



Julie Gauthier, daughter of an architect and an artist, is founder and director of the splendidly named property rental company Art De Vivre. This British based business specialises in renting some of the most exquisite, privately owned villas and chalets around the globe. The properties reflect the passions of their owners for design, art and the good things in life

Art de Vivre

Art De Vivre's clients are as demanding as the owners of the properties being offered and Julie's skill (plus that of her staff, of course) is in matching properties with people to produce exceptional experiences. We wanted to know more and took the opportunity to put a few questions to the lady herself.

Julie, we're fascinated to learn that you are the daughter of an architect and an artist. What influence would you say this has had on your choice of occupation and how you run your business?

I was lucky to have grown up in such a beautiful modernist home, built by my father, with his architectural studio right next door, and enjoyed accompanying him on the occasional client site visit as I grew up. With artistic parents we travelled a lot as a family and enjoyed the beauty of Italy and France, visiting many cities, art galleries and museums. My parents passed on to me a profound appreciation of craftsmanship, architecture and art. This is what I believe enables me to understand what makes these properties so special and to understand the years of hard work and love that has gone into creating them. My business is run with a deep appreciation of the vision of the architect and owner, and I want to share these stunning properties with clients who will appreciate them and the owner's lifestyle. Relationships with clients and suppliers were also always important to my father, and my strong relationship with owners and clients continues today.

When it comes to choosing properties to add to your portfolio, how important is design?

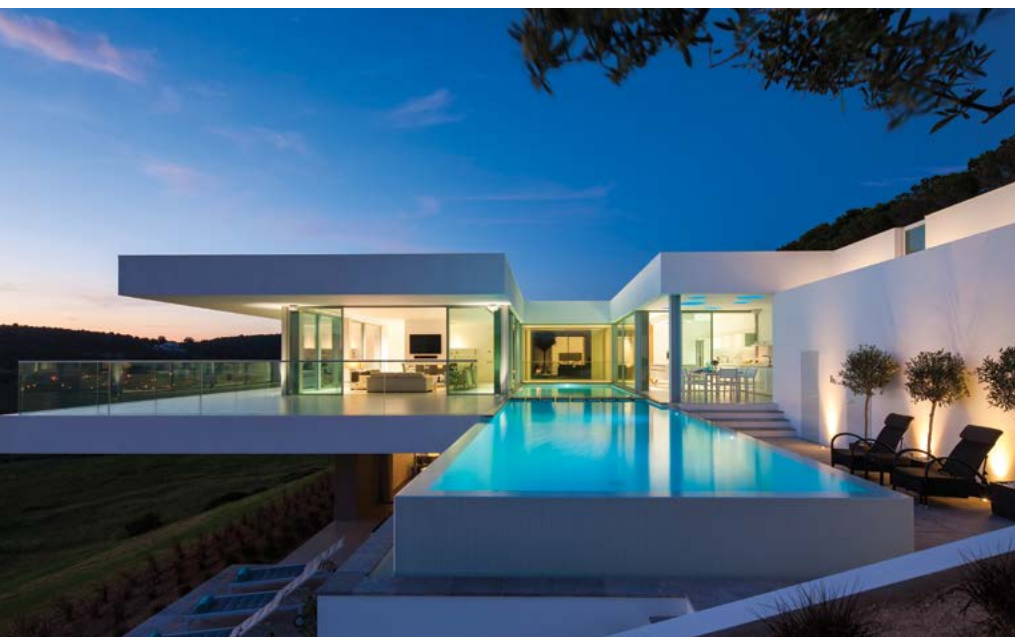
When choosing properties to add to the portfolio, we always start with the design of property, and throughout the years, I have gained a great understanding of what good design is. We look at the properties' architecture, often from a famous local architect who has won many awards, and how they have made best use of the owner's prime plot with a fantastic vista. We are also interested in whether the interiors have been created from the owner's own eclectic furniture collection, or whether a renowned interior designer has been commissioned to transform the space. Each property is an individual work of art - with its location, architecture, interior design, use of local materials, sustainability considerations and recycled architectural artefacts all forming its identity. It is through its design that each property becomes very individual and memorable, ensuring the perfect stay.

How important a factor is design for clients booking with you? As opposed to location, type of accommodation and price for example?

