



Portrait of Marc de Ladoucette

The man in question, charming and jovial, has been manufacturing decorative items for local authorities, companies and the general public for 15 years now. At first sight, this does not sound particularly exciting. Be that as it may, from his showroom, located just above his stylish Haussmannian apartment, Marc de Ladoucette is constantly coming up with new series of “little gifts” in the shape of old-style engravings or porcelain trinket dishes, destined particularly for those in the seats of government.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO... BRUSSELS

That’s the way things are today. Marc de Ladoucette’s main clients include every last European institution, from the Parliament to the Commission via the Court of Justice, the Court of Auditors and the Committee of the Regions; in short, every nook and cranny of the corridors of power. As a result, no high-ranking civil servant, Euro-MP or leading Brussels lawmaker is without at least one item bearing the ‘Marc de Ladoucette – Paris’ hallmark.

Even the loftiest heads of state cannot escape the irresistible reach of the man who freely admits that right from his earliest days in business, he wanted to sell beautiful items to political institutions in general and those of the European Union in particular.

He claims that this ambition is little more than the natural outworking of his background as a collector.

Rather than stamps or postcards, he collected maps, at least three or four centuries old. Born in Boulogne in 1965, he inherited an acute case of the collecting bug from his father, a diplomat who himself was a famous collector in his chosen realm – Ottoman scissiors.

“I travelled with him a lot. From the age of seven, he introduced me to the splendour of Iznik pottery during our regular escapades to the antiques dealers of the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul.”

A FAMILY OF COLLECTORS

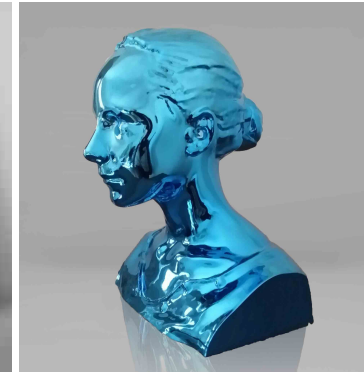
For the young Marc de Ladoucette – whose ancestors included leading shipowners from St Malo who, for generations, brought back myriads of ‘wonders’ winkled out from the four corners of the globe – this immersion into the world of ancient artefacts was an everyday experience. And so it was that the intense desire to work in an art-related field was born in him. Even so, his first steps involved a prudent three years’ worth of study at business school before taking his first steps in the world of work, in an agency specialising in PR and direct marketing.

He stayed there for four years, bored stiff – before a Damascus road moment when he beheld a map of Africa dating from the 18th century, a present from his father. Was it the naive yet poetic style? The sheen of the colours, recalling the works of his forefather Jacques de Boissieu, a celebrated artist and engraver who was a contemporary of this African map? Either way, the collecting bug for antique engravings sprang to life at that moment – the outcome of which was an extraordinary assortment of topographic maps, built up in just a few years.

WHEN PASSION GOES HAND IN HAND WITH BUSINESS

The idea of reproducing some of them gradually developed, until he finally took the plunge in 1993 using a technique in which colour is applied using a stencil, entirely by hand, in order to stay as faithful as possible to the original whilst at the same time ensuring a preservation process which makes the most of modern techniques. The last issue to be resolved was that of packaging. Following a number of trials, Marc de Ladoucette opted for a meticulously-styled tube, made using an ultra-luxurious leather-finish cardboard, with a little leaflet providing further details about the item inside.

Immediately taken with the idea, the EU institutions subsequently became completely hooked on these engravings – almost improvements on the originals, and delivered in similarly beautiful tubes, featuring blue sheathing embossed with the golden stars of the European flag. Not to be outdone, Paris City Council asked him to make an engraving based on a 17th-century map of the French capital. A whole host of other public bodies, such as the Normandy General Council, have followed suit. In addition to the tube, following the advice of one of his “patrons” at the Council of Europe who continually sang the praises of form over content, the engraver also developed packaging inspired by the shape of an artist’s portfolio and destined exclusively for gifts presented to heads of state – notably a magnificent series of some 15 black and white engravings based on the rape of the goddess Europa, as depicted by various great artists.



PICASSO ON PORCELAIN

In addition to engraving, Marc de Ladoucette is also an official supplier of porcelain items, manufactured for him in Limoges workshops, on which are portrayed drawings and paintings from centuries gone by. In actual fact, it was during a presentation of a prototype trinket dish featuring Pablo Picasso’s vision of the rape of Europa that his path crossed that of Claude, one of the Spanish master’s sons and the “guardian” of his estate. Impressed by the quality of workmanship, the latter gave his permission for the engraver to use eight of his father’s drawings to illustrate a series of a score or so of porcelain items, distributed in stores which also sell items from maisons such as Daum, Baccarat, Lalique and Hermès.