

A vibrant rainbow arches across a cloudy sky, casting a soft glow over a landscape. In the foreground, a dirt road winds through a field of green grass and various trees, including several tall, dark green cypresses. The overall scene is serene and picturesque.

LEXIS DESIGN RETREAT 2025

*Hosted by Miv Watts, Zandra Zuraw,
Francesca Wezel and Tim Beddow*

May 24th- 30th

LEXIS DESIGN RETREAT

This Spring, Miv Watts (*The Maverick Soul*) and Zandra Zuraw will be hosting interior design courses in the stunning 17th century manor amid the rolling hills of the Gers, SW France.

Using the property as an ingenious model, our guests take the opportunity to interpret the colours, textures, form and flow of the rooms as inspiration, discussing how to find comfort and confidence in one's own design aesthetic. For the curious there will be trips to uniquely quirky private Chateaux, Markets, Antique Brocante Markets, Armagnac Cellars and perhaps a little dallying in Toulouse.. Delicious lunches and dinners will be prepared daily by our Parisian chef Philippe. Miv, the mentor and inspiration for this Design Retreat, has spent her life involved in two major creative industries - music and film - working with creatives at the top of their art. Her daughter is Hollywood film actress Naomi Watts, her son the photographer Ben Watts, and her late husband, Peter, was the sound engineer for Pink Floyd from their inception in the mid 1960s. She learned at an early age that 'creativity' is seeing what others see - but then thinking for yourself and having the courage to follow your thought. It is this practice that is the focus of the retreat:“

MIV WATTS Creating a home is about filtering the layers and experiences of one's life. It is theatrical, like creating a drama or film - but a home is also a process, it has a strong practical element. It is a mix of dreaming and deciding. Feeling and function.”

As an interior designer she has worked in some of the world's most atmospheric places from historic estates like Houghton Hall, owned by the Marquess of Cholmondeley to the cosy homes of friends, like the late singer and songwriter Marianne Faithfull and her best-selling book *The Maverick Soul*, a collection of portraits of 25 homes and their owners reflects the eclecticism of the old, the unique, the enduring style. The Retreats reflect her approach to life - a mindful pace that allows for deeper reflection, creativity and a celebration of the beauty found in imperfection. “For me, design can never be just about the look, it is about the story a room tells.



When we ruminate in strangers rooms, we remember. And when we make our own rooms, we make them with memories of our own. Our rooms are sleeping inside us. It is a complex relationship between past and present.”

Lexis, Miv’s home, and the base for the Retreat, is an eighteenth century manor surrounded by ancient oak woods, situated in historic Gascony an area of south-west France. The house resembles a treasure trove - it is full of human warmth and breathes intimacy. Cushioned sofas invite you to pick up the books left lying on tables. Walls are thick with paintings - mostly portraits - looking down on the patterns of the textiles, the grain in the wood, the treasures collected over decades.

Most people who come to Gascony, come for its medieval history and the fact that it is the home of the original Three Musketeers. Then, they fall in love with its natural beauty, the sense of space, and the peace this evokes. The light in the mornings is soft and warm and at night the skies are the clearest in Europe, an immense carpet of stars that remind you of the vastness beyond. All you can hear is silence. Not for nothing is it known as the French Tuscany.

“Nature inspires me. Nature evolves blindly, haphazardly, over millions of years and much of what we call ‘design’ evolves from the natural world.” In these retreats Miv brings together groups of people learning to create a home that evokes an organic story of its own emotional connection, cultural heritage, eco-conscious practices and personal storytelling.

For two complete days of our workshops Miv and Zandra will talk on the psychology of creating a home that represents- by educating yourself on how things are made and the natural resources that make up the insides of our homes; the spiritual and cultural history tied to the objects we live with; the ways in which humans have borrowed from nature to dream up colour and pattern palates; and the exposure to the wide range of cooking, painting, music, poetry, and film found outside our own day to day life experiences. We welcome renowned photographer Tim Beddow for an afternoon chat.

