



Beauty beyond reason

THE ADDRESS

Baccarat has relocated to a legendary place situated at 11, place des Etats-Unis in Paris. The former muse of this unique private mansion, Marie-Laure de Noailles (1902-1971) threw magical parties there and in this magnificent place of pomp and tradition, made a salon dedicated to painters, writers and musicians. Time and again she would reorganize the layout and design of the mansion to suit her mood.

No setting could be better suited as the new home of Baccarat. Philippe Starck was immediately carried away by the idea of developing this magnificent project. He was given carte blanche and developed the extravagant scheme, full of wonderment and surprise for this leading international luxury brand.

The 3000 square meters of the former Noailles mansion will accommodate the Baccarat headquarters, its boutique and gallery-museum, a restaurant and the original grand ballroom of exceptional craftsmanship. It will be a

meeting place and the setting of the brand's most beautiful accomplishments: Art de Vivre, Jewelry and Accessories as well as legendary collections.

"Un soir, je dînai chez les Noailles. Leur maison m'intimidait et j'étais extrêmement flatté de voir mon Jeu Lugubre accroché à la cimaise entre un Cranach et un Watteau. La table était composée d'artistes et de gens du monde très divers. Je compris très vite que j'étais l'objet de l'attente générale. Je crois aussi que ma timidité touchait les Noailles en plein cœur. Chaque fois que le sommelier s'approchait de mon oreille pour me murmurer, très bas et sur le ton d'une confidence, le nom et l'année du vin, je croyais qu'il s'agissait de quelque chose de grave, que Gala avait été écrasée par un taxi, qu'un surréaliste furieux arrivait pour me rosser, et je sursautais, livide, prêt à quitter la table."

Salvador Dali, in *La vie secrète de Salvador Dali, La Table Ronde*, 1952.

THE MUSE

"Au cours de ce premier dîner chez les Noailles, je découvris deux choses. La première, c'était que l'aristocratie, ce que l'on appelait alors les "gens du monde", se révélait infiniment plus vulnérable à mon genre d'esprit que les artistes et les intellectuels."

Salvador Dali, op cit.

Marie-Laure de Noailles was born at the turn of the 20th century. A product of the union between a dynasty of German bankers and French aristocrats. A painter, a writer and a mostly patron, she was the queen of a very busy social and intellectual life during the first half of the 20th century, showing an inexhaustible spiritual curiosity and an unerring intuition for discovering talents.

Marie-Laure gave her financial support to "L'âge d'or" by Buñuel, "Le sang du poète" by Jean Cocteau, and "Les mystères du Château du Dé" by Man Ray. With her husband Charles de Noailles, she was among the first collectors of Mondrian works, she supported Dali when he started his career, welcomed Kurt Weill into her home, was the patron of Man Ray, launched Mallet Stevens who designed for the couple a villa of brilliant architecture in Hyères on the French Riviera, which has recently been restored after being left in a state of neglect for years.

From the Twenties on, Marie-Laure and her husband Charles de Noailles took up residence at 11, place des Etats-Unis and soon made it one of the most popular addresses with the Paris intelligentsia. Jean-Michel

Frank created for them a cream shagreen parchment-lined sitting room as well as a straw marquetry décor. His detractors made great fun of it...

Marie-Laure entertained a carefully studied mix of diplomats, princesses, actors and surrealist artists to unusual receptions dreamed of the world over. The Ball of the Materials (1929) and the Ball of the Moon-upon-Sea (1951) reflect an exceptional lifestyle, which is the subtle link between all the facets of art and talent.

THE MEMORY

"Le Sang d'un poète n'est que la descente en soi-même, une manière d'employer le mécanisme des rêves sans dormir, une bougie maladroite souvent éteinte par quelque souffle, promenée dans la nuit du corps humain..." Jean Cocteau.

In 1764 the King of France Louis XV granted the bishop of Metz to create a glass making establishment in Baccarat, which later gave rise to the present factory. In 1816, Aimé-Gabriel d'Artigues bought the glasshouse, had a crystal kiln built and transformed the plant into crystal works. In just a few years, Baccarat established itself as the leading French crystal manufacturer and soon became the most prestigious one worldwide.

