

# AD 100

JACQUES GRANGE'S  
PARIS BREAKTHROUGH



100<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary  
collector's edition





BOXWOOD HEDGES  
EDDY AROUND ALEPPO  
PINE TREES AT AD100  
DECORATOR ROSE  
TARLOW'S PROVENCE  
RETREAT. THE LANDSCAPE  
WAS CONCEIVED BY WIRTZ  
INTERNATIONAL. FOR  
DETAILS SEE RESOURCES.

# CARTE BLANCHE

*Rose Tarlow's magical landscape in Provence is a tribute to  
her total trust in garden gurus Peter and Jacques Wirtz*

TEXT BY MITCHELL OWENS PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRANÇOIS HALARD



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ven style gurus worship their own idols. Consider, for instance, Rose Tarlow, the AD100 Hall of Fame interior designer known as the decorator’s decorator, an exacting, finely tuned aesthetic adviser to highfliers such as movie magnate David Geffen and museum grandees Edythe and Eli Broad. For herself, when the subject turned to one of her own domestic landscapes about a decade ago, it was Belgian superstar Jacques Wirtz or nobody.

“Those hedges,” the Los Angeles–based Tarlow enthuses with a sigh during an interview at her leafy retreat near the Provençal city of Avignon, referring to Wirtz International’s insinuating way with boxwood. The Antwerp-area firm’s hypnotic, suggestively surrealistic landscapes are largely flower-free demesnes that are studded with trees manicured into cloudy shapes and *Buxus sempervirens* coaxed into evergreen sculptures that have been clipped into high soft walls, grand coils, and pillowy mounds that cast dramatic shadows as the sun makes its way across the sky. Imagine the mathematical perfection of André Le Nôtre’s gardens for Château de Versailles made sensual, even when blanketed with snow.

“Very peaceful, very green, and very beautiful,” Tarlow continues, summing up Wirtz International’s oeuvre. After taking several years, largely long-distance, to design and build a deceptively old-looking stone residence and guest-house on her hilly property in Provence, she handed over the seven and a half acres to Jacques. He developed the overall scheme, and his son and business partner Peter took over when the former, who died in 2018 at 93, became too infirm to continue. (Another son, Martin, is also part of Wirtz International’s leadership.) Then Tarlow, who is renowned for her uncommon pursuit of perfection—she once removed a new Connecticut house’s multitude of stone arches and groin vaults, over its architect’s protests and eventual admiration—surprised everyone, though not herself, by simply walking away. “They knew more about landscaping than I do,” she says of Wirtz *père et fils*, sagely observing, “I’m not going to take the brush out of the artist’s hand.”

Tarlow’s Provençal landscape, like her acclaimed interiors, is where layering intersects with surprises, like her Los Angeles living room (AD, June 1991), where earthy furniture is joined by vines that she’s encouraged to creep through windows and over the rough plaster walls. “My father always liked crooked spaces, full of accidents, and this place feels very medieval,” Peter explains of Tarlow’s land, challenged by multiple levels but blessed with numerous mature trees. “He integrated the weaknesses and played up the strengths.”



**ABOVE LEFT** A SPRAWLING EUROPEAN NETTLE TREE CROWNS A RETAINING WALL. **ABOVE RIGHT** BOXWOOD SPHERES AND CUBES—“I THINK I HAVE MORE BOXWOOD THAN ANYBODY IN THE WORLD,” TARLOW SAYS—BRING GREEN GEOMETRY TO A STONE TERRACE.

The street side of the property features an immense double hedge, with Italian cypresses along the road and bay trees on the inside, the latter clipped at intervals into buttresses, Peter explains, that avoid “the monotony of a straight line and create a rhythm.” As for the drystone walls that Tarlow either installed or had laboriously reconstructed (“It cost me 10 times more than I paid for the property”) and which Jacques pronounced of little interest, they are now enveloped by boxwood tiers and zigzags, the open spaces foaming with fountain grass, which, Peter says, obscures “the clumsiness and steepness.”

At the entrance, a gate opens to a car park of river pebbles and two winding thoroughfares. The path on the left leads past a bed of boxwood to the long, low, discreet main house, while the other, straight ahead, climbs a steep hillside to the guesthouse. (Visitors can also take an elevator.)

“You meander between groups of trees on serpentine paths, which confuse the mind into thinking that the space is much bigger than reality,” Peter says. Cultivated areas morph into wildernesses and back again, the transitions pinched or narrowed by trees and other artful deflections. “My father was very strong at sequencing spaces,” he adds. Says Tarlow, “I don’t like undulating paths all over, but they were right.” Ditto Peter’s advice to plant 15 more linden trees, her favorite, to make the three near the guesthouse look less lonely. “It didn’t feel complete,” she says, “and now it looks fabulous.”