<https://www.worldofinteriors.com/story/tim-beddow-taking-pictures>

Zandra Zuraw has had many passions throughout her life and she has followed them all with a great degree of intensity. She was raised by a mother who was a professional ballerina and a step-father who sang for the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Zandra's early life was informed by living backstage and she began her adult life performing in New York, Germany, Switzerland and Austria before moving to Chicago. Over time and after marriage and family and several years of self education Zandra came to understand that she had been as passionate about interiors as she had been about every other pursuit. Fast forward several years of self education in the world of interior design, and she felt discouraged by how the culture at large dismissed the act of decorating one's home as a "frivolous woman's hobby." Zandra knew that creating a meaningful home and living inside beauty was something bigger than buying throw pillows and napkin rings. She tapped into a relatively new creative medium - podcasting - to co-host a show called "Style Matters." The purpose was to explore the question of why creating a signature style and developing one's aesthetic was a valuable form of self development and expression.

The podcast led to speaking engagements, design retreats and online courses. Zandra took over the podcast as a solo host in 2017 and began developing a particular design approach and framework to teach others how to create their own beautiful aesthetics. She calls it "Slow Style." Her business, the podcast and her new book (to be released in June 2025) are all called "Slow Style Home" and based on the philosophy she's been honing ever since.

Along with being able to conceptualize and execute a design, she believes that exposure to the world beyond our immediate environs will bring your own aesthetic a depth that cannot be manufactured. She encourages everyone to develop their own, personal meaning of home.

How? By educating yourself on how things are made and the natural resources that make up the insides of our homes; the spiritual and cultural history tied to the objects we live with; the ways in which humans have borrowed from nature to dream up color and pattern palates; and the exposure to the wide range of cooking, painting, music, poetry, and film found outside our own day to day life experiences.

The retreat is the embodiment of this pursuit and throughout the week, Zandra will be leading several workshops that focus on how to bring design elements such as nature, antiques, art and heritage into your home, discuss fundamental design principles, and help you connect the dots between intangible feelings and experiences into concrete design decisions.



SOME OF THE ADVENTURES AHEAD

You will enjoy the fresh local produce. Take excursions to the pretty town of Eauze and it's weekly market. You will be able to watch and learn while Philippe (our Parisian World travelled Chef) shows us that French cuisine isn't just gizzards and goats cheese. Philippe provides a full theatrical performance as he works ,and after the wine.... his food.

Listening to the stories of his years learning Aboriginal cuisine in the Great Victorian Desert, dipping into the Hindi markets in Rajasthan, lavishly creating Pacific Rim dishes for his Madame in the castle.

You may visit the cellars of an Armagnac Chateau and take a tour of an ancient distillery, still using original methods of production. We can visit a beautiful baroque chapel (a well kept secret) in a tiny hillside village of the Tarn et Garonne, or take a visit to the bustling market of the small medieval town of Nerac .

These are some of the pleasurable activities available in the Gers. Not to be missed is the lovely town of Lectoure which is home to Les Bleus Pastel de Lectoure, a must, if like me, you want to properly dye all those old linen nightshirts you picked up on our visits to the brocante markets. Then while we are dallying in Lectoure we will visit the grand old former hospital that promises a rummage through some interesting antiques and vintage treasures. (Not least the actual dealers themselves! A trip to a Chateau or two "dans son jus" plus we will have some surprises.



FRANCESCA'S PAINTS

For over twenty years Miv has been decorating her clients walls with Francesca's Paints:

From her gentle Italian birthright, her travels through India and the African deserts, together with her training at Porter's Paints in Sydney Australia, Francesca's Paints have become a regular feature in the World of Interiors magazine and adorn some of the most prestigious homes in Britain. Along with her 140 varied colours, charts and samples Frankie will talk of the inspiration and romance she has gathered from the influences in the colours of the beauty and texture she has found in the natural world. She will explain why it is important to use paints that let your walls breathe and the movement and texture in the use of lime washes and Eco paint.





SEVANTI ROY

Is an established textile designer who has worked with Sanderson and East (Fabindia); specialising in painting, printing and embroidery. She created sustainable craft for many years working with the Craft Community in India. Sevanti is a visiting lecturer in design college, earning the bronze Art award workshops in Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge and delivered illustrative talk at the Norwich Castle museum. She loves teaching and sharing her knowledge with all age groups and any skill set.

