

# CONDÉ NAST House & Garden

SOUTH AFRICA

OCTOBER 2010 R37,95 (incl. VAT)  
OTHER COUNTRIES R33,29

**EXCLUSIVE**  
INTERIORS  
UPDATED  
CAPE DUTCH  
PROVENCE MOD  
SMART MARINE

*new thinking*

## BRIGHT IDEAS

PINK MAKES AN IMPACT | STYLE UP YOUR BEDROOM

### Gardens

■ ALL-TIME  
FAVOURITE  
ROSES  
■ PLANTING  
INSPIRATION

**RENEW & REDO**

## CONVERTING TO OPEN-PLAN







The covered courtyard leads into the living room. Painted-metal mobile designed and made by Dominique Lafourcade and François Chevalier  
OPPOSITE PAGE  
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT All the outdoor wooden furniture is painted a traditional Provençal red; the marble *David* was found at a reclamation yard. It was cut into sections, each of which is on a turning pivot; slabs of 'Martyr' stone were used to build a montage wall between the garden and parking area; the façade with its painted Italian-style stripes

# CLASSICAL COOL

A PLAYFUL TAKE ON PROVENÇAL LIVING SEES TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE AND CULTURAL ELEMENTS REWORKED WITH INVENTIVE CRAFTSMANSHIP AND FLAIR  
TEXT JOHANNA THORNYCROFT  
PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREAS VON EINSIEDEL



ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN: BRUNO LAFOURCADE; GARDEN DESIGN AND PLANTING: DOMINIQUE LAFOURCADE



For Bruno and Dominique Lafourcade, their conversion of a 1960s vegetable warehouse, formerly surrounded on all sides by a grim concrete car park, has been a dream come true. Having lived for many years in a classic Provençal country house where Dominique, a professional gardener and artist, created one of the best loved and most photographed gardens in the area, the couple longed for change and to put their passion for 'soft' modernism into practice.

The challenging site is long and narrow; the blocky warehouse itself was of solid construction, providing the sort of volumes that Bruno immediately understood would provide the virtually blank canvas he required. His intention was to design 'a house with modern sensibilities, but not as hard and empty as some contemporary homes have become'.

While Bruno and his son Alexandre are best known as the region's premier creators and restorers of traditional old chateaux, manors and farmhouses into some of the most sought-after properties in Provence, both are pleased to find that many of their international clients are keen to explore new ideas. 'We are increasingly producing the best of vernacular exterior design and construction (planning is very tough here) with up-to-the-minute interiors, which is tremendously exciting for us,' says Bruno.

Alexandre had converted an old fruit-packing warehouse into a striking modern house for himself in 2006. Bruno found inspiration in that and bought this property in December of that year, completing the construction in the summer of 2008. That the garden appears so mature and verdant is testament to Dominique's design skills and formidable plant knowledge.

One is greeted through the entry gate by a magic montage wall of stone. Enormous pieces of pale limestone from the quarry at Les Baux, in use from Roman times and still the source of stone for the Lafourcades' work, were used to build it. The wall is unusual because it is created from what are

called 'Martyr' stones, slabs upon which other stones are cut, thereby creating fascinating textured surfaces. Beyond it, the simple gable-end façade of the house comes into view, painted in horizontal stripes of grey and white inspired by 'a subconscious feeling of Italian church decoration'.

Shallow stone steps lead to a level area of timber decking and a monumental arch with columns on either side. This proves to be a covered courtyard, open on one side to access the projecting roofed terrace off the living room and kitchen. The entrance to the house is via large glass doors leading straight into the almost double-volume living-cum-dining room. There are only two interior doors on the ground floor, one to the cloakroom and another to a storage room. A pair of square arches lead from the living room and dining area to the kitchen, behind which is Dominique's atelier, open to the staircase lobby. She says it is a perfect workroom, positioned roughly at the centre of the house rather than a closed-off space. Bruno uses a lower-level warehouse space, seen through a wall of windows, as a workshop and garage.

Upstairs are five bedrooms and four bathrooms; the master suite includes a large dressing and clothes-storage area that forms a lobby between the landing and the bedroom. Bruno has created an impressive change in rhythm between the lofty open-plan living spaces and the more intimate private quarters, although the bedrooms are not small.

