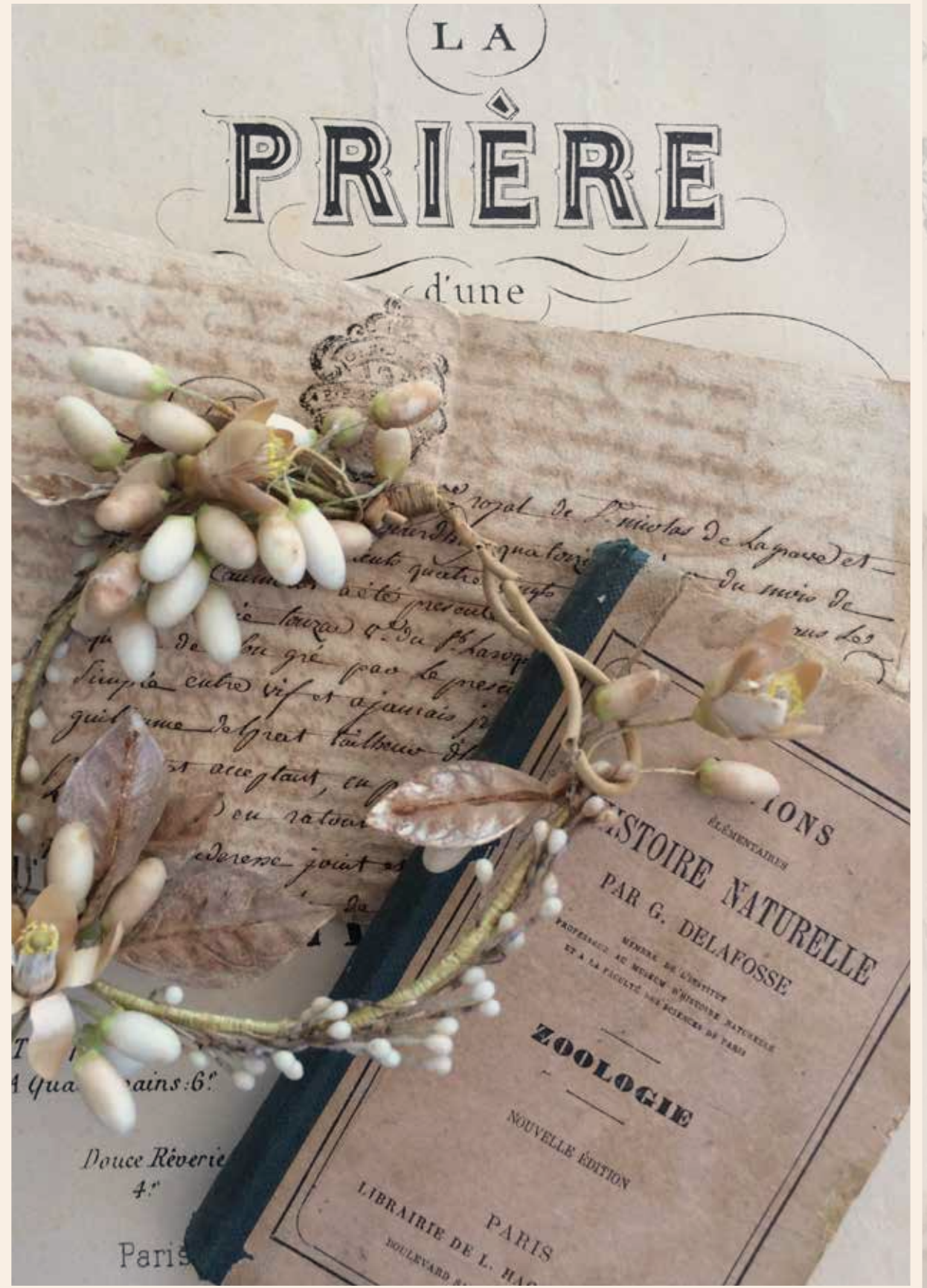




Anna Corba

ANNA CORBA returns to Southern France each year to present her weeklong creative retreat at the gorgeous 18th century, Chateau Dumas. Anna—the creator of her own handcrafted product line and author of four books on vintage collage—has combined her love of art and the French aesthetic into a one-of-a-kind experience. Created for those with a fondness for flea markets, food and crafting, this retreat includes daily workshops, town excursions, elegant meals and more.