Miv first met Sevanti 16 years ago while she was designing The Victoria at Holkham out of India. Sevanti, at the time was working with a group of young architects restoring the Jaipur Lake and Lake Palace. The lake itself was full of pollution and plastic bottles. There was little to no life in it left. Miv arrived at the end of the project and was with Sevanti, the day the first flamingos flew back into the Lake.

Some years later Miv would return to Jaipur with her daughter and grandchildren and take one of the beautiful , hand carved rowing boats out to the Palace, now beautifully restored and decorated by Sevanti and her team.

Time marched on and fate brought Miv and Sevanti together again and we are thrilled to have her join us on this retreat. She will bring her skills and materials for block printing and most exciting of all she will talk of her understanding and passion for India and her textiles and the exotic and mysterious upbringing she had in her Art collector/curator grandfather's house in Bengal.



No Rules but some suggestions

Staying off trend Focusing on innate choices while decorating your home can have several benefits. Trends come and go, but innate choices tend to have a timeless quality. By focusing on classic aesthetics and incorporating personal preferences, you create a long-lasting and timeless design that won't feel outdated or cliché.

Personal expression:

Decorating your home with innate choices allows you to express your individuality and personality. You have the freedom to choose colours, patterns, textures, and furniture that resonate with you, creating a space that truly reflects who you are.

Emotional connection:

Your choices often have personal significance and evoke emotional connections. Whether it's including sentimental items or selecting decor that brings back fond memories, a home decorated with personal choices can feel more meaningful and create a stronger emotional bond with the space.

Flexibility and adaptability:

By staying off trend, you can design a more flexible and adaptable space. Trends can quickly become outdated, requiring frequent updates. On the other hand, by focusing on innate choices, you can create a versatile design foundation that can be easily modified and updated as your preferences change over time.

Decorating with innate choices can lead to a greater sense of satisfaction and contentment with your living space. It's more likely that you'll feel comfortable and happy in a home that reflects your own style and preferences rather than just following current trends.

Remember:

while trends can provide inspiration, it's essential to strike a balance and incorporate innate choices to create a home that truly feels like your own.

Buying an old house and restoring it can be a rewarding experience for many reasons. Here are some benefits of restoration over renovation when working with a period property:

We advise bringing a small artefact, treasure, story, or something that might have inspired you to join us.

For visual inspiration we recommend this film https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Taste_of_Things

THE COURSE

Six days of unstructured workshops and events in France's most secret department The Gers. Staying at a romantic Manoir and cottages, with studio and pool, local markets and brocante treasures. The emphasis on SLOW decoration/creating your own unique story in your home.

€3,500.00 per person

DATES: Check in 24 th May, Check out 30 th May
or
Check in 6th September, Check out 13th September

ADDRESS; Lexis 401 Chemin de Baillargue,
Cazaubon, 32150
Telephone : +44 7951 951 937

ACCOMODATION

ROOM RATES: MAISON de GUARDIEN

Kerala Room - King bed with ensuite loo - bath with shower overhead in bedroom
€1200 (max. One occupant)

Indian Bean Tree Room - Queen bed with shared bathroom
€990 (max. One occupant)

Bali Room - King bed with shared bathroom
€1100 (max. One occupant)

Haveli Room - King Bed - Ensuite with shower
€1200 (max. One occupant contd-





PIGEONNIER

Turtle Dove Room - Double bed with shared bathroom
€ 800(max. One occupant)

Barbary Dove Room - Two single beds with shared bathroom
€800 (max. two occupants)

MANOIR

Ruby's Room - French small double bed - Ensuite with shower
€900 (max. One occupant)

Jaipur Room - King bed - Ensuite with shower
€1200 (max. One occupant)

INCLUSIONS

All meals are included: Please contact us if you have special requirements or allergies.

Breakfast will be a light meal of coffee , fruit/ lyoghurt and pastries. You may assemble yourselves.

Lunch and an evening meal and wine will be cooked and prepared by our own Parisian chef.

Please contact us with your desired room selection to book.

Course costs are per person and accommodation rates are per room, with maximum occupancy as listed. All rooms except two

Are doubles. If you have a partner or spouse who wishes to attend we off a 20% discount on the overall accommodation fee for two persons.



