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RÉMI TESSIER
Superyachts & Dream
Homes Visiting the
Celebrated French
Interior Designer in Paris

Happy Places

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The Artisan Designer

Twenty-seven years ago **Rémi Tessier** was still traveling through France with his fellow journeymen. Today, the Paris-based designer is on speed dial for some of the most interesting personalities and creates the interiors of their homes and yachts. The extraordinary career of a man whose loyalty, craftsmanship, vision and determination took him to where he never imagined he would be.

Text: Michaela Cordes Photos: Mark Seelen Production: Janine Weitenauer



BOOKEN THE MIDDLE: YVES KLEIN © VG BILD-KUNST, BONN 2015



Rémi & his girls: his wife, Carole, Ambre-Camelia (5), Sienna-Rose (7), Diane-Opale (2) and Lou-Victoria (7). Not in the photo: Baby Kiara-May (6 months old).

“I am not a person who plans for the future. If you had told me ten years ago that I would have five daughters one day, I would never have believed you...”

RÉMI TESSIER





“How did we meet? Carole applied for a job at the studio. Today, my wife has her own brand and helps me with my projects.”

RÉMI TESSIER

RIGHT SIDE: GLOBE BY YVES KLEIN, CHAIR BY PIERRE JEANNERET, BOTH © VG BILD-KUNST, BONN 2015



A passionate collector: when you step into his home you see immediately why Tessier enjoys working with clients who also collect art.



Perhaps one of his best assets can be attributed to the fact that Rémi Tessier has five daughters, a quality that is essential for his job as a designer: sensitivity. “The ability to put myself in my clients’ shoes, to understand what they want to wake up to, and into what kind of world they would like me to transport them – that is always the biggest challenge,” explains the French interior designer, whose unwavering instinct and passion for his craft and for contemporary art have won over some of the wealthiest entrepreneurs from Europe, the United States and the United Arab Emirates.

Dark wood, often polished to a high gloss; white sofas that appear light enough to float but into which you can imagine nothing better than to sink, all married to gleaming chrome – this is Rémi Tessier’s signature trademark. “Designing someone’s home, but even more so the interior of a yacht, is an enormously private matter, and I get to know my clients extremely well in the process. They all belong to the same ‘club’ and know each other well. Exclusive design is even written into my contract, and doing the same work for one person that I did for someone else would be an unforgivable mistake!” explains Tessier, who has just finished several private homes in London and whose primary claim to fame is doing the glamorous interiors of superyachts.

His Paris studio, which employs 15 people and is within walking distance of the Champs-Élysées, is currently one of the top addresses for interior design. Tessier develops his spectacular,

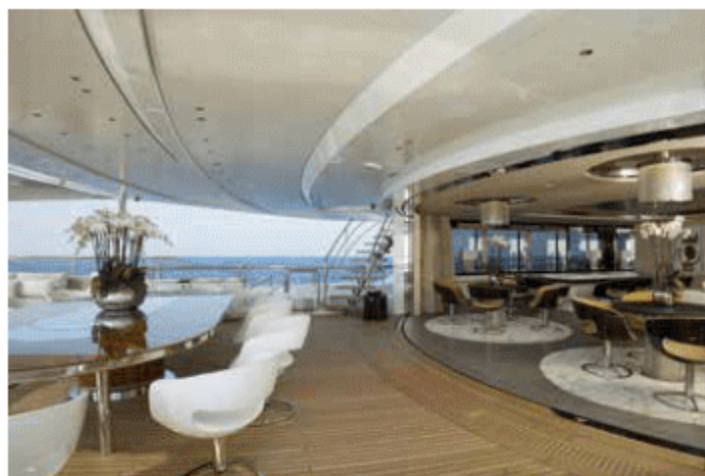
highly discreet projects just one story above the Paris gallery belonging to legendary U.S. gallerist Larry Gagosian. His clients include famous internet billionaires as well as America’s Cup winners – although he would never, as a matter of principle, divulge their names. Just one of many unspoken rules that Tessier’s clients admire about him. It is also a prerequisite for a good contact to eventually become a friendship and form the basis from which further projects can develop.