Universal Exhibitions and commissions from the crowned heads punctuate the story of Baccarat. The first prestigious order was placed by King Louis XVIII, soon followed by the maharajas of Rajasthan, the Imperial House of Japan, the President of the United States Franklin D. Roosevelt, the kings of Morocco and of Arabia among many celebrities. At the turn of the 19th century, Baccarat was operating a furnace entirely dedicated to the production of crystal intended for the Court of Russia. Large caravans laden with the most precious crystal pieces would leave the factory and cross the entire European continent on their way to Russia.

The reputation of Baccarat kept growing with the years, built on the foundations of its know-how. Hiring the best glassworkers and cutters, setting the trends in crystal design, combining high manufacturing technology with the irreplaceable dexterity of man, such are the keys of the brand's success.

The Harcourt pattern created in 1841 is the timeless symbol of this perfection. With its large wide facets-cut from the block of crystal and its pure design, it still ranks today among Baccarat's bestsellers.

THE KNOW-HOW

Passed down over the centuries thanks to a strict policy of preserving its heritage, the vocation of Baccarat from the outset was to innovate in the fields of techniques and creation, focusing on constantly training its elite craftsmen; glassblowers, cutters and engravers whose talent today expresses itself with the same exacting standards of quality.

The crystal works boasts the largest concentration of "Meilleurs Ouvriers de France" (Best Workmen of France) in its field. This is a highly prestigious honor awarded to those who have achieved excellence in their craft. Eight of them were awarded this title in 2000, bringing a total of 25 of "Meilleurs Ouvriers de France" currently employed by the company in the fields of glassworking, cutting and engraving.

Baccarat was the first French crystal works producing crystal lighting pieces as well as coloured crystal objects as early as 1827. It was also the first one that launched into the making of perfume bottles in 1907.

Important efforts in the field of professional training are made every year to perpetuate the high level of this irreplaceable expertise in workmanship. The "Mémoire" collections, prestige limited re-editions of museum pieces launched every two years, greatly contribute towards keeping this worldwide unequalled know-how at its highest.

MODERNITY

A leading international luxury brand must keep pace with the trends times. From the day it was created, Baccarat expanded its influence all over the world, thanks to important prestigious commissions.

In 1948, Baccarat established a US subsidiary in New York, followed in 1984 by a Japanese subsidiary based in Tokyo.

In 1993, the brand launched into fashion and created a line of jewels followed by a collection of accessories and wristwatches. This new orientation soon became one of its greatest successes.

The creations of famous artists inspired by the magic of crystal such as Georges Chevalier, Van day Truex, Salvador Dali, Roberto Sambonet, Andrée Putman, Christian Tortu, César, Marcial Berro and Ettore Sottsass are the cornerstones which helped build the Art-de-Vivre collections.

Two thousand permanent references and two new collections a year in the jewels and home-decoration categories are displayed in its channel of proprietary boutiques and points of sale worldwide.

Baccarat is perpetuating the image of a cosmopolitan lifestyle in the great French tradition beautifully illustrated by its new Paris Headquarters located at 11, place des Etats-Unis.

"Projeté à un moment où les banques sautent, où les révoltes éclatent, où les canons commencent à sortir de l'arsenal, l'Age d'or devrait être vu de tous ceux que n'inquiètent pas encore les nouvelles que la censure laisse imprimer dans les journaux. C'est un complément moral indispensable aux alarmes boursières dont l'effet sera très direct, justement à cause de son caractère surréaliste."

Revue programme du Studio 28, in l'Age d'or, correspondance Luis Buñuel-Charles de Noailles, Lettres et documents (1929-1976). Hors série Archives, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1993.

THE SPIRIT

Baccarat is a source of masterly inspiration to Philippe Starck, who immediately saw how to give rise, in a place already laden with memories, to the part of phantasmagoria which the famous luxury brand evokes.