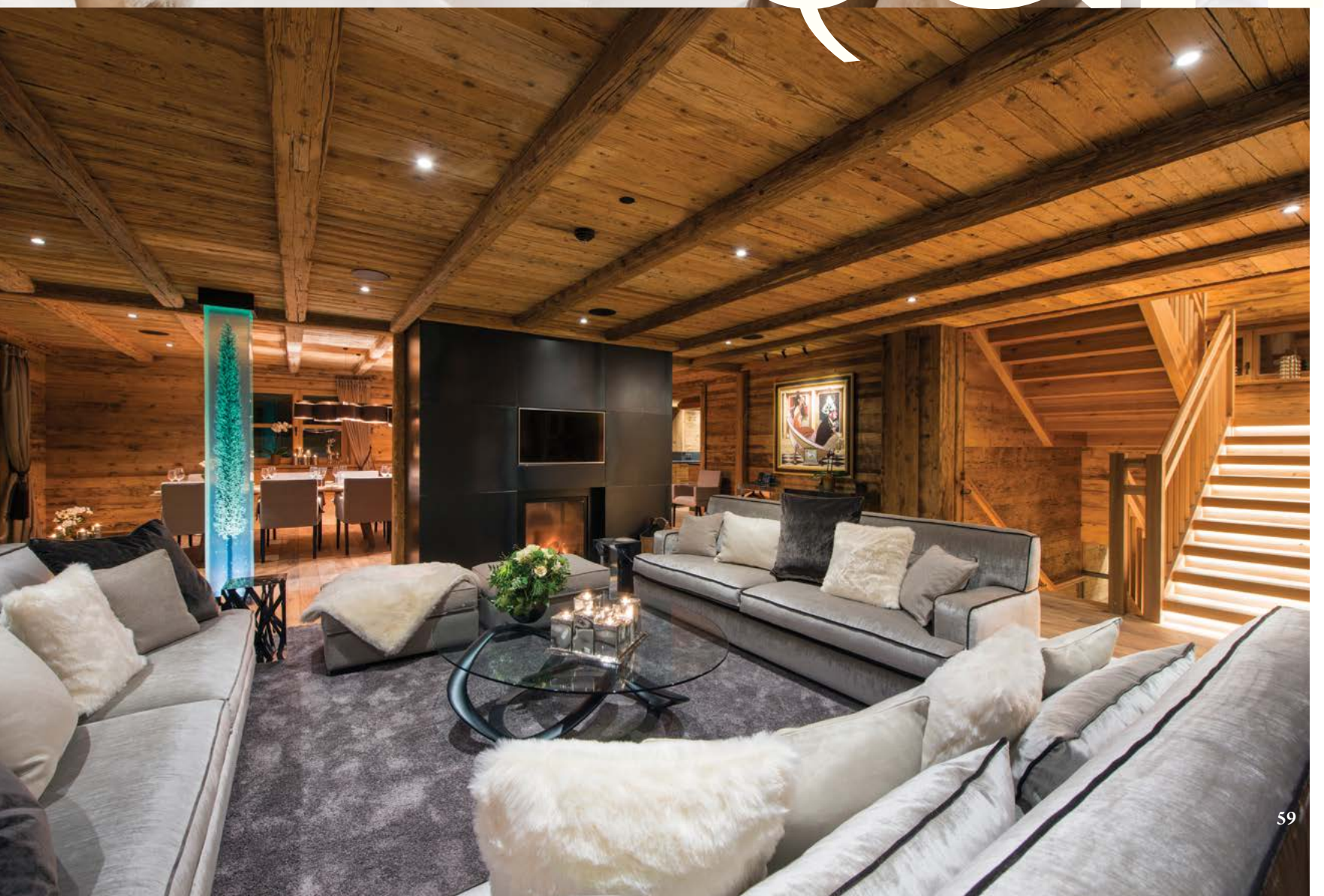
When visiting the properties, I always put myself in my clients' shoes, to get a feel for which clients I can recommend the property to based on its design and atmosphere. Our clients come to us knowing that our expertise is not only in the rental of properties, but also in handpicking the best in each location with flawless design, whether a modern white cube or a truly beautiful restoration. Some of these properties are off-market and do not appear online, which adds to their exclusive nature. Our clients have stunning homes themselves and want to enjoy the owner's unique property and the lifestyle that goes with its design. Location is not always as important, as clients are open to a choice of countries like properties in the Mediterranean such as Italy, Greece, Majorca or France, or those in the Indian Ocean such as Mauritius or Seychelles. Most of the properties have 8+ bedrooms and are designed for extended families. Although most clients have a vague budget in mind, price is not usually the deciding factor.

How do you go about determining what properties to suggest to particular clients?

