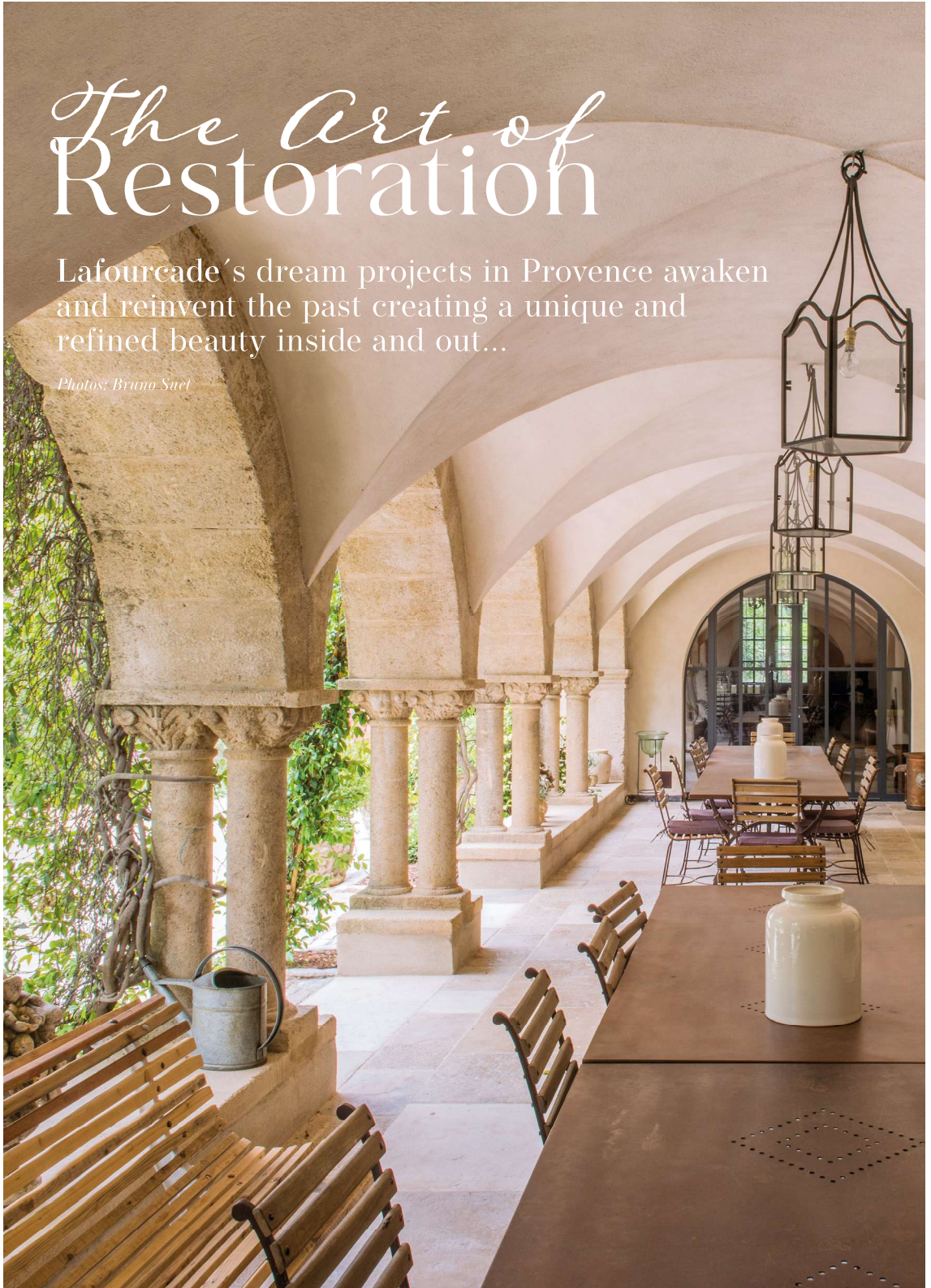


*Portrait*

# The Art of Restoration

Lafourcade's dream projects in Provence awaken and reinvent the past creating a unique and refined beauty inside and out...

*Photos: Bruno Suet*







The dream of discovering an old ruin in Provence, a lost farmhouse hidden at the end of a forgotten allée of plane trees, amid fields of lavender and waiting to be rescued, is a dream that few lucky souls can make a reality. There is, however, someone who does know about this dream and who has spent the last 25 years making it a reality: Alexandre Lafourcade. The eponymous family business started in the early 1970s when Alexandre's father, Bruno, opened his architectural practice in Saint Remy de Provence together with his artist wife, Dominique. After Bruno's passing in 2016, Alexandre and Dominique continued their work in the same spirit of authenticity and elegance. Whether a mas, a bastide, a castle, a wine estate or a hotel, the art of restoration is for Lafourcade a process that involves 'paying homage to the past' but, interestingly, it is not always about restoring the bygone charm of a dwelling. In some cases, this charm has to be created anew. The art of restoration is not just bringing



the best of the past but also recreating it. Thus a featureless and basic building is transformed into what the French describe as a 'belle demeure' in what Lafourcade describes as 'a total metamorphosis'. And the magic is there each time one looks at the restored building thinking it has always been there in absolute and total harmony with its surroundings.



The first thing he considers when starting a project, Lafourcade tells us, is 'the way my clients live. That is to say – Is it a family home? How many children? Do they have animals? What are their needs? Their dreams? Do they need a holiday home or a main residence? My priority is creating a custom made living area where my client feels at home'.

As to the main challenges most frequently found in a restoration project, Alexandre points to 'finding a good concept, the perfect circulation and the art of enhancing every room' and is clear that one should always be 'very respectful of the past. It is important not to destroy the genuine







charm.’ Even when an old building has lost all charm, this is restored with the use of ‘ancient materials so that the place seems to have existed for centuries’. As Lafourcade specialises in restoring 18th century homes, he says one of the most appealing features of such homes is the light. ‘Whereas 17th century buildings were more austere, the 18th century became more joyful architecturally speaking’ and so he does his best ‘to combine the glittering of the 18th century with the 21st century’. This is a balance that needs some consideration as modern technology must be incorporated in such a way that it in no way can distract from the aesthetics of such beautiful spaces. As Alexandre points out ‘technology needs to be perfectly accessible but hidden’.

Provence’s art of elegant living is known around the world with the region being known for the beauty of its landscapes. One of the critical characteristics of life in Provence, Alexandre tells us, is that it is enjoyed outside for most of the year and therefore ‘it is essential to succeed in creating a perfect connection between inside and outside’. This is where Dominique comes into the picture as the garden designer. She designs her gardens as a ‘natural extension of the house with perspectives, symmetry and rhythm’ to create spaces that are as carefully considered as the interiors, so as to create the perfect stage for an ideal new home and life in Provence.

*[www.architecture-lafourcade.com](http://www.architecture-lafourcade.com)*



