



## LE VAL ROGER: PROPERTY RESTORATION IN NORMANDY, FRANCE



Nestled in a valley, amidst rolling hills dotted with apple trees and grazing cows, this 300 year-old farm estate in the Normandy region of France was just waiting for the right person to come along and restore it to it's full magnificence. It took a committed new owner with a huge vision, hard work, some significant relationship building and a little touch of Wright Design to transform this collection of uninhabitable buildings into a spectacular country-side oasis. This full scale property restoration project, which included interior and exterior restoration to the buildings, as well as land restoration measures for the grounds, demonstrates the epitome of blending the best of old world techniques with new green technology... Not to mention a dream project for Wright Design!



## THE INSIDE STORY...

Getting rid of the cow in what would become the master bedroom was the first step. Then there was the matter of removing the small tree growing out of the dirt in the living room. That's how dilapidated the main house was when the owner started the project.

Huge timber joists were restored one by one, and now articulate the ceilings in several rooms. Local limestone, matching the original, was selected to complete missing walls, not just for its aesthetic appeal but for its natural ability to keep warmth in during the winter and heat out in the summer. Other features of this exquisitely finished interior include: custom paneling, cabinetry and floors, made from locally grown oak, finished with water-based, low VOC clear coats; custom and locally forged hardware and lanterns; reclaimed terra cotta tiles; high-efficiency windows, plumbing fixtures, appliances and lighting. And the piece de resistance... rooms full of French country antiques, demonstrating re-use a la Wright Design, naturally!



### LOCALLY FORGED

Every hinge, handle and latch of every door, window and cabinet was sensitively fabricated just as it would have been when the original house was built. Not unlike the relationships that were forged with local artisans, neighbors and friends over the course of this ongoing project.



### 19TH CENTURY IRON FIREPLACE PLAQUE

Adorned with a pair of lions, symbol of Normandy, this fireplace plaque not only adds beauty and interest to a cozy fire, it performs the important function of reflecting heat from the fireplace back into the room. Proving that energy efficiency is not a new idea!

### RECLAIMED TERRA COTTA TILES

Some of the tile used for flooring in the kitchen and dining area came from the original house. The rest was salvaged from other manor houses in the area. It's warm color compliments the oak of the cabinets. It's a low-maintenance option, especially for a country house where mud is a given.



## OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

The time-ravaged buildings on the property, consisting of a main house, a "pressoir" where apples were once pressed to make cider, and a little cabin overlooking a naturally-sourced pond, were all painstakingly reconstructed using natural and traditional building materials and techniques.

Over 400 native trees and shrubs were planted to replace those dying of old age and neglect. The hedgerows which originally defined the outer perimeters of the property were restored and a new hedge was added near the house to act as a windbreak, to prevent against erosion and to keep the cows and other picturesque, but plant damaging, creatures out of the garden. All this was no mean feat considering that it takes a pick-axe to break up the nutrient depleted, rocky soil, so common in this area.

Dragonflies, tadpoles and moorhens now grace the aquifer fed pond, which was enlarged and deepened to become a natural swimming pool. Filtered by cattails and other aquatic plants, it is a focal point for the property as well as a refreshing place to plunge on a hot summer day.

Restored to it's full splendor and bustling with life, this property is an ongoing showcase of past meets present. Next project: wind turbines, solar panels and a vegetable garden.



### ENERGY EFFICIENT WINDOWS

Double-glazed insulated windows improve the already ingenious, albeit age-old, system of windows with operable shutters. Shutters not only provide an added layer of sun-protection during the heat of the summer, and draft protection in the winter, they also as function as a low-tech security system.



### INDIGENOUS MATERIALS & TECHNIQUES

Stone, half timber, wattle and daub have been used in Normandy since the late 12th century. Natural, non-toxic, recyclable, renewable, locally derived and highly energy efficient, these are the greenest building materials you could hope to find in any day or age.



### ENERGY SAVING BULBS

Locally fabricated, traditionally styled exterior light fixtures throughout the property have been fitted with energy efficient bulbs. They are just one several examples of combining the best of the old with the best of the new.