



## Antiques under your feet

Inspired by Empress Sissi, Thomas Reiner is crazy about parquet

For Thomas Reiner, parquet floors are "antique furniture, on which you walk." Having started his career as a renovator of wooden floors, the native born Tübingen from Germany is now one of Europe's leading restorers of wooden objects.

His works include well-known buildings like the Leipzig Central Station (Europe's largest railway station), Meersburg Castle on Lake Constance and London's Grosvenor House Hotel.

Reiner adores parquet floors and is completely won over by their nature and designs. For several years, he mastered the art of restoring these antiques while learning to preserve and redefine the history that comes with them.

His furniture company Antique Parquet is equally well known. Founded in 2007, it is responsible for the mass distribution of Reiner designs in popular furnishing stores all over Western Europe.

Monaco's Casamanara, for instance, has a fascinating collection from the architect featuring incredible cable patterned parquet and elaborate designs like the three dimension cube parquet.

According to Reiner, a



Thomas Reiner: the king of parquet

turning point in his career was when he stumbled upon the dining room floor of Empress Sissi. "I have never seen such a beautiful parquet floor. They would normally fall into the hands of an art museum," he explained.

The ancient dynasty floor is laid deep inside the Hofburg Palace in Vienna, which has been home to some of the most powerful people in Austrian history. The work he did here, which he modestly calls a stroke of luck, helped

make him famous. As the architect charged with restoring the Hofburg Palace, he decided it would be best to take the parquet out of the dining room (undamaged) and to replace it with a new wooden floor.

But while Reiner may have ripped out the wooden floor in Sissi's dining room, he does however believe that a restorer must maintain the original wooden surface of an ancient parquet floor in order to preserve

its history. He gives the example of the famous tables in Vienna's Hetzendorf palace which date back to 1750. "To sand off the surface of these items of furniture would erase the heritage that was there within the wooden mosaic pieces," he says.

Reiner's designs now sell for prices from 300 to 800 euros per square metre and can be found on his company's website Antiques Parquet.

www.antique-parquet.com

## Maintaining the estate

The pros and cons of a having a managing agent

If you're buying a medium-sized house built in the last 30 years which stands on a plot occupying under 1000m<sup>2</sup>, or if you're having one built on a plot that size, the chances are that your home will be in a private housing estate (*lotissement pavillonnaire*) that has been, or is being, designed - with a private made-up road and utilities laid on up to your property's front boundary - by a developer. Limited street lighting, with the town hall responsible for replacing lamps, will be on the estate.

It makes sense to study the estate's rules and regulations and *cahier des charges* (individual property requirements) before committing yourself.

You should ask for them if the person selling the plot or the existing property does not propose them. The *cahier des charges* normally is valid for 10 years from the estate's inception, with local municipal regulations prevailing after that period. Building heights and exactly where houses must be built on plots, defined car parking areas, and any rights of way for property owners not actually in the estate are the sort of matters covered.

All estates, whether they're in a straight-down-and-back cul-de-sac form or a circular drive-through in-and-out form, have communal areas (pavements, trees, the road itself, the estate's boundary walls or fences, etc.) which need to be maintained by the estate home owners (*co-proprétaires*).

Although a self-management committee of home

owners or the appointment of a professional managing agent (*syndic*) is not a legal obligation, it is practical.

Small estates, say up to 20 properties, can be sensibly managed by an *Association Syndicale Libre* (ASL) with a *Président*, *Vice-Président*, *Trésorier* and *Secrétaire* drawn from the home owners, or their appointed representatives, by a

of estate signposts, installation of an estate entry gate if required, for example if the estate is near a school, shops or tourist spot; unblocking or flushing out drains leading to each plot.

Labour costs for maintenance work can be kept down if able-bodied residents muck in and organise DIY sessions for tasks such as trimming small trees and bushes.

An ASL is also useful for getting to know the neighbours better, which is sometimes difficult in France, especially if your property is not your main home and consequently you're not there for much of the time.

An ASL must have a bank account with both the *Président* and *Trésorier* entitled to sign cheques. The principal obligations of an Association are registration with the Préfecture, and an annual general meeting with an order of the day or agenda and presentation of the previous year's expenses and receipts (*Compte Rendu Financier*).

The *Président* is elected for a maximum of three years but can have a new mandate after this, if they resign and are re-elected.

An *Association Syndicale Libre* (ASL) does not have to be eternal. If the estate is fortunate enough to have no upkeep costs, or *co-proprétaires* prefer to hang on to their money and cough up if any major communal repair becomes necessary, they can vote for its dissolution.

