

PRETTIGE

THAILAND
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FERRARIS AND
FASHION

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FUN & GAMES

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BEAUTIFUL BABY
NEW MERCEDES
C-CLASS

URBAN VISIONARY
**WANNAPORN
PHORNPRAPHA**

Green Spirit

TUPTIM MALAKUL LANE talks to distinguished French landscape architect **CHRISTIAN PRÉAUD** about recreating heaven on Earth



THE MANY GREAT gardens of the world, reminiscent of literature and poetry, suggestive of paintings and music, all make the point as clear as possible: the soul cannot thrive in the absence of a garden.

Christian Préaud has had a passion for gardens from a very young age and an insatiable interest in acquiring new landscape and gardening knowledge. Incongruously though, after initially training at the Ecole Spéciale d'Architecture in Paris, he worked for fifteen years in advertising film production before returning to his childhood love.

Although born in Paris, as a youngster Préaud spent his summers drinking in the flora and fauna of Dinard, a commune in the Ille-et-Vilaine on Brittany's Côte d'Émeraude in northwestern France. He discovered his 'green thumb' as a five year old while helping his grandmother in her garden. He would also visit the spectacular gardens at Versailles frequently, which made an indelible impression on him. So much so that today he says, "It [gardening] has been both a

hobby and my life's work for the last 40 years."

Albeit that a good number of those years were spent in the corporate sphere as a media professional Préaud held senior management positions at a number of international companies including Proxicom Paris, Scient Corp. in San Francisco and DDB Digital in Brussels, before establishing his own production company, Mostra.

Creativity, it seems, was in his blood, but so too was gardening and Préaud always knew he would return to his 'roots'. He also knew that to make a living at it he needed a proper grounding in techniques and know-how. So he went back to school at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure du Paysage de Versailles and graduated in 2003.

OPPOSITE: CHRISTIAN PRÉAUD AND JEAN-FRANÇOIS JIQUEL (SEATED)





“If Eden is the ultimate garden that cannot be matched, it still remains for humanity to keep on trying”

He explains landscape gardening in poetic tones. “Just as a song is composed using musical rhythms overlaid with lyrics, so landscape architecture is a composite of sculpting and painting with plants and flowers to create an overall artistic impression. And if Eden is the ultimate garden that cannot be matched, it still remains for humanity to keep on trying. It is a true labour of love, much like the accursed Sisyphus forever trying to roll his rock up a mountain side. No matter how difficult the task may seem, man must keep trying to replicate paradise on earth.”

Now in his true element, Préaud founded his own agency, Atelier Jardins, to create privately-owned gardens in France and abroad and for a number of years he orchestrated the work of numerous craftsmen in various trades working on the agency’s projects. Then in 2011 he met and formed a business partnership with Jean-Francois Jiquel, the founder of Jardin du Roi Soliel, a company that specialized primarily in reproducing the famous orange tree growing boxes first introduced at Versailles in 1670 by King Louis XIV’s landscape architect, André Le Nôtre.

As it happened, Jiquel had worked at Versailles for almost 40 years, first as the

chateau’s locksmith performing the highly specialized task of replacing or fixing ancient broken keys and their locks. He was then asked to help fix the chateau’s dilapidated orange tree growing boxes (which gave him the opportunity to patent an updated version of the planter), and was eventually offered the position of head of gardens at Versailles.

Today Jiquel’s products extend from the reprised orange planters to other traditionally-made garden furniture items suitable for the grandeur of the manicured grounds at Versailles: wooden benches, cast-iron and brass Medici vases, chestnut trellises, and various types of lamps and lanterns. The quality of the materials used, assembled in strict compliance with time-honoured methods of craftsmanship, have seen the products granted an exclusive license to use the ‘Château

de Versailles’ trademark. And today Jardin du Roi Soliel supplies the green spaces of many great institutions ranging from the Elysees Palace and the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères to luxurious hotels such as The Ritz and private residences like Château Margaux.

By the time Préaud and Jiquel got together, Jardin du Roi Soliel was already under the aegis of the Fort Royal project. Established in 2010, Fort Royal is technically a holding company but acts more as a catalyst for bringing together under the same umbrella French craftsmen acknowledged by their peers as the best in their respective trades. It was founded by Jacques Bolelli to offer connoisseurs and experts primarily architects and interior decorators unique access to the best of French craftsmanship and to maintain and preserve skilled French arts and crafts that were fast disappearing.

Préaud’s encounter with Bolelli has the air of inevitability about it: beyond their common origins (both coming from the banks of the Rance River, which flows into the English Channel between Dinard and Saint-Malo), the Fort Royal project is a crossroads of their complementary

experiences and their common passion for the arts and crafts of France.

And now Préaud and Jiquel are bringing that essence of traditional French craftsmanship to Thailand, pooling their collective experience to provide landscaping at the new L’Esprit de Provence development at Khao Yai, Nakorn Ratchasima province.

The French are proud of their parks and gardens; they take great care of them and with Préaud and Jiquel’s expertise, it is hoped the landscape at L’Esprit de Provence will be added to the list of notable gardens outside France. It will feature a marriage of colourful cottage-style gardens and formal design, cropped borders and stone hardscapes inspired the 19th Century impressionist painters, all representing the spirit of France on an oriental canvas. **Q**

ABOVE (MAIN) & OPPOSITE: VIEWS AT L’ESPRIT DE PROVENCE, KHAO YAI