



THE AESTHETE

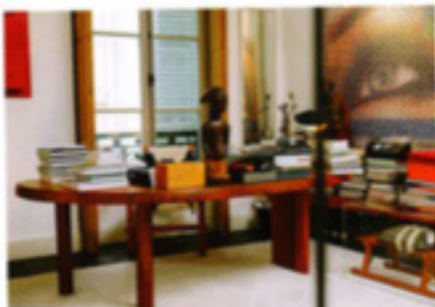
# François Laffanour

The design collector and founder of Paris's Galerie Downtown adores historical biographies, kite surfing and Japanese maple trees. By Alice Cavanagh

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEX CRÉTEY SYSTEMANS



Top: Laffanour at home in Paris. Above: the Pol Dorey earrings he gave his partner, Alexandra. Right: the Charlotte Springe vase from his collection. Inset: a Japanese maple tree in the right. Top right: Jacques Laffanour champagne



**M**Y PERSONAL STYLE **INSPIRES** is to dress predominantly in navy blue. My father always wore navy blue, so I must get it from him – but I also like it because it's elegant and not as harsh as black. I always wear sweaters too. I remember it used to be shocking 10-15 years ago and now it's the new normal. At the moment, I have a pair by James Perse that I wear on high rotation.

**THE LAST THING I BOUGHT AND LOVED** was a Japanese maple tree for my house in Normandy. I already have around 20 of them. I love the way they branch out horizontally and the way the colour of their leaves transforms throughout the year.

**ON MY WISHLIST** is a little house by the sea on one of the Cyclades. I was born in Algeria and I think Greece shares a similar atmosphere, with all the sunshine and the coastal lifestyle. I love the simplicity of the food and the way of life.

**THE BEST GIFT I'VE GIVEN RECENTLY** was a pair of gold earrings by the Belgian sculptor

Pol Dorey, which I gave to my partner, Alexandra. He only made a few pieces of jewellery so they're very rare, but I met his wife recently and she sold them to me. They are incredible but also, unfortunately, a little too heavy.

**THE BEST GIFT I HAVE EVER RECEIVED** was given to me by Alexandra about five years ago – an artwork painted on a one-dollar bill by the German artist Hans-Peter Feldmann. It was hard to find but she tracked it down. I was very touched.

**IN MY FRIDGE, YOU'LL ALWAYS FIND** sheep's milk yoghurt, a great Coeur cheese and a bottle of Jacques Laffanour champagne. It is a small champagne producer, not easy to find, but I buy it from the Paris restaurant Le Dauphin.

**MY FAVOURITE ROOM IN MY HOME** is my kitchen. It opens into the living room, which has a fireplace, so I can entertain guests and cook at the same time. I love food and I love to cook. I had a



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LAFFANOUR'S LIVING WITH CHARLOTTE PERRIARD BOOK ON A LE CORBUSIER/PIERRE JEANNERET TUBE TRUNK COFFEE TABLE

Left: Laffanour's Jean Prové armchair in his garden. Below: wearing his orange scarf



which was published last year, as a way of staying in touch with the collectors and interiors I love. I didn't watch or listen to too much news either – I was very much absorbed by nature.

**THE BEST BOOK I'VE READ IN THE PAST YEAR** is *Mary Queen of Scots*, a biography by Stefan Zweig. I like reading fiction, but I am always very inspired by real-life stories, and am endlessly curious about how people lived in the past. This book is so insightful; it is as if Zweig knew all these people personally. The relationship between Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart was fascinating and complex.

**A RECENT "FIND"** was the Hotel Delano in Miami, where I stay during Art Basel. It was designed by Philippe Starck, and it has his particular blend of design and comfort. Starck has a unique interpretation of our contemporary world, and in the future I think he will be popular with collectors. He is always looking for something inventive and different.

**IF I COULD, I WOULD COLLECT** Italian Renaissance art. In particular, I love *The Duke and Duchess of Urbino* by Piero della Francesca and *The Procession in St Mark's Square* by Gentile Bellini.

**I HAD A MEMORABLE MEAL** at Atelier Joël Robuchon in Paris. My daughter took me there for my birthday, and we ate lobster pasta and drank a great bottle of burgundy.

**MY STYLE ICON** is the actor John Cassavetes. He had a kind of fragility, as well as an elegant and intelligent sensibility. He looked so chic in a navy-blue blazer, light-blue trousers and white moccasins.

**MY GROOMING STAPLES** are products by Aesop. I am fond of its strong aromatic scents and I recently discovered its new fragrance, which pays homage to Charlotte Perriand, who has been so important in my own life. *Aesop Rina*, £110 for 100ml EDP.

**IF I WEREN'T DOING WHAT I DO, I WOULD HAVE BEEN** a landscape designer. People say I have a green thumb. I'm not sure I do, but I get very excited every time I go to a garden shop. When you're planting a garden, it's like making a sculpture. I love that relationship with nature.

**I CAN'T WAIT TO GET BACK TO** living with my wife. We love going to the Dominican Republic, but I think that this summer we will have to cancel. Every year, Galerie Downtown takes part in Design Miami in Basel and TEFAF New York and as the two fairs have been postponed, it feels like something is missing. There is so much uncertainty about travel, but I am coming to terms with the reality that we have other priorities at the moment, and that the gallery will work differently in the future, working more online to communicate with collectors around the world. **EMMA**



Polish grandmother and an Italian grandmother, and they both taught me. One opened my eyes to Eastern European dishes, such as veal with peas, and the other taught me how to cook pasta.

**THE LAST ALBUM I DOWNLOADED** was Nick Cave's *Skutumpah*. I like the nostalgia in his music. Alexandra is a musician, and she has introduced me to a world beyond The Rolling Stones.

**I HAVE A SERIOUS COLLECTION** of shoes: around 250 pairs. When I discover a style I like, I buy it in all different colours. It is a disease. The floor of my dressing room is covered with shoes. I used to buy Italian shoes, such as Gucci's – they are so satisfying – but I have since changed my style. I like something less sophisticated but still good quality.

**AN OBJECT I WOULD NEVER PART WITH** is a table by Charlotte Perriand and Jean Prové that I bought in the late '80s. I've always lived with it. It was made for university libraries, so it has a light above it, but you can work on it, you can cook on it. It is both industrial and comfortable.

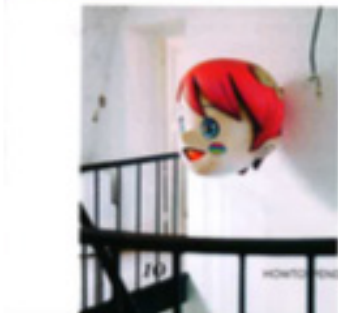
**AN UNFORGETTABLE PLACE I'VE TRAVELLED TO IN THE PAST YEAR** is Dakhla in Western Sahara, where I went kite-surfing. I love the way the desert meets the sea. It feels isolated from everything.

**THE BEST SOUVENIR I EVER BROUGHT HOME** was a beautiful orange scarf I got in Dharamshala in India. I went there about 15 years ago and met the Dalai Lama.

**RECENTLY I'VE BEEN READING** with difficulty – I had a hard time with it throughout the lockdown. I started reading a Murakami book but didn't finish it. I did read my book *Living with Charlotte Perriand*.



Left: Laffanour's bar stool, Serge Mouille desk lamp and table, Noguchi side table. Right: shelves from his garden. Below left: part of his shoe collection. Below right: shelves on a wall of his home. Below far right: Rina by Aesop



WHEN YOU'RE PLANTING A GARDEN, IT'S LIKE MAKING A SCULPTURE