"To me, the gist of Baccarat is a world of illusion originating from the glitter of light on the facets of cut crystal, and it led me to dream up a crystal palace where everything is possible. The interplay of light and crystal turns into mental and poetic games in which everything is relative and subject to illusion. It perfectly corresponds to the attitude I like in life, this deep understanding that all that is relative becomes a supreme way to love and dream. Dreams, symbols and reality mingle all the time, like this fire permanently burning in the two monumental chimneys right at the entrance, this crystal hand held out, the mouth of the glassworkers who express their exceptional know-how in images projected onto the Négus monumental vases of the stairway, like the canopy painted by Gérard Garouste and inspired by the symbols of crystal alchemy: air, water, earth and fire."

Contrasts again, between the magnificent chandeliers, the crystal collections and the crude concrete of the boutique's walls, the lit chandelier floating in a giant aquarium, the hall's monumental chair worthy of "Alice in Wonderland"... Magical chandeliers seem to flicker in the breeze, a luminous carpet shows the way into a Palace of Light Cocteau would not have denied and where the memory of Marie-Laure de Noailles, this great friend of the Surrealists and of Jean Cocteau himself, is probably still lingering...

"Je ne suis ni à la hauteur de votre force, ni de votre pureté. Je vous aime trop pour ne pas les subir de toute mon âme et chaque fois qu'il faut retomber ensuite dans le coutumier, le terrestre, je me meurtris et je fais du mal autour de moi. On ne peut pas "moucher les enfants" et "beurrer leurs tartines" et celles des poètes. Vous avez été présent dans mon cœur pendant une si longue absence que je sais que plus rien au monde ne peut changer - en dehors de la mort - le sentiment plus fort que l'amour : l'amitié quasi divine qui me maintiendra toujours à vos côtés."

Lettre de Marie-Laure de Noailles à Jean Cocteau, mars 1933. Cité in "La Vicomtesse du bizarre", Laurence Benaïm, Grasset, 2001.

THE DESIGNER

"Starck recalls spending his childhood underneath his father's drawing boards; hours spent sawing, cutting, gluing, sanding, dismantling bikes, motor cycles and other objects.

Endless hours, a whole lifetime spent taking apart and putting back together whatever comes to hand, remaking the world around him.

Several years and several prototypes later, the Italians have made him responsible for our furniture, President Mitterand asked him to change life at the Elysées Palace, the Café Costes has become Le Café, he has turned the Royalton and Paramount in New York into the new classics of the hotel world and scattered Japan with architectural tours de force that have made him the leading exponent of expressionist architecture. His respect for the environment and for humankind has also been recognized in France, where he was commissioned to design the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, the control tower at Bordeaux airport, and a waste recycling plant in Paris metropolitan area.

Abroad, he continues to shake up the traditions and culture of major cities around the world, with the decoration of the Peninsula Hotel restaurant in Hong Kong, the Teatron in Mexico, the Hotel Delano in Miami, the Mondrian in Los Angeles, the Asia de Cuba restaurant in New York, and a whole clutch of projects under way in London and elsewhere. His gift is to turn the object of his commission instantly into a place of charm, pleasure and encounters.

An honest, enthusiastic citizen of today's world, he considers it his duty to share with us his subversive vision of a better world which is his alone and yet which fits up like a glove.

He is tireless in changing the realities of our daily life, sublimating our roots and the deepest wellsprings of our being into his changes. He captures the essential spirit of the sea for Béneteau, turns the toothbrush into a noble object, squeezes lemons but the "wrong" way, and even makes our TV sets more fun to be with when he brings his "emotional style" into Thomson's electronic world. He also takes time out to change our pasta, our ash-trays, lamps, toothbrushes, door handles, cutlery, candlesticks, kettles, knives, vases, clocks, scooters, motorcycles, desks, beds, taps, baths, toilets... in short, our whole life. A life that he finds increasingly fascinating, which has brought him now closer to the human body with clothes, underwear, shoes, glasses, watches, food, toiletries et al., still determined that his designs shall, as ever, respect the nature and the future of mankind.

The world's museums are unerring. Paris, New York, Munich, London, Chicago, Kyoto, Barcelona - all exhibit his work as that of a master.

Prizes and awards are showered on him: designer of the year, Grand Prix for Industrial Design, the Oscar for Design, Officier des Arts et des Lettres, and many more.

