



A Living Work of Art

Photos & text by Ruth Ribeaucourt

A former private residence, this astounding 17th-century mansion with elegant interiors is an inspiring setting for its future as an exclusive arts club.

One of Provence's famous *villages perchés* ("hilltop villages"), Ménerbes is widely regarded as one of France's most spectacular places, gracefully floating above the lush vineyards, cherry orchards and garrigue of the Luberon. Its winding streets are home to exceptional architecture, from the beautifully preserved Middle Age and Renaissance buildings; to the Hôtel de Ville, with its wrought iron bell tower; to the soaring citadel and the cemetery that dates back to ancient Rome.

The town has attracted many artists over the years — Nicolas de Staël, Jane Eakin, Joe Downing, Picasso and Dora Maar all fell under its charm and settled there. In 1989, Ménerbes gained a certain notoriety thanks to Peter Mayle's bestselling book, *A Year in Provence*, which was such a hit that thousands followed him to buy up properties in the area, creating what is locally referred to as the "Mayle Invasion."



SECRET CORNERS

1. Charming patina on the streets of Ménerbes.
2. Ancient, cobbled streets lead up to the Hôtel de Ville.
3. Soaring vaulted ceilings have been painstakingly restored by the owner Nancy B. Negley.
4. The entrance hallway features a breathtaking fresco inspired by Villa Livia in Rome.



Inside the *boudoir*, the tall windows are framed with exquisite, cascading silk.

Like many of Ménerbes' best-kept secrets, Hôtel de Tingry is discreetly tucked away off a quiet street. For many decades, it was closed off to the public and served as the private residence of the American arts patron, Nancy Brown Negley, who purchased it in 1998.

A historical monument, Hôtel de Tingry was built in the 17th century by Joseph Balthazar des Laurents, a descendant of Eléonore Pulchérie des Laurents

and Charles François Christian de Montmorency-Luxembourg — Prince of Tingry — who gave his name to the mansion.

Since taking it over, Nancy has dedicated many years to lovingly renovating the property and courtyard with the guidance of interior designer France Loeb. The house was respectfully restored with careful preservation of many of its original features, including the ancient

tomette (hexagonal or square terracotta tiles) floors and soaring vaulted ceilings. Nancy's desire was to create a family home that was comfortable, one that was a joy to live in and that could be shared with friends.

OPPOSITE

In the heart of the kitchen is a custom-made La Cornue stove — every cook's dream.





Nancy's love for Rome inspired her to commission this fresco in the entrance hall, reminiscent of the famous "Garden room" at Villa Livia.



The custom-built library displays beautiful, reclaimed stone tiles.



An 1800s Breton *armoire* ("cabinet") houses an impressive collection of French faience for entertaining.

HEAVENLY DESIGN

1. Detail from a Napoleon III embroidered stool in the "Yellow salon."
2. Inside the dining room, the owner's love for Italian design is reflected in this black Murano chandelier. Artwork by Suzi Davidoff.
3. In the "Yellow salon," interior designer France Loeb decorated using soft, luxurious silks with floral accents.



The kitchen is a cook's dream, featuring a custom-made La Cornue stove adorned with a glorious assortment of copper pots and pans and an imposing 1800s Breton *armoire* ("cabinet") that houses an impressive collection of French faience for entertaining. The interior has been decorated with striking colors and patterns, from the entrance hallway — which features a breathtaking fresco inspired by the legendary "Garden Room" at Villa Livia in Rome — to the wonderful use of Pierre Frey fabrics in the living areas and upstairs bedrooms. Antique furniture procured from the nearby Isle sur la Sorgue is complemented by an exceptional contemporary art collection, sourced both locally and internationally by Nancy herself. It is a living dedication to some of art and design's greatest talents that also manages to feel very much like a home.



In 2019, after living at Hôtel de Tingry for 13 years, Nancy created the Nancy B. Negley Association and donated the residence, along with another important property called Maison Dora Maar (the artist's former residence), to France's Fondation pour les Monuments Historiques. This achieved her goal of establishing two exceptional cultural venues to promote creative activities in the region.

Hôtel de Tingry has recently been transformed into an intimate arts club in the heart of the Luberon. Outside the high season summer months, Director Gwen Strauss seeks to create a place of "vibrant exchange," where concerts, exhibitions, readings, conferences and masterclasses and more are hosted. It is an inspired way to showcase artists' works in a more intimate setting and allows the house to stay alive through art, music, creativity and community.

For the 2021 summer season, Hôtel de Tingry will be offering up the mansion for private rentals.

For more information about the house and its 2021 events, visit www.maisondoramaar.org



CREATING A COZY HOME

1. An incredible Empire mahogany daybed, sourced from nearby Isle sur la Sorgue, complements the contemporary artwork in the main hall.
2. The bedrooms are upholstered with Pierre Frey fabric to create soft, warm and welcoming spaces.

OPPOSITE

Plush furnishings and antique finds make the boudoir the perfect place to curl up with a good book. It features a painting by 19th-century American artist Pinckney Marcus-Simons.



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The boudoir — a refined yet inviting setting for reading and relaxing.
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