Some of my clients book with me every year, which means I know their family make-up and what is most important to them, which could be cuisine, good wine or activities they and their guests enjoy doing together. They often ask for suggestions for specific dates, and I put forward 2-3 options I know they would love. When I look at the properties, I keep what's important to them and how they want their stay to unfold in the back of my mind, which helps me choose the perfect property. When the client is new, I spend as much time as I can discussing their requirements, and often meet them in London, Paris, Geneva or Zurich in order to form a relationship of trust and to understand their needs fully. It's a very personal approach for a property rental, as it is such an important decision in which they should love the design, location and fascinating lifestyle that the right property will provide. »



Villa Escarpa, Algarve, Portugal





Castell de Manresa, Mallorca

Do property owners come to you, or do you seek them out?

Initially, our property collection was created from existing owners who recommended their friends' stunning properties. More recently, we are finding that property owners come to us through recommendations.

What are the factors that help you decide to include a property in your portfolio?

Firstly, the property needs to be unique, and not part of some large real estate scheme. They are people's second homes that are rented out a few weeks a year to the privileged few. Secondly, they need to be in a desirable location for our clients, where they can enjoy either the sea or the countryside, as well as the local activities. Design is very important, as is the highest quality of furnishings and fittings, with great attention to detail. The properties are also well maintained and serviced with a house manager, housekeepers and gardeners as a minimum. We then often organise a private chef and butler on our guests' request.

Presumably many of your properties contain significant artworks?

Yes, our owners are avid collectors of paintings, sculpture, photography and artefacts. We and our clients are privileged to enjoy them, as they are in such a private setting.

Do you generally find there is a relationship between those artworks and the design of the properties?

Many of our owners use artworks to accent the beautifully minimal spaces they have created, but we also have owners who have a truly eclectic collection of artworks and artefacts, which transforms the architectural space into a private museum.

Do you find that the interior design of the properties you deal with generally matches well with the architecture?

As our owners have commissioned a talented architect and interior designer to work closely together on the project over many years, we have seen beautiful collaborations between the owner, architect and interior designers. It is really important that both are in harmony as this is what our clients expect.

To what extent have the travelling you do and the properties you handle influenced your own attitude to design?

Through my travels, I have learnt to appreciate a vast range of design and architectural styles, and what I love most is the way that different locations and climates can give the same design new meaning. The exceptional local design in these different locations across the world provides our guests with an endless source of inspiration for their stay. I am now more critical of design and really appreciate when an architect and interior designer have created something truly outstanding.

Have you ever found a disparity between property and owner? *No names, no locations, of course!*

We have always found that our owners are fascinating individuals and their homes usually match their unique personalities and interests perfectly, as they have been at the heart of the design process.

Is it possible to run your business without getting to know property owners and clients quite closely?

I believe that trust is the most important aspect of our business, and it is imperative that the owners know me well and that I understand their wishes, as they are renting out their own home. Some of the properties

are among the world's most expensive real estate, and it is a privilege to be able to rent them to our discerning clients. The more I know and understand my clients, the better I can advise them, which is why I encourage my clients to meet me at their convenience. Art de Vivre enjoys a close relationship with both clients and owners which is what makes our service so unique.

Do you have a favourite property in your portfolio, and if so, why?

I have so many favourites across our portfolio, so I shall select a few that are true masterpieces. In the Alps, my favourite could be none other than Chalet Les Anges, in Zermatt, with its open plan design, the delicious cuisine and the fact that the bath had such a stunning view of the Matterhorn. In the Mediterranean area, Castell de Manresa in Mallorca is definitely a favourite, with the beauty of its restoration of an old fortress dating back to 1715, and its privileged location offering a kilometre of coastline and panoramic views. I have always had a soft spot for the Seychelles and the variety of its architecture in our portfolio. We have a colonial mansion built into the rock with architectural antiques named Residence on the Rocks, Li Al Do Maison, which is an Italian designed African-inspired oceanfront property, and the breathtakingly rare Villa Praslin, a new beachfront villa with astounding modern tropical design.

How would you describe your own attitude to art and design?

I grew up surrounded by modern design and nature, and this is what I appreciate most in life. I love clean lines and large windows letting the boundaries between the outside and inside blur, especially when the view is breath taking. Although my taste in art and design has always been quite classic, I have grown to appreciate and love some more unusual pieces, especially within

the villa setting. Also, as I have grown older, I have come to enjoy historical design and admire craftsmanship in all its forms. I am also a fan of architectural antiques, which feature in many of our properties such as Residence on the Rocks in Seychelles, where the owner sourced Haveli Palace Doors from India, and many other colonial antiques. ■

For further information on designer villa and alpine chalet rentals, please contact Julie:

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San Luigi, Italy



Leobo Observatory Villa, South Africa