Tarlow has also become accustomed to the fan-shaped parterre of overgrown roses, hemmed by manicured boxwood hedges, that offers a flamboyant pause on the otherwise tranquil guesthouse ascent. “Jacques wanted it to look like a deserted churchyard,” she recalls, “but I don’t think it does.”

Despite being no fan of what Peter describes as “fuzziness” in architecture, decoration, or gardens, she now sees the point of the huge massed roses: Malvern Hills, Alden Biesen, Brigitte de Villefagne, Rosalita, Fortissima, and Plaisanterie. Some naturally sprawl, others clamber up wrought-iron supports, and all arch into yellow or pink waterfalls. “It’s like a piece of candy,” Peter observes amid the green-on-green setting.

Should a more conventional sweet be required, there’s always the village. “One day I was walking with my grandson to the *boulangerie*,” Tarlow says, “and he told me I kissed 14 people on the way. I think he really said 11, but I always exaggerate.” One woman’s country paradise, though, can be one decorator’s gilded cage, Tarlow cheerfully admits. “It’s a very sleepy place, but the antiques villages are only 15 minutes away. Otherwise, what would I do all day?” ■



COMMON IVY CLOAKS  
A STONE WALL AND  
WRAPS THE TRUNK OF A  
EUROPEAN NETTLE TREE.  
OPPOSITE BOXWOOD  
TIERS RISE TO THE  
STONE GUESTHOUSE.



“I’m not going to take the brush out of  
the artist’s hand,” *Tarlow* says of giving  
Wirtz International free rein





IN THE GUEST BEDROOM, A MAURIZIO CATTELAN PAINTING HANGS OVER AN ANTIQUE FRENCH BED. OPPOSITE A SCULPTURAL SPIRALING STAIRCASE CONNECTS GRANGE'S ORIGINAL FLAT TO THE APARTMENT ABOVE. FOR DETAILS SEE RESOURCES.



# FRENCH TWIST



ARTWORK: MATHIEU LEHANEUR, POCKET OCEAN

For *Jacques Grange*, home is an art-filled Paris apartment that once belonged to the legendary writer *Colette*

TEXT BY **DANA THOMAS** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **FRANÇOIS HALARD**





LEFT THE LIVING ROOM  
OVERLOOKS THE  
PALAIS-ROYAL GARDEN.  
FRANCIS JOURDAIN  
SUEDE ARMCHAIRS;  
JEAN ROYÈRE COCKTAIL  
TABLE; JEAN-MICHEL  
FRANK SOFA.





IN GRANGE'S OFFICE, A SUITE OF ALOYS ZÖTL WATERCOLORS HANGS ABOVE THE ANDRÉ SORNAY DESK. KEITH HARING VASE (LEFT), ALBERTO GIACOMETTI LAMPS. JEAN ROYÈRE FLOOR LAMP. **OPPOSITE** AZULEJO TILES COVER THE WALLS OF THE SECOND ENTRY. 19TH-CENTURY CHAIRS FROM MADELEINE CASTAING; 18TH-CENTURY IVORY CABINET.



ARTWORK: © 2020 ALBERTO GIACOMETTI ESTATE / VAGA AT ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NY / ADAGP, PARIS

# the

celebrated French writer Colette first moved to 9 rue de Beaujolais, overlooking the Palais-Royal garden in Paris, in the 1920s. Her south-facing flat was an entresol—one of the low-ceilinged “lairs huddled under the arches, squeezed between first floor and the shops beneath,” she wrote. Colette loved living on the elegant quad, with its percolating fountains and squealing schoolchildren. But she lusted for the roomier, airier apartment directly above. In the late 1930s—after having moved, and moved again—she declared in an interview her unyielding desire to live on No. 9’s first floor. Its owner read the article and offered her and her husband, the journalist Maurice Goudekot, the flat. It would be Colette’s final and most famous home.

In 1990, more than three decades after Colette’s death, French interior designer and AD100 Hall of Famer Jacques Grange became friendly with Maurice’s second wife (and widow), Sanda; she was a neighbor of Grange’s friends and clients Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé in the Norman seaside resort of Deauville. One day, she told Grange that

the apartment was available and asked if he would like to rent it. He did, and redecorated it, as he says now, “as respectfully as possible to Colette”—maintaining the floor plan of living room and bedroom on the park and dining room under a drafty painted-glass ceiling, as well as a few bits of Colette ephemera: a small bronze bust of her by Spanish sculptor Apel.les Fenosa; a sketch of her by her friend and neighbor Jean Cocteau; one of her pens, kept in a cup on his night stand; and, most important, her tufted chaise longue. “She received friends on the chaise longue here in this salon,” Grange said on a sunny autumn afternoon. “And she worked in her bedroom, opening the window to hear the children playing in the garden.”