Always and everywhere, he seems to understand better than any other our dreams, our desires, our needs, and our responsibility to the future, as well the overriding need to respect his fellow citizens by making his work a political and a civic act.

Crazy, warm yet terribly lucid, he draws without respite, out of necessity, driven by a sense of urgency, for himself and for others. He touches us through his work, which is fine and intelligent indeed, but most of all touches us because he puts his heart into that work, creating objects that are good even before they are beautiful."

(by Ed Mae Cooper)

Starck takes no notice of the times, since in his opinion, time as distances do not exist. He draws his inspiration equally from the past -archetypes and singularities alike- and from the future behavior of his human brothers, which partly explains his sense of relativity.

The carte blanche offered to him by Baccarat couldn't but appeal to him. Baccarat embodies the past, the present and the future with prestige; it epitomizes the alchemy of the molten material, crystallized and crafted into light-trapping objects, optical illusions, a kaleidoscope of the matter. A dream that was a match for him, and which he made come true.

THE PAINTER

Gérard Garouste is a painter inspired by the founder myths of humanity. Be it legends, biblical texts, epic stories or philosophical tales, he finds in his proclivity towards dream and imagination the subjects and reflection which bring to life his finest paintings, drawings, sculptures, engravings, his most beautiful metaphysical and universal illustrations originating in the collective memory, from the most brilliant to the most obscure.

Garouste creates monumental frescoes as well as illuminations - the size and support of which are only means of experiment -, illustrating the themes of Dante's Divine Comedy, the biblical Haggada, or Don Quixote of Cervantes. When Philippe Starck sought his collaboration, the alchemy of crystal that is Baccarat's distinctive feature immediately evoked to him the legend of the Athanor, this Philosophers' secret hearth of constant temperature condemned to spread only when in contact with art.

Blue (the Air blown into the moulds), Green (the nearby river's essential Water), Black (the Earth, a mixture of oxide, sand, silica and lead), and Red (the Fire necessary for the melting of the raw materials and for the alchemy of crystal crafted into exceptional objects) were his sources of inspiration and the symbolic colours of the painted canopy he has created for the gallery-museum.

Gérard Garouste lives and works most of the time in a village situated in the Eure region. He pays great attention to the rest of the world as to its weaknesses, to the point of succeeding in stirring it when he does not approve. In 1990, he created an immediately successful association called "La Source" which offers the problem youth, as means of rehabilitation, a concrete approach to art in all its forms. The workshops are open and enjoy the collaboration of many of his artist friends such as Boltansky, Di Rosa or Combas.

Among his public commissions, Gérard Garouste created the stained-glass windows of the church of Talant in Burgundy, the painted curtain of the "Théâtre du Châtelet" in Paris and the ceiling of the Mons theatre in Belgium, as well as various works for the Cartier Foundation and the National Library of France.

THE PLACE

"Oh ! Sommeil, Oh ! Soleil, ma vie sera soumise à tes lois. Et je fermerai les yeux quand tu disparaîtras."

Le mystère du Château du Dé, Man Ray, 1929.

The relocation of Baccarat highlights the brand's deep evolution. It will feature among the major steps taken by the company with the passing centuries. Baccarat made the choice of reviving the place's spirit and memory by re-creating a house of exceptional hospitality. The visitor will marvel at the quality of the setting and the magic of the place, then discover the whole range of Home collections, have some refreshments or a meal at the "Cristal Room Baccarat" before admiring the gallery-museum's historical collections as its temporary exhibitions. The layout features a first section dedicated to monumental pieces and filled with thematic display cabinets. Next, a rotunda formerly decorated by Jean-Michel Frank and today out of service, screened from view by a canvas canopy painted by Gérard Garouste. It showcases pieces of outstanding craftsmanship.

The last section presents thematic display cabinets. The whole area is shrouded in a magical atmosphere of semi-darkness and selective theatrical lighting. On the same floor, the Ball Room evoking famous filmsettings has been preserved in its original state, in the spirit of an 18th - century Italian palazzo. It seems to echo with the famous receptions Marie-Laure de Noailles used to give there. Its wood panelling and its paintings achieved by a Tiepolo's disciple come from a Napolitan palace. This ball room will play host to temporary exhibitions, special events, fashion shows and other receptions.

