

These Tech-Forward Art Stars Have Mastered Hospitality In Provence

The Leroy Brothers work with Internet culture and AI chatbots to make art. But Toile Blanche, their hotel in the south of France, is all about nature, peace and hands-on, low-tech hospitality.

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A quiet corner at Toile Blanche
ALYAAN MOODYSSON

For decades, the Leroy Brothers have been known for their conceptual, tech-forward and [boundary-pushing art](#). One of their early projects jumped off from Myspace; now they're working with AI entities like Midjourney, ChatGPT and Grok.

But **Toile Blanche**, the Leroy Brothers' longtime hotel in Provence, is the opposite of all that. It's devoted to everything that is pleasurable to see, to touch, to taste, to breathe in. It's delightfully analog.

Toile Blanche started life as a restaurant and small bed-and-breakfast about 20 years ago. Even as the Leroy Brothers—Gilles, Gregory and Nicolas—were becoming very online art stars in their native Belgium, and beyond, their father had the idea of a hospitality project in the south of France.



The main pool
ALYAAN MOODYSSON

Dad asked his sons to open the restaurant; they said they were artists and couldn't cook. He insisted, and it turned out they could. Even as they were still living in Ghent and traveling on the international art circuit, they returned to this corner of the Côte d'Azur every summer to cook "pure Provençal cuisine."

As their success grew, so did their hospitality offering—slowly, and then all at once. About five years ago, they had the opportunity to buy the property of three of their neighbors. They set about renovating the existing buildings and adding more—they legally could have put about 50 accommodations on their 6.5 acres but chose to limit it to just 22 large, soothing and understated suites for now—doing all the architecture, landscape design and decoration themselves, along with their parents, wives and children.

Everyone involved emphasizes that this is a family project. Family members chose every detail in the rooms, the parents take road trips to French wine regions and fill their trunk with special bottles from small producers, and someone from the family is always on site, interacting with their international but generally like-minded (“down to earth”) guests and having big conversations about art and the ways they see the world.



The dining terrace beside the main restaurant
ALYAAN MOODYSSON

“The whole family is present,” says Nicolas’s sister-in-law, Caroline. “My father-in-law is almost 80, and he’s around every day. He loves to do it. We all work almost every day, but we love it. And guests really feel our family’s involvement. Representing our love for our guests is the most important thing.”

That involvement has most clearly manifested itself in the art around the hotel, not only works by the Leroy Brothers, but vintage pieces made by their grandfather, who never had the courage to show them during his lifetime, and in a growing collection from all the artists who pass through.

After using the hotel reception as an exhibition space, they inaugurated a separate gallery and invite international artists to show their works for two or three months at a time, combining the exhibitions with four-hands dinners with French or Belgian chefs, concerts and other special events. In winter, they offer residencies for artists they find through their international network of dealers and collectors. As part of the deal, every visiting artist gives them a piece for their collection, which is displayed in the rooms and among the lightly manicured gardens and on the wild grounds of the hotel.



A bedroom
ALYAAN MOODYSSON

But it's not only the art that sets Toile Blanche apart in a region filled with [grande dame hotels](#) and [design-forward](#) opulence. "On the French Riviera, a lot of the luxury hotels are palaces or châteaux," says Nicolas, who notes that they worked with a local architect to bring their ideas to life, including working with earthy materials to have a natural feeling. "You don't find places like this," with this idea of living outdoors "like in Southeast Asia or Mexico." (There are two shared swimming pools, as well as private ones in some of the suites.)

At the same time, the connection between hospitality and art is vital. “We didn’t want to have only a place where people come and go,” he continues. “We added art to tell personal stories.”

As for the seemingly opposing ideas contained in AI-driven art and nature-forward hospitality, Nicolas says, “Both for us are very interesting. On an intellectual side, we are very much into ‘Where is humanity going?’ But the two things don’t have to be together. They can be apart in our creations.”



The main restaurant's outdoor area
ALYAAN MOODYSSON

He also emphasizes that any work they make or display has to be “avant-garde yet accessible. You don’t have to study it for hours to know what’s going on.” And perhaps that’s one reason they’ve been accepted into the community in nearby Saint-Paul-de-Vence, one of those impossibly picturesque Provençal villages that’s the stuff of tourist dreams.

Locals from the surrounding area frequent their restaurant and art events, and in turn, they highlight some of the galleries and institutions in the village that are doing real artistic work (between the souvenir shops with their watercolors of lavender fields, banal photography and vintage postcards promoting the Côte d’Azur), such as the [Maeght Foundation](#) and [Fondation CAB Saint-Paul-de-Vance](#).

With their focus more on art these days, both in the village and in their own global career, the Leroy Brothers brought in a new chef a couple of years ago. Nicolas Leclair continues their legacy of local recipes with a modern twist. At the original restaurant, overlooking the main pool, that means dishes like house-made duck foie gras, roasted turbot, lobster fricassée with bisque sauce and Maxi Spaghetti di Gragnano, or rack of Provençal lamb, grilled eggplant with caviar, Muscat grapes and crispy panisse.

A few years ago, they added the casual, summer-only La Guinguette. There, on small tables set amid the garden, guests, both from the hotel and especially from outside, share plates like grilled octopus with chickpeas and a popular saucisson bridé (an artisanal dry sausage of pork). In both restaurants, much of the produce comes from the hotel's aromatic gardens—a short journey that's as low-tech as can be.