**FIFTEEN YEARS LATER**, after Madame Goudekot had died, Grange was able to purchase the 1,400-square-foot flat from the estate. But like Colette before him, he longed for the roost above; it had an unobstructed view over the squared-off linden trees to the historic Comédie-Française theater. Two years ago, he bought it and made a duplex, with spiral stairs inspired by the curling Man Ray chandelier in his entrance hall. “I’m very proud of the staircase,” he said. “It looks like a sculpture.”

There was other major work to be done. On the lower floor, he replaced the leaky Belle Époque verrière with a new Cubist-style one after the Robert Mallet-Stevens–designed Villa Noailles in Hyères, and converted Colette’s (and his) bedroom into a guest room.





**ABOVE** DIEGO GIACOMETTI CHAIRS FLANK AN HERVÉ VAN DER STRAETEN CONSOLE IN THE ENTRY. GILBERT AND GEORGE PAINTING; MAN RAY PENDANT. **RIGHT** AN ANTIQUE VIENNESE CABINET GROUNDS THE AIRY MASTER BEDROOM.

**BELOW** IN THE LIBRARY, A BANQUETTE IS TUCKED BENEATH AN OAK BOOKCASE. CHRISTIAN BÉRARD TRIPTYCH; MAN RAY PHOTOGRAPHS.



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ARTWORKS TOP A MARBLE CONSOLE BY MARC NEWSOM IN THE DINING ROOM.





“To have lightness is so peaceful,” says *Grange* of the bright, open rooms.

PLATES BY LUCIO FONTANA COMPLETE A VIGNETTE IN THE MASTER BEDROOM. 19TH-CENTURY NEO-GREEK CHAIR; TABLE COVERED WITH 18TH-CENTURY PORTUGUESE TILES.

Upstairs, he reorganized the flow of the 1,000-square-foot space so natural light could sweep through. “To have lightness is so peaceful,” he said. From his beach house in Comporta, Portugal, he traveled throughout the southern Iberian Peninsula to collect neoclassical tiles—some glazed with sponge smears in plum, chestnut, and pine, which he used for the master bath, powder room, and fireplace, and others with classic blue-and-white geometric designs, which now enrobe the entrance hall.

Then he filled the home with art, photography, and furnishings that are meaningful to him—usually by or of people he has known or admired. Like the string of photographs of French arts patron Marie-Laure de Noailles—by Man Ray, Dora Maar, and George Hoyningen-Huene, respectively—above the library sofa (de Noailles was also a friend of Bergé and Saint Laurent), and a soot-tinted tableau of a Paris artist’s atelier by Bernard Buffet, Bergé’s lover before Saint Laurent. It is poised over a sweet still life of buttercups by Grange chum Andy Warhol. “They go very well together, yes?” Grange mused. Next to

them is a Marc Newson sculpted-marble console, and in the entrance hall, a pair of “little wire chairs” from Madeleine Castaing’s Chateau de Lèves, near Chartres, that he picked up at her estate sale.

Nearby, on the entrance table, sits Theodore Géricault’s painting of a nude young man; it last graced the entrée of Saint Laurent’s Left Bank home. “So, like at Yves’s, we see it when we arrive,” Grange said. On his Louis XVI bureau—previously Count Beistegui’s at the Château de Groussay—stands a 17th-century gold bronze of Jesus Christ from Saint Laurent’s Paris bedroom. In the kitchen, Grange pointed to a charming porcelain cabbage tureen, topped with a songbird; it served as the centerpiece of Bergé’s dining table. “It’s nice to have souvenirs of Yves and Pierre,” Grange said. “It shows their influence—and their circle’s influence—on me. They were my base. My youth.”

Like Colette, when at home Grange works at his desk overlooking the Palais-Royal. “I hear the fountains, and the children playing, too,” he said brightly. He looked out the window to the shaded Allée Colette below. “It’s the Paris one dreams of, isn’t it?”

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PAINTINGS BY ROBERT MOTHERWELL (TOP) AND CARLA ACCARDI BRIGHTEN A CORNER OF THE LIVING ROOM. SHELF BY GRANGE; THONET CHAIR.