The 2019 Bonne Fete will be presented twice: September 14-21 and 21-28.



Flower

how our journeys through life, no matter the circumstances, will always offer elements of serendipity. If we are paying attention, these mysterious surprises can pull us towards a new opening, maybe even our destiny. Being invited to teach in France has been one such gift for me.

Chateau Dumas is a sumptuous feast for the senses set in the scenic countryside of South Central France. The owner, Lizzie Hulme, has painstakingly and lovingly created a stunning environment to hold her dream of gathering creative women for weeklong workshops from May through September. Eight years ago we created a retreat combining my collage workshops with visits to nearby villages, flea markets, delicious dining and restful interludes. Due to its lighthearted and whimsical spirit, we named this event "Bonne Fete," which loosely means "Celebration" in French.

I had been drawn to the French design aesthetic for years before the Chateau came into my life. It had woven its way into my product line and my art ever since one stark winter morning when visiting the Saint Ouen Brocante in Paris, my friend and I came upon stacks and stacks of gorgeous sheet music. They were one euro each, and I returned home with dozens. Each visit to Paris provided more inspiration to my life and my art; I adored the color palette of French faded book covers: dusty rose, musky sage, greying blues, the hand-painted femmes fatales on the cartes postales, and the ancient seed catalogues with pen and ink illustrations. My heart beat quicker each time as I stumbled into a flea market stall with a cache of vintage ribbons...corals, raspberry, faded



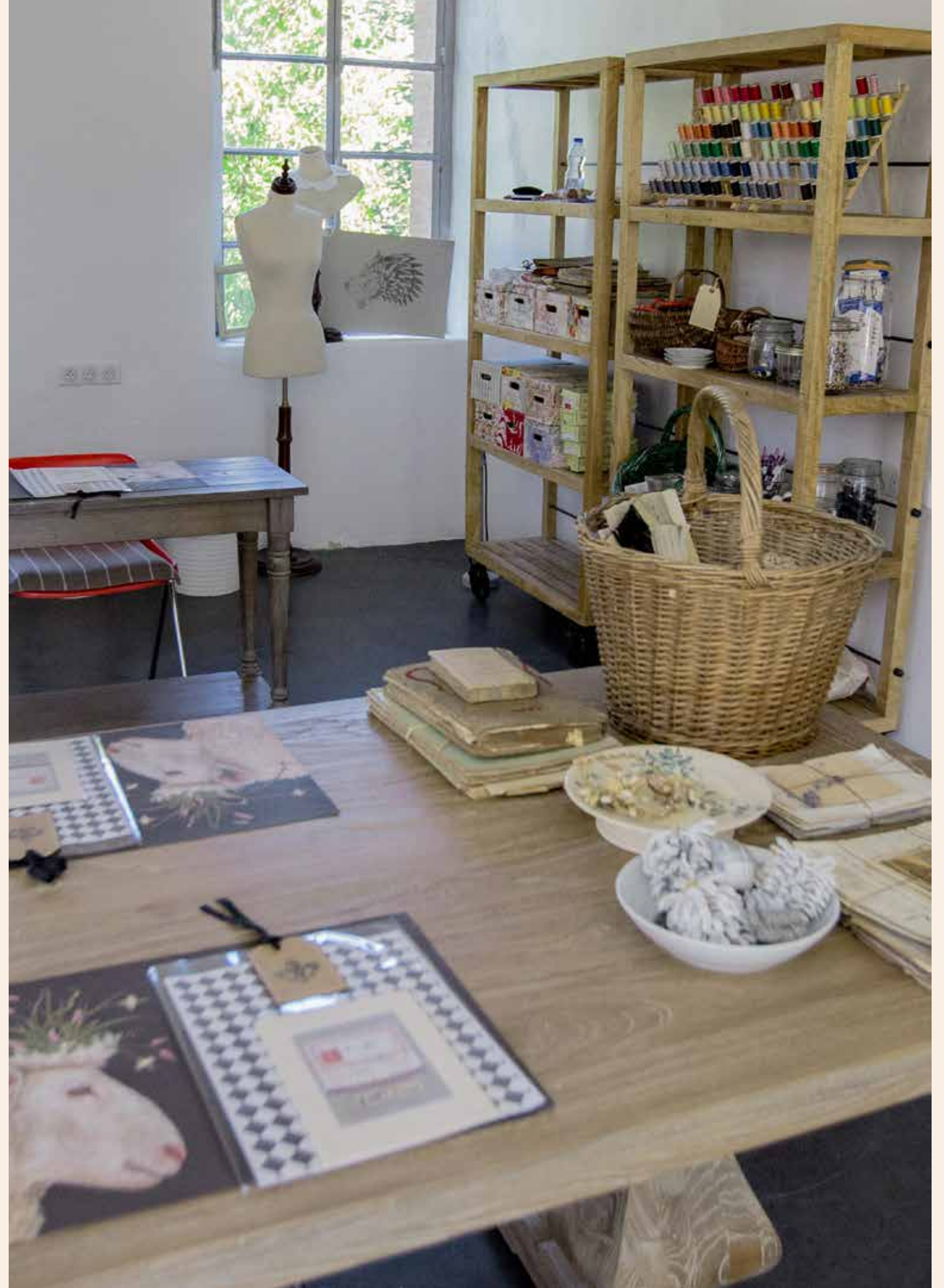
lilac, rolled around antique spools with a thin crisp layer of yellowed paper in-between. I am frugal; I don't overbuy, but even a petite assortment laid out to admire on the hotel bed each evening would make my heart sing. Why did I buy these things? Their faded, elegant beauty tugged at my tender heart. What would I do with them? I wasn't

