



COGNAC PRUNIER

TRAVEL RETAIL & DUTY FREE

WWW.COGNACPRUNIERTRAVELRETAIL.COM - INFO@COGNACPRUNIERTRAVELRETAIL.COM

PRUNIER AGE STATEMENT COGNACS – INFORMATION PACK

The Photographs

The background story to the eight photographs by Julia Hasse

Julia Hasse brought her photographer's eye for detail to *La Maison de la Lieutenance*, known as 'La Vieille Maison', the oldest house in Cognac, built around 1490 on foundations dating back at least to the 11th century.

This magnificent half-timbered house is today the property and also the symbol of the House of Prunier, itself one of the oldest cognac houses, dating back to the early 1700s.

With a free-ranging brief, Julia Hasse was commissioned to create a series of artistic photographs capturing the passage of time in the Old House to complement the new range of Age Statement cognacs.



10 YEAR OLD
A detail from the murals on the first floor

From 1603 to 1624 Pierre de Lacombe, Lieutenant-General of Cognac, made the House his residence and the seat of government of the town. He added many fine decorations, including the painted wooden ceiling and colourful murals in the rooms.

Although once covered in plaster, vestiges of these murals remain, revealing scenes of the countryside, such as the brightly coloured bird featured in Julia Hasse's photograph:

"When I spotted this charming little bird, almost intact, it was a real delight. I love the look in his watchful eye, like a witness to days gone by."

MAISON PRUNIER S.A., B.P. 70033, 7, AVENUE MARECHAL LECLERC - 30, RUE LEONCE LAVAL, 16102 COGNAC CEDEX

TEL. 33 (0)5 45 35 00 14 - FAX 33 (0)5 45 35 39 41

CAPITAL 3.000.000 Euros - R. C. COGNAC 57 B 18 - SIRET 905720181.00023- APE 1101Z - N° TVA : FR47905720181- N° Accise : FR093515E0041

	<p>Built long before the infamous 'Window Tax' was introduced in France in 1798, the House has a generous number of exquisite leaded windows, making it a bright and comfortable residence.</p> <p>With their subtly coloured glasses, they allow ample light to enter while providing complete privacy from outside. The fascinating geometry of these works of art is the subject of this photograph by Julia Hasse :</p> <p><i>"In the House on a crisp, sunny winter morning, I caught the magnificent light shining through the stained glass windows. It brought the glass to life, revealing every subtle detail and nuance of colour."</i></p>
<p>20 YEAR OLD A leaded window pane from a first floor room</p>	<p>The walls of the House were once covered in brightly coloured murals, of which sadly only traces remain after they were damaged by layers of plaster in a previous century.</p> <p>While working in the House, Julia Hasse discovered that in certain lights the now bare walls fleetingly decorate themselves, as if to remind us of their former glory.</p> <p><i>"A ray of winter sunshine passing through a leaded window cast this shadow on the stone wall. Seconds later the shadow had gone as the sun moved on and I was delighted to have captured the ephemeral beauty of the moment."</i></p>
	<p>30 YEAR OLD A fleeting shadow thrown on the walls by early morning sunshine</p>
	<p>The House has withstood everything that Man and Nature have inflicted on it for over 500 years, but this long battle has left its mark on the building and nowhere more than on the extensive timberwork.</p> <p>The window ledge captured in this photograph by Julia Hasse is a silent witness to the sufferings of the Old House over time:</p> <p><i>"As I was opening a window, a ray of morning sunshine lit up the ledge, revealing its hidden beauty. I was fascinated by the textures carved into the wood by centuries of weathering and by the richness of the colours."</i></p>
<p>40 YEAR OLD A window ledge on the façade at the top of the House</p>	



50 YEAR OLD
A human face among the gargoyles adorning the façade

Gargoyles, or grotesques as they are properly called when purely ornamental, were believed to frighten away evil or harmful spirits, protecting those inside the building.

The Old House has a variety of human and animal figures adorning the half-timbering, one of which caught the eye of Julia Hasse:

"I couldn't help staring into what I feel is a friendly face and admiring the finesse with which his features are sculpted into the wood. He has the appealing, wise look of one who has observed centuries of life around the House."



60 YEAR OLD
A section of the spiral stone staircase seen from below

The upper floors and cellar of the House are reached by the original 15th century spiral stone staircase. Each of the 68 steps is carved from a single block, a work of enormous precision by the mediaeval stonemasons.

Winding clockwise – thereby ensuring that invading attackers, most likely right-handed, are disadvantaged when wielding a sword – the mesmerising swirl of the staircase seen from below inspired this photograph by Julia Hasse :

"I found an exquisite beauty in this fan-shaped carving, with its subtle gradient of colours and the way the stone captures the light to reveal all its nuances. It is sheer perfection in craftsmanship."



70 YEAR OLD
The stone arch leading into the subterranean passage below the House

Cognac in medieval times was a fortified town, regularly besieged, making the streets dangerous in time of war. This led the inhabitants to build a network of underground passages cut through the solid limestone, allowing safe movement around the town.

Most of these passages are now walled up, but an extensive section runs below the Old House, accessible via the cellar and a magnificent stone arch, subject of this photograph by Julia Hasse:

"I felt a sense of magic down here, transported back to the time when people would pass under this beautifully sculpted arch, into the bustling underground passages."



80 YEAR OLD
The rope handrail winding up the spiral stone staircase

The House has been home to many occupants over more than five centuries as a private house, seat of government, hostelry and craftsman's workshop.

Nowhere is this long and busy history more apparent than in the staircase, with its deeply worn stone steps and shiny stair rope, featured in this photograph by Julia Hasse:

"Sunlight flooding the staircase revealed the charming union of stone, iron and rope. By playing with perspective, I wanted to capture the simple beauty of their subtle colours and the harmony of the contrasting textures."



30-80 YEAR OLD
The early 17th century painted wooden ceiling on the ground floor

Pierre de Lacombe, Lieutenant-General of Cognac from 1603 to 1624, oversaw the decoration of the House with colourful murals and the magnificent painted wooden ceiling, signs of his high office and power over the town.

The acanthus leaf motif, much in vogue at the time, was brightly coloured when painted, but although the colours have faded over the 400 years since, closer inspection reveals blues, greens, reds and yellows - a spectacular sight to impress the 17th century townspeople.

Such ceilings, as costly as a precious tapestry, are now extremely rare, frequently succumbing to fire, insect or water damage, but the Old House ceiling remains in excellent condition and features on the outer band and mirror of the six oldest Age Statement cognacs.