

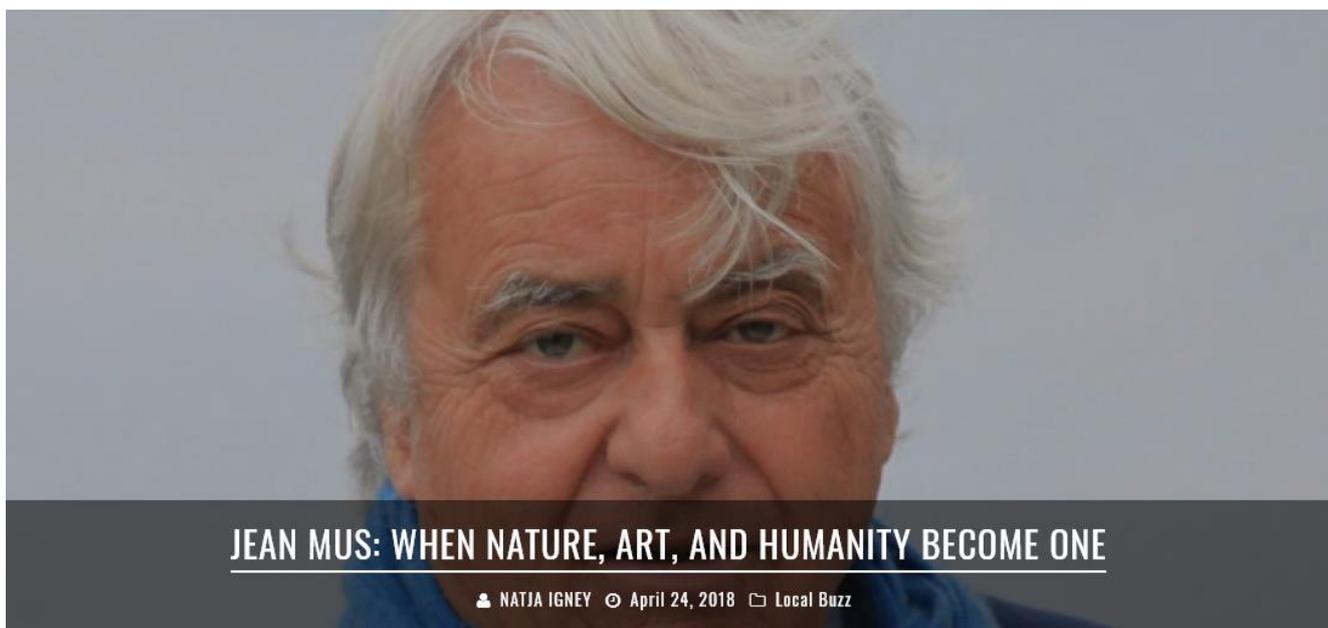


Jean Mus: When Nature, Art, and Humanity Become One



*By Natja Igney
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<http://riviera-buzz.com/features/local-buzz/item/jean-mus-profile.html>



April is Garden Month – the perfect time to visit with one of the world’s great landscaping artists

This spring of 2018 has not been kind to the French Riviera. It is only now, in late April, that Mother Nature is finally letting up a bit. But as if to make up for two months of rain and chill, she has a treat in store: this is just

the time of the year when Jean Mus’ gardens are staged to absolute perfection. Jean Mus – no introduction needed: he is the [landscaping artist](#) to royalty, industrial tycoons, and world heritage sites. And mere mortals, too, can savour his green thumb in emblematic public gardens around the Côte d’Azur and all throughout the world.



Most people tend to associate French gardens with ornate parks like Versailles, with plants, trees, and shrubs lined up in military precision, and not one bladelet of grass out of rank. But that is far from the gardens that Jean Mus designs. His philosophy is to respect nature, to emphasize it in all its joyful, jubilant expression, and to celebrate its majesty by bringing out the best in it. He seeks to accompany nature, not to direct it. Think of Provence, teeming with floral abundance, and more likely than not, the image that comes to mind is a landscape designed by Jean Mus.