The only obligation then will be to officially notify the Préfecture. *Richard Whiting*



ASL and a little DIY can work well on smallish estates

majority vote.

The main advantage of a self-management association is that home owners only pay for what is actually spent or liable to be spent and an annual charge (*cotisation*) to fund expenses is voted by majority and reviewed when the ASL meets.

Expenses can be for items such as premiums for comprehensive insurance cover for residents and visitors in the communal areas; painting materials for car parking zones; repair or replacement

## MORTGAGE CONDITIONS

Financial Institution	Contact	Spoken	Tel / Fax.	Interest p.a.		Loan Ratio	Sanctioning Process	Mortgage Insurance	Fees
				VARIABLE	FIXED				
JYSKE BANK PRIVATE BANKING									0,25 % min. € 750

# Old - to change

Financial Institution	Contact	E	Tel	Specialising in helping international clients obtain mortgages,
RFP - RIVIERA FINANCIAL PLANNING SARL	Yves Derrien	E	Tel: +33 (0)4 93 74 73 35 Mob: +33 (0)6 21 85 84 42	Specialising in helping international clients obtain mortgages,
		E	Tel: +33 (0)4 93 00 11 71 info@rfp.fr www.rfp.fr	Real estate financing in France provided by European banks and unit-linked life insurance from a range of European insurance companies. Specialist international financial advice, from a qualified IFA, regarding relocation from anywhere in Europe to Switzerland, France or Monaco.

# Interview new CCI pres

## Tax reduction cuts for 2011

As announced, several tax advantages have been cut. The changes affect income tax for 2011:

- 10% cut in tax reductions for expenses relating to some investments or services, but not those for employing a home worker or cost of child care. Applies to expenses incurred from 1st Jan. 2011.

- Upper threshold of *niches fiscales* is reduced to 18,000 euros plus 6% of the taxable income amount. New limit applies from 1st Jan. 2011.

- Those who took out a loan between 6th May 2007 and 31st Dec. 2010 to buy their main residence still get a reduction, which since 1st Jan. 2011 has been replaced by the "0% rate loan" (*prêt à taux zéro*) until 31st Dec. 2014.

- Taxpayers can benefit from

a tax reduction if they subscribe to the capital of small or medium-sized companies (25% reduction on about 20,000 euros for single people and 40,000 for a couple). However, the 2011 Finance Act has made conditions to benefit from this reduction harder, for example it excludes more activities than before: finance and real estate, activities with guaranteed income. From 2011, the company must have at less two employees (one if it depends on the *Chambre des Métiers*).

Expenses for sustainable development equipment: the tax reduction has been halved from 50% to 25% for expenses from 30th Sept. 2010.

Concerning: a) expenses for equipment to protect people, eg the disabled; b) for work

requested due to technical risks; and c) purchase of electric lifts in residential buildings older than two years: the tax reduction is 25% for a), and 15% for the other two for expenses incurred between 1st Jan. 2005 and 31st Dec. 2010. The reduction is extended for one year, and for b) it is 30% for expenses incurred from 1st Jan. 2010.

### Deadlines for 2010 Income Tax Returns are:

30th May 2011 by post

For internet declarations:

9th June - *départements* 1 to 19

16th June - *dépts* 20 to 49

23rd June - *dépts* 50 to 974

30th June for non-residents of

the EU, USA and Africa,

15th July for rest of the world.

**Jean-Philippe GIOANNI**  
Chartered-Accountant,  
Cannes

## Looking to buy a place in the sun?

One local bank can help you the minute you land at the airport

Based in Nice, the International Branch of the BPCA - Banque Populaire Côte d'Azur - is in an ideal location to help anyone looking to purchase, build or renovate a property anywhere along or inland of the French Riviera.

Whether you are already resident here or looking to move or a newcomer, BPCA can advise and help with financing the purchase of a primary or secondary residence. It can also help you with loans and advice if you want to design and build your own home or have plans, however modest or ambitious, to renovate or extend an existing one.

For anyone just arriving in the region who cannot wait to

get started, your first port of call could be a visit to one of our two reception desks at the arrivals gates in Terminals 1 and 2 of Nice Côte d'Azur airport!

You can also contact our English speaking office on boulevard Victor Hugo in Nice for advice on how to optimise your budget and taxation, and choose the home loan best suited to your situation (fixed rate, variable rate, combined rate, *in fine, relai*).

One of our private wealth management experts who are dedicated to non-residents will be more than happy to guide you through the process step by step.

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# Domaine Endreols

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