“You might be surprised to hear this, but loyalty and reliability are very important and highly appreciated in those circles. In fact, I once turned down a major project because my new client was in a dispute with someone for whom I had already completed several projects and who I truly admire. It’s very important to demonstrate your integrity, and in the end, relationships are more important than the money or the business. Making the decision to turn down the job wasn’t easy, but ultimately, it was the right thing to do. It even gained me the respect of both parties. Three years later, I was contacted again, and since the conflict had been laid to rest, I was able to do the interior of the client’s 80-meter motoryacht without any misgivings.”

Determined and very talented, someone who knows exactly what he wants – this is how Tessier is regarded in the yachting world. A strong personality. His unusual career path certainly played a major role in forming his character. “I knew when I was 13 years old that what I wanted to do was work with wood,” says Tessier. Although he was born in Paris, he grew up as the youngest of five children in St. Etienne in eastern central France.

One day, when he had just turned 15, he announced to his parents (his father was an enthusiastic painter) that he would be leaving ►

RÉMI TESSIER'S LATEST COMMISSION



For "Grace E," Tessier has just been awarded a Best Interior Design prize at the Monaco Yacht Show. The 73-meter Picchiotti motor yacht with cabins for twelve guests and a 22-member crew was completed by Perini Navi in 2014. The typical shell chairs and large, comfortable sofas both recognizably bear the famous Tessier signature.



Creativity lies in the family: happy times at home in Paris, where mom Carole has also started her own fashion label, "Preciously."

► home to join the "Compagnons du Devoir," an association of tradesmen and artisans. For seven years the young Rémi traveled through France with the organization that dates back to the Middle Ages, learning everything about the cabinetmaking trade. "There came a time when I realized that I didn't want to do this my whole life and I needed to make a change in order to move forward. I had only a single month's wages in my pocket and absolutely no contacts. When I knocked on the fancy studio doors they looked at my dirty hands, saw that I hadn't had the right schooling and had no portfolio, and turned me away."

Having nowhere to go he turned to the street and approached small shop owners for work. "I got my first commission when I promised the owner of a flower shop that I could make it look much larger by simply hanging mirrors everywhere. That's how I earned my first fee."

Through friends, Tessier eventually heard about a bigger job in southern France, where they were looking for someone to put together a promotion for a new residential project. "I traveled to Juan-les-Pins and was told that if I could deliver within three weeks the job would be mine!" News of the dedicated young man named Rémi Tessier spread so quickly that he was soon able to set up a studio in Lyon, employ 15 people and within the first five years of the business, take on numerous commercial projects in Lyon, Geneva and Saint-Tropez, as well as his first orders from private customers. "I immediately found that much more interesting because I prefer to talk to private people rather than to marketing strategists. This is probably because I always put so much of myself into my projects and let my instincts

show me the way forward. I have to get a feeling for a project and a person, and the extent to which we understand each other."

And how exactly did he make the significant leap from residential interiors to those of superyachts? "One of my clients, for whom I had previously designed a house in Geneva, wanted to build a yacht in 1999. He was actually playing with the idea of getting a big-name designer involved. But one day he knocked on my door although I had never before worked on a yacht, asked me to build him one and I went for the challenge. It wasn't easy! Perini Navi had never collaborated with an external designer. I learned an incredible amount on that project and got so involved in the various processes that I basically started managing the entire thing. At first, they weren't very happy about this at Perini but when the yacht *Squall* was finally completed, they absolutely loved her. And for myself, I discovered that this type of work drew on all the strengths and skills that I had developed over the years. Offering clients full service from beginning to end is one of our greatest strengths. In fact, it is something our clients are addicted to!"

Rémi Tessier has designed more than 20 boats over the last 14 years, and he is currently working on his biggest project to date. "It's a 170-meter motor yacht. I'm doing both the interior and the exterior for a client from the Middle East. When he first contacted me, he asked me to send him my portfolio. 'I'm sorry,' I told him, 'I prefer to meet you in person.'" After a 10-minute presentation he asked me if I would stay for dinner. I call myself an artisan designer and I am very fond of that term. I still do very many things myself, and handle each project personally as if it were my own." **MC**

All names and addresses on page 158.