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LAUREN HALSEY / h CLUB / ELYSIAN LANDSCAPES
THE MANUFACTORY / OYLER WU / JEAN-DE MERRY
TRACY FEITH / SPENCER FUNG / OUTDOOR FURNITURE

THE MIRAMAR BEACH RESORT
IN MONTECITO



Text by Kelly Vencill Sanchez / Photography by Sam Frost



CHARACTER STUDY

JEAN DE MERRY AND
CHRISTIAN DARNAUD-MAROSELLI'S
HOUSE OF MEMORIES

Above:
Jean de Merry (left) and Christian Darnaud-Maroselli,
who founded the design brand Jean de Merry.

Left:
The living room features a leather sofa and club
chairs by Jean de Merry and a Lindström rug;
bronze vessel by Patricia Roach.



Opposite, clockwise from top left: A Heijden Hume Metro table and Jean de Merry Brinco light fixture in the hallway; a sculpture by Lester Weise and a small artwork by Marco Lorenzetto in the living room; the remodeled kitchen; pieces by Rafael Buñuel above a custom sofa and 1960s lamp by Rougier in the study.

Above: Paintings by Jeffrey Long in the dining room. The Sitz chairs were designed by Jean de Merry; the ceiling fixture is one of the brand's signature pieces. Hubert Le Gall wall sconce, at left; 1920s sculpture by Katumo.

The poolside studio at the Los Angeles home of Jean de Merry and Christian Darnaud-Maroselli is a telling portrait of their work and passions. Filled with books, art, bespoke furnishings and flea-market finds, the lofty space is at once inviting and fascinating, not least because of the mural that stretches across one wall, whimsically chronicling the couple's lives and travels over their 22 years together.

"It's not a house for display," says de Merry, as a black-and-white cat wanders in, demanding attention. He picks up a turn-of-the-century carved chicha cup that he bought in Peru and runs his fingers around the jagged rim. "One of the dogs chewed it." He shrugs. "This is a house of love, not a house of value. What is here are memories."

Those memories are seamlessly connected to the couple's fine furnishings firm, Jean de Merry, which they launched in Los Angeles in 2001 after living in France and England. At first they specialized in French antiques but soon began turning out their own Deco-inflected designs, including a line of hand-dyed and aged-leather seating inspired by the tanning business de Merry's family operated for four centuries in France. The company has expanded to encompass luxury case goods, lighting and decorative arts as well as furniture, textile and carpet lines by Natasha Baradaran, Jean-Louis Deniot, Kimberly Denman, Philip Nimmo, Peggy Platner, Erik Lindström and others.

Tucked behind a tall hedge on a quiet street, the house is an easy drive from both the Jean de Merry



Opposite and these pages:
 A former garage now serves as an office and studio, with French doors that open to the pool area. The mobile is by Karl Zahn; a mural by Aidan Sakarya details significant places and events in the couple's lives.



showroom at the Pacific Design Center (there are also Jean de Merry showrooms in New York, Chicago and Dallas) and the firm's Los Angeles factory. They found it 18 years ago, when they unexpectedly had to move from their apartment in Marina del Rey and Darnaud-Maroselli announced he'd found a Koreatown rental. Unsure about the neighborhood, de Merry was skeptical until he learned the house had a pool. They set out for a look, and after peering through the 1927 Dutch Colonial's windows, they contacted the landlord.

They rented the place for four years before convincing the owner to sell it to them. "The day after we bought it we started to realize it needed a lot of work," de Merry says wryly. Their first order of business was redoing the pool and transforming the large rear garden—planting orange, lemon and olive trees along with clusters of fragrant lavender. "I wanted it to be a haven since we spend so much time at home working," says Darnaud-Maroselli.



The studio, formerly a garage that briefly served as the Jean de Merry atelier, was opened to the rafters and outfitted with French doors on two sides. When the weather is nice, they're left open while the couple works at the long library table, which holds sculptures, stacks of magazines and paperwork for the business as well as boxes of research for de Merry's latest novel (his previous works were published in France under the name Jean-Claude Libourel). Designing, he observes, is much like writing. "You design a chandelier and you start square and it ends up oblong and you don't know why—something in the design brought you to a certain shape. Writing a character is the same."

They went on to redo the kitchen and bathrooms, install oak floors and turn a porch upstairs into a feline rec room. French doors at the back of the house open to a covered terrace, where at any given moment you'll find one or more of the couple's beloved rescues—the current total is three dogs and 10 cats.

Bottom:
A bedroom features an artwork by Clamdigin; the shelving was designed by Oliver Furth for Jean de Merry. *Below:* A bathroom with a Jean de Merry light fixture.

Right:
The couple refurbished the pool and planted orange, lemon and olive trees. The Schindler sling chair is from Marmol Radziner. "I wanted it to be a haven since we spend so much time at home working," says Darnaud-Maroselli.

The house continues to evolve. Last year Darnaud-Maroselli commissioned French artist Aidan Sakarya to paint the studio's mural, which details everything from the couple's astrological signs to places they've lived, including Corsica, where Darnaud-Maroselli was born, and Paris, where he and de Merry met. And a few months ago, Darnaud-Maroselli oversaw a refresh of the interiors. "For years we lived with dark gray walls, and everything was very masculine," he explains. "I wanted to change the energy and make the rooms less cluttered and brighter."

There's a casually collected quality to the rooms, where everything is used, from the worn Jean de Merry leather sofa in the living room—a favorite perch for the dogs—to the dining room table that de Merry fashioned from an industrial metal base. Displayed throughout are sculptures and artworks, like the Rafael Buñuel prints in the TV room and the tribal-themed paintings by Jeffrey Long in the dining room.

"It's like being in a Parisian apartment, but with a private oasis in the middle of Los Angeles," says Darnaud-Maroselli. De Merry agrees. "Every time we've thought about moving someplace bigger, we come back and say, Why would we want to start again somewhere else? Our soul is here." •

