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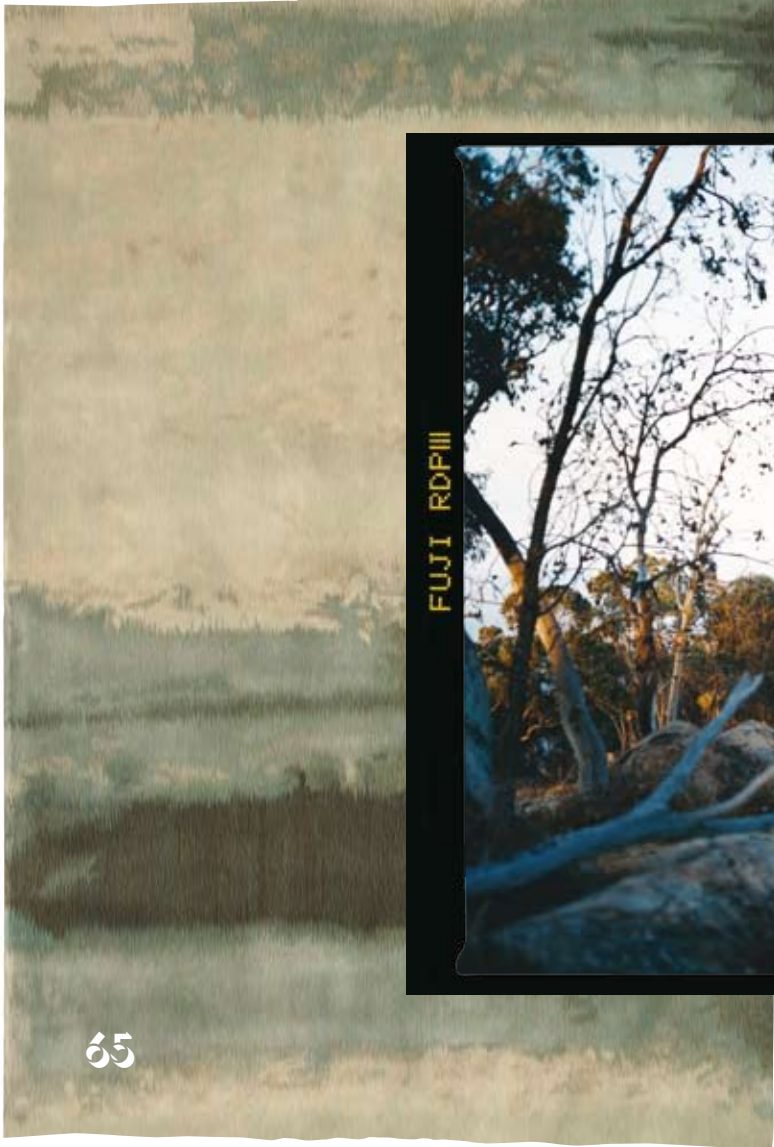
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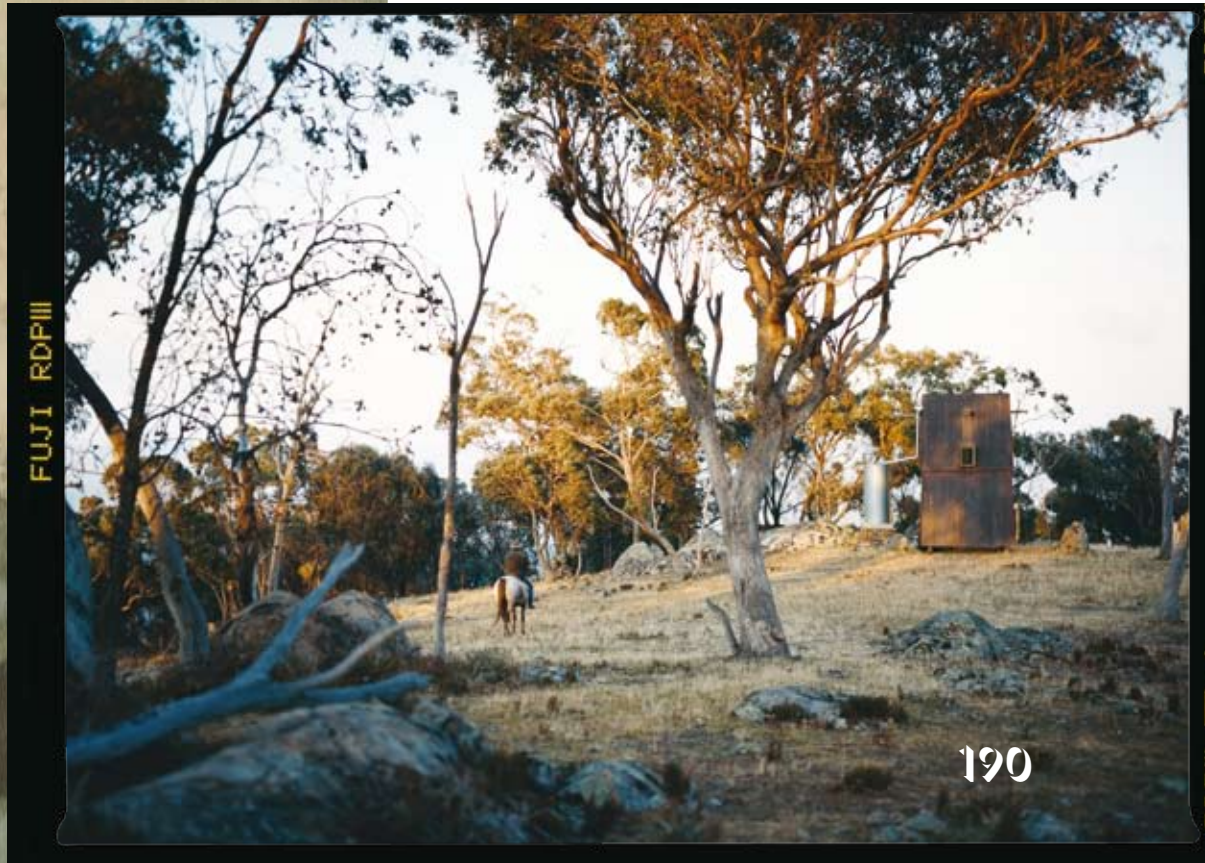
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BY
CATHERINE MARTIN



