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ELLE DECOR

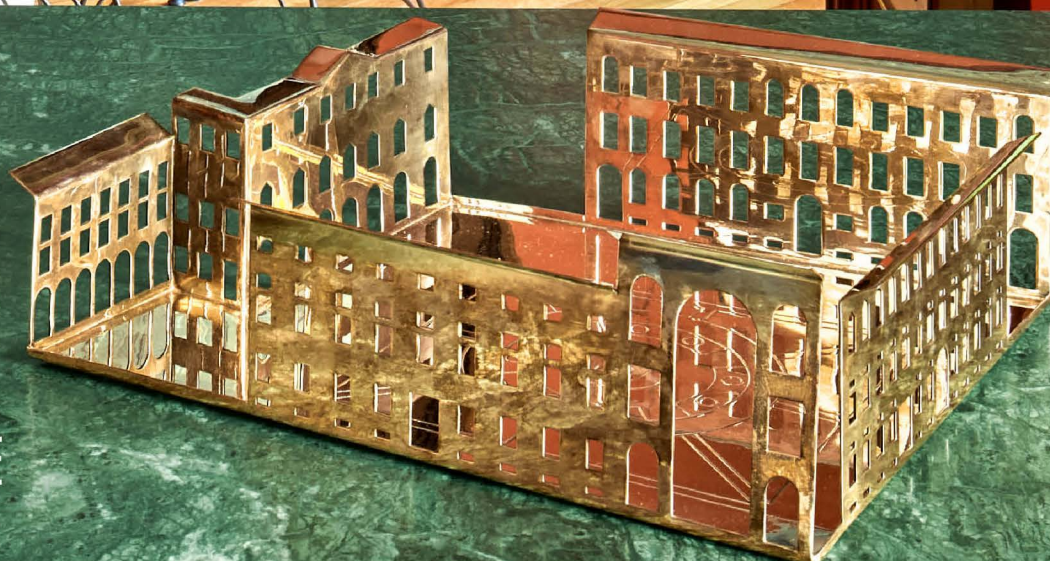
Let's Get Personal

THE DESIGNERS-AT-HOME ISSUE

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(AND HE DECORATES)



Ile

Off the Atlantic coast of France, Jean-Louis Deniot brings mainland flair and charm to his family's dreamy holiday refuge.

BY IAN PHILLIPS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEPHAN JULLIARD

In the living room of siblings Jean-Louis and Virginie Deniot's 1940s vacation home on Île de Ré, France, the armchairs are vintage, the cocktail table is from the 1950s, and the ottoman is custom.

Reve

At home with Jean-Louis Deniot

de

The custom sofa and shades in the office are of a Josef Frank fabric. Side table by Audoux Minet; midcentury desk by Peter Lovig Nielsen; photograph by Slim Aarons. For details, see Resources.

In the dining area, a custom banquette in a Josef Frank fabric and vintage bamboo chairs surround a custom dining table. Sconces by Audoux Minet; wallpaper, Au Fil des Couleurs; artworks by Frederic de Luca.

OPPOSITE: The kitchen cabinets and countertops are custom. Sink, Franke; oven, Miele.



Located off the west coast of France, Île de Ré is one of Europe's most beautiful seaside destinations. Known for its picturesque villages and 60 miles

of sandy coastline, for years it has attracted a well-heeled crowd including celebrities like Vanessa Paradis, as well as the late designer Christian Liaigre. Other fans in the design world include decorator Jean-Louis Deniot and his sister, Virginie, who has managed his eponymous firm in Paris for the past two decades.

Virginie discovered the island while vacationing in 2008, and the charm of its landscape, its temperate climate, and spellbinding light had an immediate impact. Soon after, she brought Jean-Louis, who was struck by the beauty of its architecture. "It was one of the first places I'd been where there were really old houses by the sea," Jean-Louis says. He wasn't too keen on their interior style, though. "They're old-fashioned, with lots of driftwood," he says. So when Virginie came across this house, it presented the ideal opportunity to not only create a Deniot family getaway but also redefine what a home there could look like inside.

Wrapped around a spacious courtyard, the house was built in the 1940s by the Bordelais family from

whom they purchased it. When it came up for sale, the structure was in need of extensive renovations. There were problems with humidity, the fire-place no longer worked, and there was only one bathroom. The interiors were gloomy, with wooden walls and terra-cotta floors, and the kitchen had just one tiny window. Still, the house had its charms: There was a turret, a

lucid flow to the layout, and a quirky ceiling in the living room built, in part, from an old boat mast.

Together, Jean-Louis and Virginie decided to maintain a number of traditional touches. The original moldings and doors were copied, and a classic checkerboard floor was installed in the entry hall. "For my nephew and nieces, I wanted to create the impression of a family home that had always existed," Jean-Louis says. To that end, he also chose to incorporate some more classical-looking furniture pieces, such as a sofa from his own collection for English manufacturer George Smith and a 1950s wrought-iron curule seat in the entry.

Layered on top is a healthy dose of playfulness. One of the half-serious themes adopted for the decor was "Tintin at the beach," after the iconic Belgian cartoon character. "That led us to introduce bright colors and some slightly childish touches," says Jean-Louis. The Josef Frank fabrics in the dining room and study certainly make a statement, as does the second-floor bathroom, which was painted Majorelle blue.

And a seaside house wouldn't be right without a few maritime references. They come here via rope around the doorways, a fish sculpture on the sitting room fireplace, and a model of a 19th-century racing yacht in the entry hall. Then there is the ground-floor bedroom, whose walls were painted to resemble a sandstorm. The 1950s headboard has an unconventional retractable armrest in the middle. "I guess it was so people could smoke or drink whiskey in bed," he jokes.

It is only one of a series of items in the home that were shipped from Los Angeles, where Jean-Louis has a house in the Hollywood Hills. Other pieces include the 1950s wooden cocktail table in the sitting room, an obelisk-shaped lamp in the principal bedroom, and the vintage chair in one of the children's bedrooms. Some of the locals apparently find such midcentury marvels incongruous with the overall vibe of the island. What really raised eyebrows, though, was the installation of the swimming pool. "They initially thought it was vulgar," Virginie says. But she insists they're changing their minds. "When it's low tide and over 100 degrees Fahrenheit in August, a pool is not such a bad idea." ■



RIGHT: Custom bunk beds in the children's room are dressed in pom-pom bedspreads from Tangier. Danish armchair by Hartmut Lohmeyer; Moroccan rug and rope donkey; wallpaper, Eno Studio.

BELOW RIGHT: In the primary bedroom, Deniot designed everything from the bed and canopy to the nightstand and lamp. Wallpaper, Thibaut.

OPPOSITE: The backyard features a gunite pool with chairs by Guillemme Chambron covered in a Dedar fabric.