EXCLUSIONS

Flights are not included: Although there will be a vehicle for events and outings; we recommend that you hire a car;

We will do our best to arrange car pools once we know your arrival times.

Nearest airports are Toulouse (Blagnac) flights from London Gatwick Easy Jet and Bordeaux (Merignac) Flights from London Luton to Bordeaux.

Fees: A €700 deposit to be paid on booking.

Cancellation Policy: Full deposit return if cancelled before April 16th. 50% deposit after April 16th 2005.

If you wish to attend on a daily basis only and can provide your own transport you are welcome.

Should require lunch please let us know in advance.

Miv's mobile: +44 (0) 7951951937

Email: miv.watts@icloud.com



The Studio

Will be available at all times for fabric research, reference, discussions and general ideas.

Due to weather and availability, a confirmed schedule will be announced in April.

We have a number of enchanting visits arranged.

A visit to the renowned Lectoure Bleu workshop. Since 1994, Le Bleu de Lectoure has been developing a project to re-enhance the value of pastel (Isatis Tinctoria) through the cultivation, extraction and production of pigment for use in fine arts, decoration and textiles..

Followed by a rummage through the Old Hospital Antique Centre, and a stroll through the centre of the village and its many antique shops.

A visit to a secret tiny treasure trove where it will be impossible not to come away without a little antique ceramic.

A tiny but incredibly theatrical Baroque chapel set in the hills of the Tarn.

Market day with Chef Philippe, filling his basket with local produce for dinner.

A mysterious Chateau with an alluring history and a more recent exotic story. Elegantly retiring in its own juice. A truly beautiful edifice.

Remember we are not striving for perfection....
We are celebrating the quirks and colour of LIFE.



Arrival Day:

4:00pm - 6:00pm - Tea and cake and settling in.

6:00pm to 7:00pm - Introductory welcome session with Miv and Zandra

7:30pm - Dinner and informal discussion around the course and upcoming days.

Day 2 - 5:

Breakfast: Fresh fruit and daily fresh pastries and baguettes.

Morning Session: Studio time with Miv and Zandra discussions and consulting time, lessons in curating and decorating, innate choices.

Lunch: Local and home grown from our veggie patch prepared by chef Philippe

Afternoon: Scheduled visits in the area . A Renaissance Chateau restored completely in sympathy with the period. A mysterious Tower, A medieval Village with a feline folklore. An enchanting private garden, an abandoned Mill house.....TBC

Markets and lunch in a favourite restaurant.

Sevanti talks and Blockprinting, Creating , Grouping, understanding Textures and Form, and Light.

Or time for those who want to read or relax by the pool.