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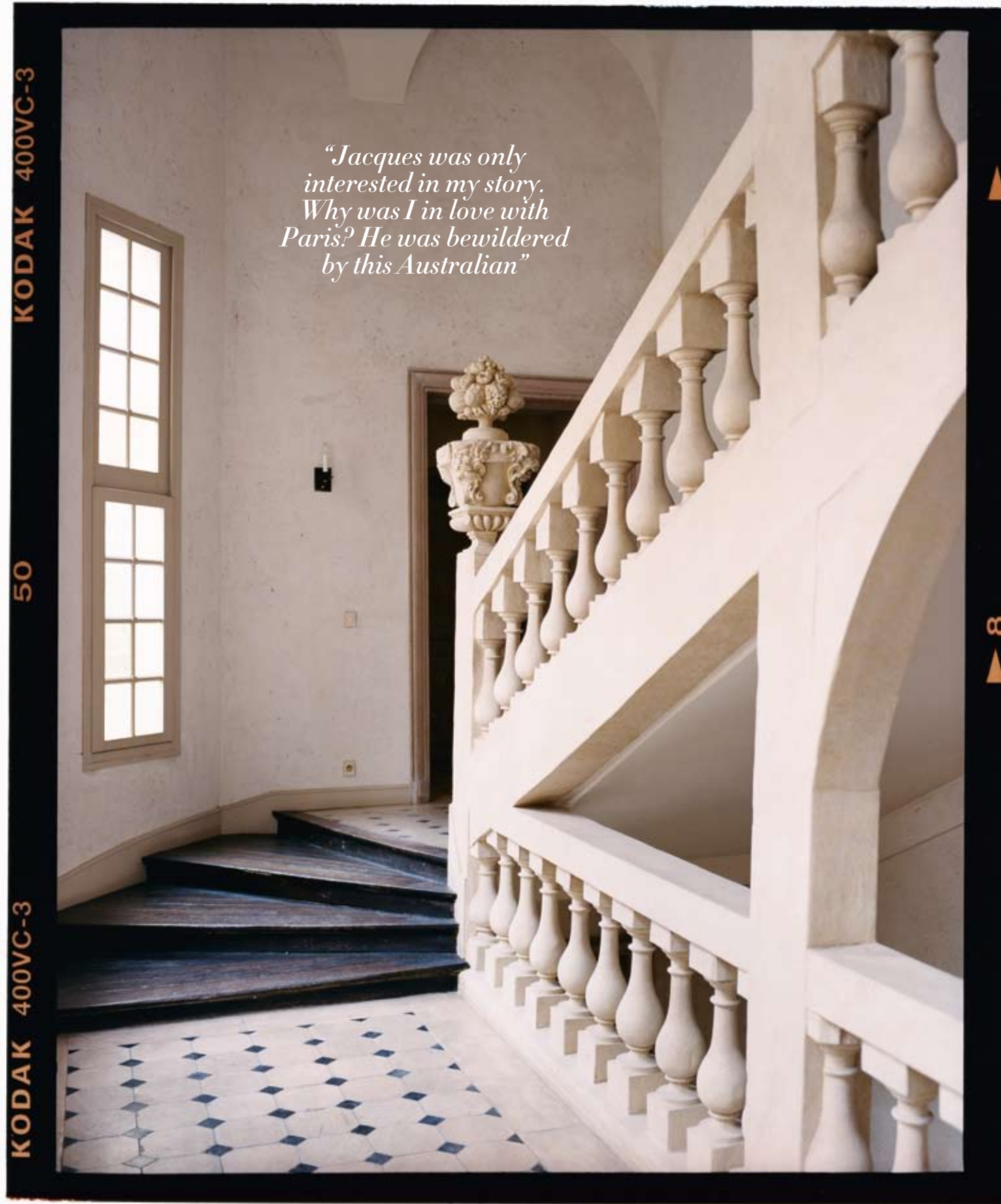
The APARTMENT