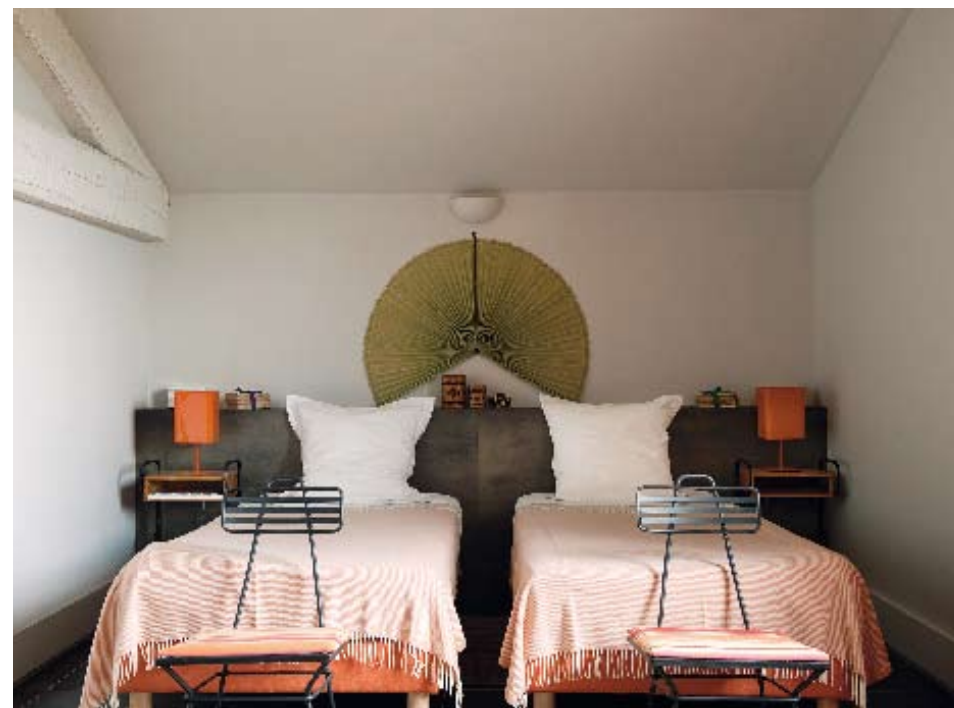
The Lafourcades are both interested in and design, among other items, furniture and lighting. In collaboration, Bruno designed a pair of bedroom cupboards that Dominique decorated in a mosaic of cut-up Hermès carrier bags. She also used Hermès boxes to make table lamps, choosing the same colour for her bed linen. Dominique and artist-craftsman Francois Chevalier (the pair usually make lamps together) also made the mobile hanging from the courtyard ceiling and the curious giraffe looking out over the living room.

There is plenty of subtle detailing throughout the house. Oak-framed doors are clad in black check-patterned melamine and the handrails on the stairs finished in crocodile leather, while all the door handles were custom designed. In the kitchen, the finishes and lighting have the feel of a semi-industrial space, but as Bruno was determined to keep it from becoming too hard, the walls have a soft pearlised-grey tone. Red were chosen for the curtains, chair seats and lampshades 'because it is an old traditional Provence colour and works perfectly here'. A boxy dark-wood sofa and chairs were designed by Alexandre and balanced by a pair of beige 'Womb' chairs by Eero Saarinen.

Everything about this house and garden illustrates its owners' sensibilities and desire to mix the rough with the smooth, as well as their passion for craftsmanship and modern design. Equally the interiors are original, individual and comfortable – a good case of triumphant teamwork. ■ Bruno and Alexandre Lafourcade [www.architecture-lafourcade.com](http://www.architecture-lafourcade.com)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT View across the dining room to the workshop and landing above; old white-painted structural beams delineate the dining area adjacent to the kitchen. 'Florence' dining table by Knoll; Hermès orange was chosen as accent colour in the master bedroom. Dominique made the bedside lamps by stacking Hermès boxes on top of one another; intimate spare bedroom; the living room is partly divided by a fireplace and chimney breast. Bruno Lafourcade created a raised library and reading area with storage either side of the fireplace







The kitchen was designed by Bruno and custom-made using marble, granite and oak. Powder-coated and polished metal were used for the finishes, while Italian ceramic tiles were chosen for the floor. The iron-and-sycamore table and aluminium pendant lights are also by Bruno. Double doors lead off the kitchen to a summer dining area furnished with locally made twig chairs and a glossy-red metal table by Bruno