

object lesson



LEFT LALANNE STOOLS IN SINGER ANDY WILLIAMS'S CALIFORNIA LIVING ROOM.

For the 1965 Salon de la Jeune Peinture in Paris, French artist François-Xavier Lalanne wanted to make a statement. "If you come with a snail as big as a thumb, nobody notices," he said. "You have to go with something immodest and slightly embarrassing." His idea? Twenty-four sheep.

Lalanne fashioned the faux livestock in the living room of the Paris apartment he shared with Claude, his wife and artistic partner. Four sculptures received impassive faces of patinated bronze while the others remained headless; all were swathed in fluffy sheepskins. Les Lalannes then trotted the surrealist herd off to the storied Palais de Tokyo exhibition hall, where the *moutons*—making their grand debut as art furniture, complete with casters in their hooves for easy mobility—were placed prominently at the salon's entrance.

Le Tout-Paris was charmed and covetous. "Having a sheep in your living room, as opposed to an armchair or a wood bench, is just pure fun," says garden designer Madison Cox, a longtime friend of the Lalannes.

That fun was as instantaneous as it has been enduring. (And price: In 2011 a group of ten sheep fetched nearly \$7.5 million at Christie's.) Several were commissioned by Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé, who positioned them throughout their Paris library. "[They help me] pretend I am on a farm in Normandy," the couturier wistfully observed. And when Adelaide de Menil got wind of artist William Copley's third divorce, in the 1970s, she sent her condolences: a rare black sheep to add to his collection. "I always prefer them in a big mass," says decorator François Catroux, who recently gathered a trio in a Paris apartment. Architect Peter Marino remembers when François-Xavier asked what was his favorite mythological tale: "Without hesitation, I said, 'The Golden Fleece,' and he answered, 'I shall make you an entire flock.'" Cast in bronze, the *Moutons de Peter* now stand on his Hamptons lawn year-round and graze, just like the ruminants that inspired them. —HANNAH MARTIN



ABOVE VALENTINO, IN GSTAAD, SWITZERLAND, WITH HIS MENAGERIE OF PUGS (REAL) AND SHEEP (LALANNE).



A WEATHER-RESISTANT LALANNE TRIO AT INVESTOR WILBUR ROSS'S HOME IN SOUTHAMPTON, NEW YORK.

LEFT YVES SAINT LAURENT AND PIERRE BERGÉ'S PARIS LIBRARY.

BELOW DESIGNER REED KRAKOFF'S LONG ISLAND HOUSE.

