

# WE'RE RAISING MONEY FOR



JOYFUL

French culture. I joined her and caught a first glimpse of the house's organic curves and the distinctive bubble skylights that appeared like eyes across its surface. It certainly looked like a cartoon character would be perfectly at home here. We spotted a narrow gate to the left—a pedestrian entrance—and through this we could see a thin, curving path leading down into the house. I could hardly stand still, I was so excited, but we were early, so I hesitated to ring the bell. Soon we heard a rustling down below. "Bonjour?" I called out. "Bonjour, bonjour!" I heard in response, and presently the tall, bespectacled figure of Jean-Pascal Hesse appeared from around the bend to let us in. He led us down the driveway toward the main part of the house. We entered a large round atrium through a massive oculus that opened by sliding up like a garage door. To the right an elliptical window offered a view to the sea. Other rounded openings pierced the space, giving peeks into rooms above and below the main room. Hesse whisked us through the house, up and down stairs, along winding pathways, into and out of the many bedrooms, each decorated by a different young artist. The beds were all circular, covered with tailored quilts in shades of raspberry, mint, and periwinkle, each piled with a small mound of pillows that looked like candies. We followed Hesse down a sweeping hallway to the heart of the house, a living and dining space built at a more intimate scale. There was a round living room with a C-shaped sofa, a dining area that held a circular table with a built-in lazy Susan, and, my favorite, a breakfast nook encased in a bubble that could be unlatched and swiveled open for poolside dining. Hesse excused himself to take a phone call and invited us to explore the place on our own.

I began to wander, aiming to retrace my steps and see everything again at a slower pace. But the house took me on its own journey. I

158

PLAY

started down the path back to the main atrium, but I couldn't resist poking my head through each circular aperture and following each curving branch off the hallway. I ascended a whorl of stairs up one turn to a closed door made of honey-colored fiberglass, convex and shaped like a duck egg. The door was locked, but I paused for a moment to study the curves, like a ball at the top of its arc before it turns back down. Then I was off again, following pathways that wove between inside and outside, snapping pictures of palm trees framed by portholes and round swatches of clouds through the skylights. Near another set of steps, I was stopped briefly in my tracks by a circular window radiating aqua light: an underwater window into the pool. I followed the curve around, up more steps, and into another bedroom, its walls lined with navy-blue carpet and inset with curving shelves that housed glass vases colored like semiprecious stones: amethyst, lapis, turquoise. A strip of salmon-colored carpet patterned with giant dots led me into a sun-filled lounge with a ring of curvy red plastic chairs as glossy as candy apples. A squiggle-shaped ladder caught my eye, and I climbed it. A new path appeared, and I followed it. The house looped me around and around, as if I were playing hide-and-seek with myself.

The language of buildings fails me when trying to describe this house. The spherical volumes felt more like vessels than rooms. They spilled into each other gently, at elliptical intersections that resembled portals rather than doorways. Walls and ceilings met not in hard lines but in soft arcs and gibbous shapes. Rooms didn't stack into levels, but nestled together like soap bubbles in foam. This gentle, undulating structure was a direct result of Lovag's unorthodox method of design and construction. Instead of following the traditional architectural practice of drawing up precise blueprints, he would arrive on-site with a construction crew and no defined plan. He and his crew would create

159

unite to light