

FRENCHIE VOLUPTION

Under the watchful eyes of designer *Tino Zervudachi*, a 17th-century chateau in the Loire Valley is sensitively updated for life today

TEXT BY NOGA ARIKHA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD POWERS
STYLED BY ANITA SARSIDI

A ROBERT LONGO CHARCOAL DRAWING HANGS IN THE ANTIQUE-FILLED ENTRANCE HALL. 19TH-CENTURY DUTCH-STYLE CHANDELIER; 16TH-CENTURY SCAGLIOLA-TOPPED FLORENTINE TABLE; 19TH-CENTURY CLOISONNÉ LAMPS SIT ON 19TH-CENTURY SIDE TABLES. FOR DETAILS SEE RESOURCES.

OPPOSITE ORIGINAL OAK BEAMS FRAME THE TOP-FLOOR GAMES ROOM, WHERE TWO VINTAGE PHILIP ARCTANDER CLAM CHAIRS CONVERSE WITH AN OTTOMAN UPHOLSTERED IN A LE MANACH PRINT. BELOW THE EXTERIOR FROM THE GARDENS, WHICH WERE UPDATED BY LOUIS BENECH.



“By improving on what was there and carefully adding new things, *Tino* brought the house into the 21st century,” says the owner.



PREVIOUS SPREAD: © 2017 ROBERT LONGO/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK

h

ow do you revive a much-loved but well-worn house without destroying the long-cherished spirit of the place? Such was the dilemma of the woman who inherited a very old château in France's Loire Valley and couldn't quite determine what to do.

Then, when she happened upon the work of Tino Zervudachi in an issue of *AD*, she suddenly knew she had found a designer up to the task.

Acquired by the owner's grandfather in the late 1940s, the house originally dates from the 17th century, although the main façade was constructed in the 18th when the house was partly burned, and further additions accrued during the 1800s. As the current chatelaine relates, its first owner was one Michel Bégon, a marine official and administrator under King Louis XIV, born in nearby Blois, site of one of the greatest châteaux of the Loire. He is not a major historic figure, nor is the residence he built of major historic importance, despite its location in the heartland of the French nobility. But his name lives on in the begonia, the flower discovered by the botanist Charles Plumier, whom he befriended in the French Antilles in the 1680s. As it happens, when the grandfather bought the house, he planted a whole parterre of his favorite flowers, begonias, unaware that Plumier had named them after Bégon.

The coincidence is noteworthy, but then a house is often more than the sum of its physical parts. Restoring a home without destroying its spirit and the memories that dwell within it is a delicate matter. This one is the sort of place where extended family gathers for holidays, and every nook and cranny is replete with memories. By the time Zervudachi was called in, it had not been updated since the 1950s and was in obvious need of repair.

It took thoughtful care and three years of construction to give the château a new lease on life. "Tino doesn't impose a style; he works with you and with the existing furniture," the owner explains. "By improving on what was there and carefully adding new things, he brought the house into the 21st century."

From top to bottom, all was reconfigured, repurposed, and reorganized. Storerooms were converted into up-to-date bathrooms. Magnificent 19th-century beams emerged from behind mid-20th-century plaster ceilings. Light shone again through a blocked-up window in the master bedroom, where a new dressing room was created. A summer sitting room

was set up at the south end of the house, a winter library at the north. The old, depressing servants' hall became a new, inviting kitchen, and a cramped, dreary pantry became a sunny breakfast room. The ancient water-pumping system was removed from the basement to make space for a vaulted wine cellar and a capacious new pantry that now accommodates the jams and pickles yielded by the vegetable garden.

The best of the existing furniture remained, but it was restored, reupholstered, and moved into new groupings that made better practical and aesthetic sense. And it was complemented by newly purchased antiques and new pieces designed by Tino Zervudachi & Associés. The art was reframed, rehung, and relit. Zervudachi did bring in one new work, a large drawing of a knight by Robert Longo—"the guardian of the château," quips the designer—to hang in the hall.

"In these big old houses, very often the trick is simply to make them comfortable again," says Zervudachi. And when the family gathered for a first Christmas in the newly finished home, the unanimous verdict was that its welcoming spirit was more powerfully present than ever. "All the cousins came and were just blown away by how the place had been brought back to life. It was the greatest compliment."

One of the most challenging transformations was performed on the main staircase, which initially turned counterclockwise and stopped at the second floor. Zervudachi and architect Sébastien Desroches designed a new staircase to turn clockwise and rise one more story, to the top floor, where the design team remodeled a warren of tiny children's rooms into a suite of cozy guest rooms and bathrooms, and an attic into a large TV-and-games room under the eaves. When the cornice was raised there, it revealed that the staircase was being returned to its original shape. Perhaps this is why it felt exactly right to the family. "They couldn't even remember the way it had been!" Zervudachi exclaims.