THE GALLERY-MUSEUM

In the gallery-museum, the quintessence of the brand's prestigious collections is on exhibit following an evolving museum approach that reflects a gallery spirit rather than that of a museum. Dazzling special commissions, sets of glasses of exceptional craftsmanship, vases and decorative objects demonstrating unequalled technical and stylistic skills mirror the evolution of the different movements of Decorative Arts.

The first section "Folie des Grandeurs" showcases monumental pieces such as the Tsar Nicholas II's candelabra, the Tsarina's candelabra, as well as the Ferrières pieces of furniture commissioned in olden times by maharajas and delivered on elephant's back.

The next section "Alchemy, by Gérard Garouste" is a rotunda dedicated to the exceptional know-how. Fully decorated by the painter, it accommodates a canopy representing an allegory on the theme of the four elements: Water, Earth, Air and Fire, which are also the constituents essential to the almost alchemical making of crystal. In this space a series of extraordinary pieces are on exhibit. The ultimate, a famous pair of vases engraved by "Simon", precisely modelled with the "Water Allegory" and the "Earth Allegory", and the chessboard of which some pieces were sources of inspiration to Garouste are shown.

The "Beyond transparency" space houses four thematic display cases: "Tales from Afar", "Designers", "Celebrities" and "Femininity and Lightness", illustrating the various facets of Baccarat's exceptional know-how. The legendary pieces presented at the Universal Exhibitions recount all the technical skills in term of ornamentation, whether cutting, wheel-engraving, enamelling and gilding: "Turkish enamelled mocha coffee set" – flagship of the 1878 Exhibition - or the "Elephant vase", dated 1880. Worth admiring are the limited-edition collections created by renowned designers such as Georges Chevalier, Ettore Sottsass, Roberto Sambonet, Van day Truex and Marcial Berro; the prestigious commissions from heads of states, royal or imperial courts from the world over as well as from international celebrities (the Emperor of Japan, the Prince of Wales, Josephine Baker...).

One display cabinet highlights the technical feats of glassworking: vases, dishes and stemware on a mouth-blown hollow stem of incredible lightness.

THE TEMPTATIONS

The ground floor plays host to the Home, Decoration, Jewels and Accessories boutique in which the full range of the Baccarat collections from lighting pieces to watches are on display. In a setting of concrete that gives on a patio, Philippe Starck once again accentuated the contrast between the intentionally crude appearance of the walls and the Baccarat-designed sophisticated furniture: imposing mirror and crystal display windows, giant 13-meter-long lit table with a crystal base, accommodating the entire range of the Home Decoration collections. A special area is dedicated to the jewels and accessories collections, while a private lounge allows welcoming interior designers and VIPs in an atmosphere more propitious to choices requiring specific attention.

A gallery adjacent to the boutique puts the collection of lighting pieces into perspective. The boutique's furniture, the table and chairs fitted with a crystal base, are Starck's creations and available to order. On the gallery-museum's floor, a mini-concept store presents a selection of impulse-buy Baccarat products to buy without reservation as the tangible evidence of a visit to this exceptional place.

LA CRISTAL ROOM BACCARAT

In the heart of the magnificent first-floor lounges, the "Cristal Room Baccarat" is a genuine living space situated in the former dining room of Marie-Laure de Noailles. Philippe Starck chose to preserve its original design while giving it a necessary touch of modernism and daring. Meals are served in an extremely sophisticated setting of plain bricks set in wood panelling and gilts. The furniture has been specially designed by Philippe Starck for Baccarat.

Since 2009, new chef Guy Martin, international stars renowned chef, and his second chef Thomas L'Hérison, run the orchestration of the restaurant. The repertoire of dishes changes regularly according to the season and the delivery of fresh quality-products by independent producers.

The menu offers a subtle combination of tastes, with an emphasis on the quality and freshness of the products, from the main courses to the desserts.

This extraordinary space is available for private parties and will be frequented by a cosmopolitan crowd worthy of the most successful receptions given at the Hôtel de Marie-Laure de Noailles, to which modernity primarily means memory.