always sure, but it never really mattered.

Fast forward to present time, and it becomes very clear why I was amassing these tokens of a more subdued, elegant past. They not only added layers to the work I was doing with my handmade product line, but they became the fodder for the collage workshops I began to teach out of my studio, then expanding to larger events across the country and now, most appropriately, France itself.

A typical day during Bonne Fete will begin with croissants, freshly brewed coffee and freshly cooked eggs before we saunter past the lavender in the courtyard for a workshop. The ancient stone building that used to house horse carriages

has been transformed into a spacious studio with polished concrete floors and tall windows that allow for copious amounts of natural light. The worktable is piled high with vintage books, old receipts, stamps and postcards, all collected from nearby flea markets. In one corner sits a basket filled with vintage textiles. Added to this mélange will be ribbons, buttons, trimmings and lace that I have brought from my home studio. I also bring kits that I have made for each class, ranging from small journals and ornaments with beeswax, to sewn needle cases and sachets.





“The studio ambience is casual and inviting; all skill levels are welcome, and participants quickly fall into a rhythm of inspired camaraderie.”

I consider art making to be a meditative, intuitive act of devotion, yet also understand that within any group of women there will be a wide range of ways to work, so I keep my teaching style loose, while also providing general guidelines and making certain that projects are completed. A feeling of accomplishment is a wonderful thing to hold as we head back out to finish off our afternoon. Our afternoons are spent in a variety of ways. Frequently, we take an excursion to a nearby village to visit their flea market or enjoy a glass of wine. A highlight is our trip to the food market in Cahors, a lovely town situated on a picturesque bend of the river Lot, filled with lively shops and a terrific Brocante, where we also have lunch at an outdoor cafe...most often a lush salad accompanied by fresh quiche or tartines.

Evenings find us back at Chateau Dumas enjoying aperitifs on the terrace, flipping through French magazines on a settee, or taking a nap or a walk. With twenty-two acres of lush grounds and a crystal blue swimming pool, there are no shortages of options for a little downtime—all of this leading up to our three-course dinner prepared by our in-house chef.

It is an honor to return to creating Bonne Fete anew each year. As my life has weathered many storms these past few years, to have this retreat as a thread of continuity has saved a part of my spirit. We have many women who repeat their visit year after year...one prized attendee has been with us for all eight years; as a result, we are now close friends. This is what makes the magic...commitment, beauty, reaching out, shared experience and if we are lucky, a dash of serendipity will throw itself in.

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