Landscape designer Louis Benech took a similar approach to the garden. Car-free views and open vistas were reframed by hedges, and now giant sequoias shield the house from the driveway. The park was filled in with new evergreens—and a well-placed Bernar Venet sculpture. Yew hides the pool, and water plants now grow on the far bank of a stream that runs beyond it. Benech also pared down the old orchard, planting young fruit trees and a mix of flowers and vegetables. A diminutive garden features a pair of formal parterres planted—"in a wild spirit," says Benech—with heathers and grasses. From the house, one sees oaks, magnolias, and once again, luxuriating by a wall of the house, shaded by a large cedar: begonias. ■

IN THE CHAMBRE À FLEURS BEDROOM, A CUSTOM-MADE TINO ZERVUDACHI & ASSOCIÉS-DESIGNED BED IS DRESSED WITH FABRICS BY MARTYN LAWRENCE BULLARD AND NICOLE FABRE DESIGNS. ANTIQUE AUBUSSON TEXTILE ON TOP OF A SHYAM AHUJA RUG; 19TH-CENTURY PROVINCIAL BENCH.



IN THE LIBRARY, A CUSTOM FOUR-PIECE OTTOMAN IN AN EDMOND PETIT FABRIC SITS BETWEEN A LOUIS XV BERGÈRE IN AN ANDREW MARTIN FABRIC AND A PAIR OF 19TH-CENTURY SLIPPER CHAIRS IN AN ANTIQUE STRIPED LINEN; ANTIQUE OUSHAK RUG.



This house is the sort of place where extended family gathers for holidays, and every nook and cranny is replete with memories.

OPPOSITE AN OSBORNE & LITTLE CURTAIN ENVELOPS A DRUMMONDS TUB WITH VOLEVATCH FITTINGS IN THE CHAMBRE BLEUE BATHROOM. BELOW A BRAQUENIÉ COTTON-LINEN FABRIC COVERS THE WALLS, HEADBOARD, AND CURTAINS IN THE CHAMBRE BASSE BEDROOM. PAUL DUPRÉ-LAFON CHAIR IN JEAN ROZE FABRIC; LOUIS XV SIDE CHAIR IN MALABAR FABRIC; VINTAGE TURKISH RUG.



“In these big old houses, very often the trick is to simply make them comfortable again,” says *Zervudachi*.

design notes

THE DETAILS THAT MAKE THE LOOK

“It had been my grandfather’s house,” says the owner. “My goal was to give it a new lease on life, but not turn it into something that it wasn’t.”

CHATEAU RENAUD FABRIC BY BRAQUENIÉ; TO THE TRADE. PIERREFREY.COM

ROI SOLEIL MIRROR BY LINE VAUTRIN; PRICE UPON REQUEST. MAISON GERARD.COM

TYLER ARMCHAIR BY MICHAEL S. SMITH FOR JASPER; TO THE TRADE. MICHAELSMITHINC.COM

KRB DRINKS TABLE IN OXBLOOD AND NICKEL; \$1,750. KRBNYC.COM

SUZANI CUSHION 4853P; \$543. YASTIKBYRIFATOZBEK.COM

THE KITCHEN FEATURES A CUSTOM HOOD DESIGNED BY TINO ZERVUDACHI & ASSOCIÉS ABOVE A LA CORNUË RANGE.

IN THE DINING ROOM, A COZY BANQUETTE-LINED ALCOVE IS HUNG WITH ANTIQUE IZNIK PLATES COLLECTED BY THE OWNER’S GRANDMOTHER.

VINTAGE SAMARKAND CARPET; TO THE TRADE; DORISLESLEBLAU.COM

ABBOTSFORD LAMP; TO THE TRADE. ROBERT KIME.COM

“We reused as much as we could, reupholstering and relocating as needed,” says Zervudachi.

STYLE 1551B FABRIC IN GOLD AND RED; TO THE TRADE. DURALEE.COM

IZNIK DESIGN CIRCULAR GLASS PLATTER; \$65. SCULLYAND SCULLY.COM

COHASSET CHANDELIER IN AGED BRASS; \$1,196. HUDSONVALLEY LIGHTING.COM

GREEN WINE GOBLET BY BILLY COTTON; \$20. MARCHSF.COM

CHINESE BOUQUET TUREEN WITH BRANCH HANDLES BY HEREND; \$1,350. MARYMAHONEY.COM

INTERIORS: RICHARD POWERS; ALL OTHERS: COURTESY OF RESPECTIVE COMPANIES