In an Australian's Paris apartment, with an address to make any decorator weak at the knees, the celebrated Jacques Grange adds his elegant touch.

PHOTOGRAPHER: DITTE ISAGER WRITER: SUSAN OWENS



OPPOSITE: A COLLAGE OF THIS STUNNING APARTMENT ON THE PLACE DES VOSGES, PARIS'S OLDEST SQUARE. THIS PAGE: AUSTRALIAN OWNER NIKKI PARKER CALLS THE MASTER BEDROOM THE "CHAMBRE DE MADAME" IN DEFERENCE TO THE 17TH-CENTURY ROOM WHICH OVERLOOKS THE SQUARE. THE BED'S CANOPY IS STYLED ON AN 18TH-CENTURY POLISH BED ADAPTED BY DESIGNER JACQUES GRANGE. EAU DE NIL-COLOURED SILK FALLS FROM THE CANOPY, AND THE CHANDELIER IS BACCARAT CRYSTAL. DETAILS, LAST PAGES.



ABOVE: THE ENTRANCE. FROM THE COBBLESTONE CENTRAL COURTYARD OF THE MAJESTIC HOUSE, A CARVED LIMESTONE STAIRCASE SWEEPS UP TO THE FIRST-FLOOR APARTMENT. OPPOSITE: IN THE SUMMER SALON TWO OVERSIZED SOFAS, DESIGNED BY GRANGE, ARE UPHOLSTERED IN TAUPE LINEN JACQUARD (NOT SEEN) AND A MUSHROOM SUEDE (PICTURED). GRANGE SAYS: “OVERSIZED FURNITURE MAKES YOU FEEL COSY.” THE SET OF FAUTEUIL CHAIRS CAME FROM CHRISTIE’S.



"I'm like a film director, I cut, I edit," he says, "but, most of all, in this apartment I woke up the beauty"

BEFORE MEETING JACQUES Grange I am mindful he is the doyen among Parisian decorators. That in a brilliant career spanning four decades his clients include Princess Caroline of Monaco, Paloma Picasso and his much-missed friend, couturier Yves Saint Laurent.

So how did Sydneysider Nikki Parker persuade Grange to accept the role of realising her long-time dream: an apartment of her own in Paris? "She came to me. She is so divine, her mind is so wonderful. *J'adore*," says Grange, whose accented English is punctuated with outbursts of French.

Parker tells a different story, which suggests it took every ounce of her abundant charm to persuade him. "I persisted in a meeting. We sat at a trestle table with storyboards of my favourite things. But Jacques was only interested in my story. How did I get to France? Why did I speak the language so well? Why was I in love with Paris? He was bewildered by this Australian."

Parker told her story to Grange and tempted him with an address to make a connoisseur go weak at the knees. The Place des Vosges, standing at the end of Le Marais.

The majestic houses stand above vaulted colonnades that are home to cafés, restaurants, art galleries and the exclusive hotel Le Pavillon de la Reine. A formal garden with fountains, bordered by linden trees, lies at its heart. Inside the apartment, a large entrance hall leads to a library, summer salon, winter salon, kitchen, master bedroom and bathroom. A discreet staircase winds up to the mezzanine, two more bedrooms and a bathroom.

"*C'est charmant*," says Grange, admiring the sumptuous result of their two-year collaboration. "I'm like a film director, I cut, I edit," he says, "but, most of all, in this apartment I woke up the beauty."

A VIEW FROM THE APARTMENT OF THE PLACE DES VOSGES, AT THE END OF LE MARAIS. REGARDED BY CHIC PARISIANS AS "THE COUNTRY IN THE CITY", IT WAS BUILT BY HENRI IV BETWEEN 1605 AND 1612 AND IS THE PROTOTYPE OF ALL RESIDENTIAL SQUARES IN EUROPEAN CITIES.