8:00pm - Nightly dinner with Chef Philippe

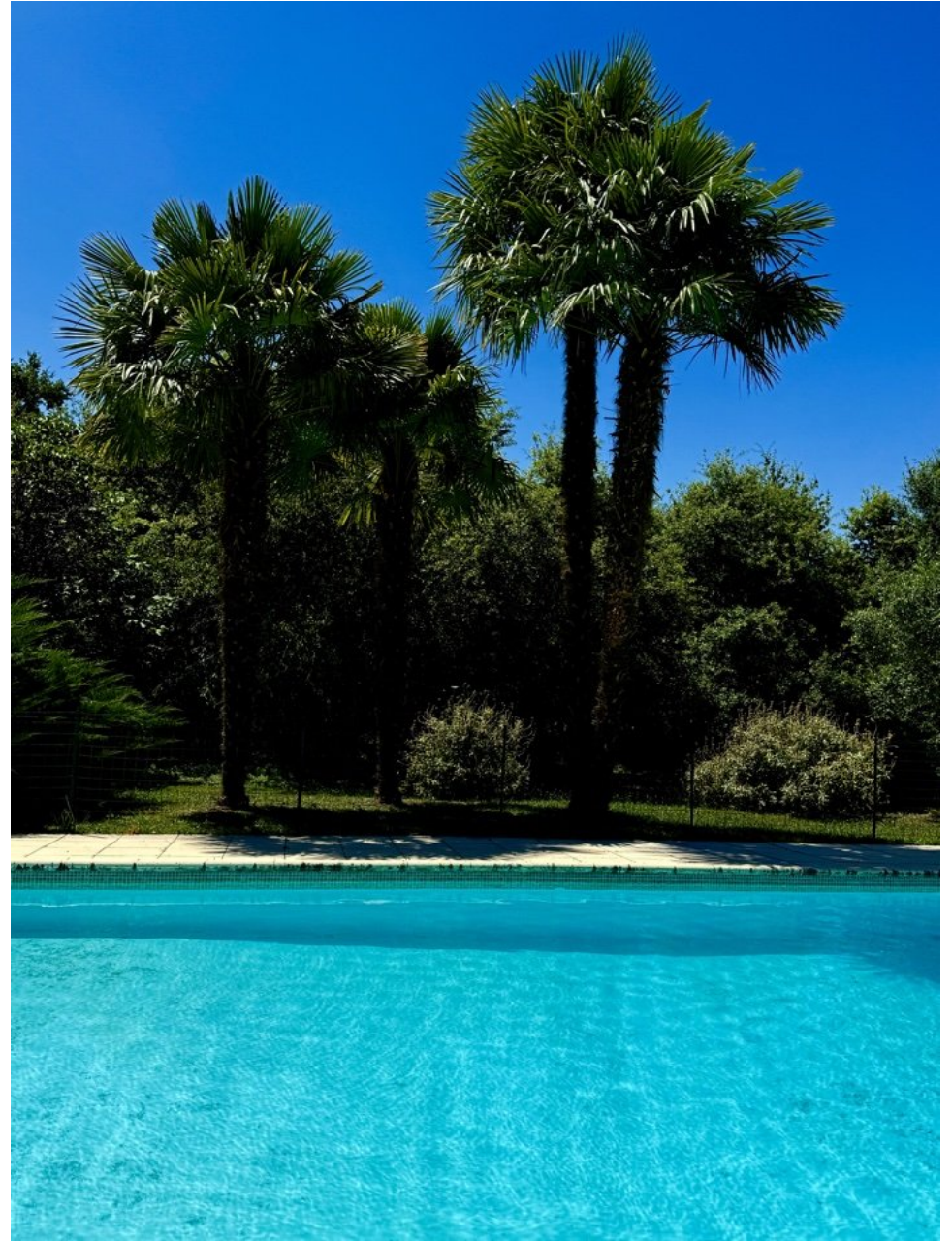
Dinner: Cooking market delights with Philippe. Local wines and Armagnacs, sharing stories and lots of giggles before going off to dream.

.Departure Day:

12:00pm - Guests depart Lexis

Scheduled visit times will be confirmed asap.







@themavericksoul



wattswish

Ernesto Cortazar · Beethoven's Silence



YOGA ELEMENTS



Mark Magee began exploring movement to manage chronic pain in the wake of an accident as an infant. But it was while living in China for the better part of a decade that he discovered vitality as Chi or Prana, the energy that permeates and animates everything.

Hatha Yoga Techniques are a holistic way to get fit, strong and condition the nervous system.

Designed around the ancient principles developed by the Yogis and Martial Artists of the East. The methods taught by Mark are conscious exercises for health, longevity, fitness and ultimate freedom of body and mind. His classes are delivered in an informal manner and appeal to both beginners and advanced practitioners alike. He has been an active faculty member in Teacher Training Programs at both Yoga Arts and INSPYA. He led group events in Tai Chi and Yoga at the Gaia Retreat Byron Bay Australia, but now prefers to guide aspirants on a private one to one basis in recognition of individual constitution and needs. Mark also enjoys being a father, organic gardener and cook.



“Where there is Yoga, there is Peace, Prosperity and Joy!” BKS Iyengar

Classes: One hour 30 minutes: €15.00 Beginners or lapsed practioners

One on One: Private Consultation and Pain Management : €45.00 Tel: 04 66 77 87 96 email:markjpmagee@gmail.com



For those that wish to have morning or evening Yoga classes our resident Yoga master will be available each day. Straight from Byron Bay Australia, Mark has worked with Yoga for over thirty years perfecting his craft from China to Estonia. He is an excellent teacher, devoting personal time in massage and yoga to his individual clients.