Behind that apparent simplicity is of course tremendous knowhow. “*The secret is listening to what local geography, climate, soil, and history tell me*”, he explains, and he uses that information to gently coax and guide natural habitat into

perfection. He designs his gardens in a way that is not even perceived as having human influence, only adding a fountain here, a pebbled path there, as if everything had been there forever and ever. He instinctively uses a sweeping valley vista to frame a single tree like a piece of art. He stacks layers upon layers of different greens and textures to give them depth and dimension. His work is reminiscent of the great masters of painting, a chef at the peak of culinary art, or a jeweller who polished a flawless gem stone. *“The sky, the sun, the moon, the stars, and the smells, they all are my partners that help me in creating a landscape that is in harmony and balance with its environment.”*

Jean Mus is a philosopher, a *bon vivant*, a traveller, and a storyteller, and all of this is reflected in his work. In his skilful hands, the already rich and generous Provençal flora becomes a magnificent jewel. He intuitively pairs lavender, rosemary, thyme, olive trees, cedars, and other native plants. He also understands the magic of nature’s own perfumes, and their subtle influence on the senses. And by offering an inviting environment for birds, bees, and butterflies, he creates a holistic sensation that transports the visitor in the heart of the Garden of Eden.

Such expertise and artistic savoir-faire has not gone unnoticed. Over the decades-long course of his career, Jean Mus has been called to create landscapes in 12 countries around the world. Among countless projects, he recreated a little bit of [Provence in Santa Barbara, California](#), flirted with the [Atlas mountains and desert](#) in Morocco, built a private [East Meets West park](#) in the Netherlands, and paired [modern architecture with a natural garden](#). In France, he was tapped to adorn the [zen-like gardens](#) of the Hotel Ritz and the spectacular cliffside [Vista Palace](#) in Roquebrune Cap Martin.



But his native, bucolic Provence remains his first love, and it is a love he happily shares with the public. The [Exotic Gardens of Èze](#) (pictured above) soaring high above the remnants of the medieval fortress or the elegant Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild have become prime visitor destinations thanks to Jean Mus’ experienced hand in fitting succulent and natural plants to seamlessly fit into the backdrop of the Mediterranean Sea to form an authentic and harmonious ensemble. The [Grimaldi Forum](#) in Monaco and the [Polygone Riviera Mall park](#) in Cagnes sur Mer testify to his unobtrusive yet highly effective style of integrating nature with manmade buildings. Among the flagship project the landscaping architect particularly relishes: the magical grounds of Jacques Chibois’ *La Bastide St. Antoine in Grasse*. Here, all the values he cherishes come together: beauty, conviviality, and friendship.

But these are only a small sampling of the high-profile and award-winning project Jean Mus has done. In 50 active years, he has created over 1,500 public and private spaces. He is sought after all over the world. But as if this wasn’t enough work, he advocates tirelessly for causes around nature, and is on national and international committees and juries to preserve heritage and ancestral skills, and to pass on his expertise to the younger generations. *“I was fortunate enough to have been born in a beautiful garden. My father was the head gardener at [Villa Croisset](#), a 20,000 m² park that is a French classical monument. He transmitted his love of nature to me. He had hoped that I would become an engineer but this calling was stronger. And now I want to share my emotions, sensations, and aspirations for people to rediscover this “green” paradise in my gardens... the paradise of childhood,”* the Grasse native shares with us. He is also the author of numerous coffee table books celebrating the glory and poetry of naturally landscaped gardens and parks.



Published by Ulmer, written by Dane McDowell and photographs taken by Philippe Perdereau.

In this book, Jean Mus presents 20 emblematic gardens taken from his most recent creations. These gardens are wilder, spectacular and sensual at the same time, and always respectful of nature. As a passionate ambassador of Provence, Jean Mus reinvents it on each property and extends the Mediterranean shores till Flanders and California... [read on](#)

In his atelier in Cabris, in the hills behind Grasse, Jean Mus is supported by a team of landscape architects and experts, and he insists that although he may be *primus inter pares*, they are not behind but alongside him. Among them, his daughter Florence who has inherited her father's talent and business sense. Jean may be in his seventies, but he is far from retiring. Gardens, music, literature, laughter, and people – those are the things that drive him and make him happy, day after day, and he sees a connection between them all as the basis for a life well-lived. Sensuality is his credo in all he touches. That, and respect for natural balance.

Like his gardens, Jean Mus has become a national treasure. People like him make the world a better, and a more beautiful place. And wherever you are, there is a Jean Mus garden not far from you. Be sure to visit it (again) because it does keep his promise: *“I want it to make your heart sing.”*

“Gardens are a place of encounter and celebration where everyone, following his own culture, can find the sensations he seeks.” — Jean Mus

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