At their meeting, Parker told him how she fell in love with Paris on her first visit aged 16. After leaving school she studied French at the Sorbonne university until, “The Countess Christine de Loisy, who knew my parents, said studying French in Paris was out of the question. ‘*Mais non*, she will speak like an American,’ she told them. So arrangements were made for me to study at the university in Dijon and I left Paris to live with her for a year in a beautiful château outside the city. And there my love of France was cemented.”

She told Grange how she went on to work for Ralph Lauren in Paris, opening new stores across Europe. And of how her husband proposed to her there and of how he supported her idea of owning an apartment.

“I had this concept of a beautiful private residence that I would also rent, offering the rare experience of living like an aristocratic Parisian,” she says. “I needed a great French decorator. It had to be Jacques.”

For 18 months Parker flew between Sydney and Paris where she sourced antiques, furniture and chandeliers at Christie’s and Les Puces de Paris Saint-Ouen flea market.

When the dust cleared and Grange’s small army of tradesmen had left following the renovation, it was evident that he had orchestrated a quiet symphony of calm colours. His handwriting is subtle but distinctive to a trained eye. “All the woodwork on the doors and the skirting is the same colour throughout,” Parker says. “It’s a pale green-cream ribbon that ties it all together.”

The main salon – the summer salon – shimmers by day and sparkles by night. Mirrors and candlelight reflect the overhead chandelier and soft silk furnishings. It’s painted off-white, with a tear of grey, and the two and a half-storey ceiling is tinged with a breath of blue to reflect the sky outside. Two oversized sofas, designed by Grange, feature subtly contrasting fabrics; one is a mushroom suede, the other taupe linen Jacquard.



THIS PAGE: THE WINTER SALON. PARKER SAYS: “JACQUES UPHOLSTERED THE WALLS IN A BRONZE CHANDELIER WITH A CARPET OF HIS OWN DESIGN WHICH I HAD MADE BY JAN KATH IN NEPAL.” PARKER FOUND LEATHER CLUB CHAIRS AT A MARKET IN SAINT SULPICE. THE 19TH-CENTURY WALL CHANDELIER AND THE COFFEE TABLE, RE-WORKED FROM AN IRON GATE, CAME FROM LES PUCES DE PARIS SAINT-OUEN FLEA MARKET. OPPOSITE: GRANGE DESIGNED A NEW STAIRCASE WHICH LEADS TO THE MEZZANINE.



IN THE MASTER BEDROOM, THE EAU DE NIL-COLOURED SILK OF THE BED'S CANOPY IS REFLECTED IN THE PALE BLUE-GREEN SILK CURTAINS OF FULL-HEIGHT WINDOWS. THE LOUIS XVI BERGÈRE CHAIR IS SILK UPHOLSTERED. OPPOSITE: JACQUES GRANGE AND NIKKI PARKER ENJOY THE END RESULT OF THEIR TWO-YEAR COLLABORATION. DETAILS, LAST PAGES.

PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHER: ROBERTO FRANKENBERG



He placed a vast glass coffee table on a rug of his own design. In fact, he designed rugs for all the rooms. The summer salon leads to the main bedroom where a pearly soft-green silk canopy floats to the four bedposts and pretty 19th-century chairs are upholstered in silk.

"It's important to consider the 21st century," Parker says, and to this end walls of cupboards line a small dressing room leading to a sleek Art Deco-inspired bathroom. Here, Grange has constructed a wall of mirror and brass doors, concealing a shower and separate toilet beyond the bath.

With little structural change to the entire apartment Grange conceived a long narrow library and re-designed a staircase leading to the mezzanine where one bedroom has a masculine feel, and the other has a playful quality for children who might come to stay.

Downstairs, he installed a professionally equipped kitchen off the winter salon. "You can dine in the kitchen but the round table in the winter salon is so much nicer," Grange says. "It's a sexy, relaxed room, you put your feet up and watch television," Parker adds. The walls are covered with bronze Jacquard fabric, two chartreuse leather club chairs she found in a market at Saint Sulpice are snug by a stone fireplace found by Grange in the south of France. The most remarkable aspect of the room is the painted, beamed ceiling (a classified historic monument) with a Flemish bronze candle chandelier.

"Jacques has a unique way of mixing elements," Parker says. "I showed him pictures of a mirrored hall in a Venetian palace and he immediately adapted it to the entrance, piecing together vast squares of antique glass which are joined at the corners with brass studs."

"This was a wonderful project," Grange says, "Nikki has a deeply interesting attitude. I like that. It built slowly and the result is charming. *J'adore.*" **VL**

For enquiries about renting this apartment, email Nikki Parker at enquiries@23placedesvosges.com.