EDITOR’S LETTER

BY KATHLEEN CARLIN-RUSSELL

Nuances ... they are often what make a good story, great; a painting, a masterpiece; a house more than just four walls. The details and subtleties are what elevate most items, whether it is how a well-placed window offers that perfect view or how small characteristics turn a basic character into a memorable figure.

You'll find meetings of nuances throughout this summer issue — some obvious, and some less so ... which is exactly what makes a nuance a nuance.

Details are often overlooked; just like the ground we walk on. Which is why what one flooring master is doing is so notable. Antique Parquet is not your average craftsman. This Austria-based restoration company rescues and restores historic parquet (think: 18th century) from throughout Europe (page 26).

Details are hard to miss, such as the millions of dollars worth of 22-karat gold leaf detailing used in the estate known as Le Palais Royal. Set in Hillsborough, Florida, this massive estate has been under construction for a decade, and the amenities and finishes found here took an estimated 2 million man hours to complete. It is, but one of the many stunning waterfront properties you'll find in this special issue. Take an armchair tour on page 37, and then visit the 60-page Waterfront section that follows.

This issue's 45th-anniversary series article is all about nuances ... but not any of the ones mentioned above. It focuses on a critical and typically overlooked ones that are important to owning a luxury residence in this day and age. Security, insurance and wealth management are just some of the items about which every owner should know the details. Peruse that story, starting on page 18.

Small details combine with large ideas and lots of effort to make something award winning, whether it is a unique home or this Unique Homes. With that in mind, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank my amazing staff for their efforts on this issue and every issue. I know how much they put into all of the parts of the process and it is gratifying when that work gets noticed by someone outside of your team. That is why our recent National Association of Real Estate Editors (NAREE) win means so much. This 2016 award is the fourth consecutive year that NAREE has recognized our editorial content, design and reporting as among the finest in the country, and the second time in the last three years that Unique Homes has received an award in the coveted "best magazine" category. Special thanks goes to Mark Moffa, our managing editor, for his ability to always go above and beyond on the nuances, the big items, and everything in between.

Until next time...

Kathleen Carlin-Russell
After a decade of design and development, Le Palais Royal in the South Florida community of Hillsboro Beach is scheduled to be complete in November. The Beaux-Arts style estate, inspired by the Palace of Versailles and other majestic European landmarks, is currently priced at $159 million, represented by One Sotheby’s International Realty.

Developer Joseph Leone, a French-born fashion industry entrepreneur, has made a monumental statement with Le Palais Royal on the Florida coast about 40 miles north of Miami. On a pristine 4.5-acre site sandwiched between the Atlantic Ocean and the Intracoastal Waterway, he has spared no expense to create one of the most palatial residences in America. Now, after more than 10 years and 2 million man-hours later, work has been completed on the 96,000-square-foot château.

Despite its grand scale, Leone insists the home has a remarkably human scale. "For such a large house, it's very homey. You don't feel like you're lost in space," he says. "The kitchen is spectacular, the living room is extraordinary and the office is to die for," reports Leone, who demurs from identifying his favorite room. "Every room is a work of art," he maintains, explaining that is why Le Palais Royal took so long to complete. Citing the home’s construction — poured concrete walls on a foundation of 1,300 piles — Leone also suggests that no modern-era home in America is so substantially engineered.

Literally a gilded palace, Le Palais Royal contains more than $6 million of 22-karat gold leaf, initially revealed on a 29-foot formal fountain in the motor court. Much more of it glitters from the wrought iron railing of a $2 million grand staircase clad in African marble. Hanging overhead is a spectacular 120-year-old Austrian crystal chandelier valued at $250,000, while more than $1 million was spent on trompe l'oeil murals that reinforce the Old World elegance. Skilled artisans from about 25 countries participated in creating the exquisite detail evident throughout this one-of-a-kind residence.

More than a dozen water features are found on the property, including a formidable 29-foot wall of water, a 4,000-square-foot resort-style infinity pool with a LED-lit double-loop slide and a glass-bottomed hot tub suspended above the grotto bar. The balcony of the master suite contains its own infinity-edge plunge pool and Le Palais Royal enjoys 465 feet of private Atlantic Ocean beach. Two docks can accommodate 140- and 200-foot mega-yachts respectively, and for those arriving by land, the home’s garage parks 30 cars.

Entertainment features include an 18-seat IMAX theater, the company’s first installation in a private residence, and a wine cellar accommodating more than 3,000 bottles. Showcased in Le Palais Royal’s crystal chandelier-illuminated kitchen are solid mahogany cabinetry inlaid with gold leaf, exotic Brazilian marble countertops and a Le Creuset range. Two 3,000-square-foot guesthouses, an ice skating rink and nightclub are planned for a second phase of construction.

"The house looks like a jewel because I was designing haute couture jewelry for 20 years," insists Leone, who reports international interest in the property.