THE LUMINARIES ISSUE
Knowledge Illuminates

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A Bright Spark
Art is essential in nourishing the young and creating an escape from everyday routines.
by Marie-Laure de Clermont-Tonnerre

With a stiff curriculum at most schools and a ‘one-size-fits-all’ examination system, funding creativity in the young could not be money better spent, creating innovation within the next generation of luminaries.

Developing one’s expressiveness from a young age is crucial, as it allows you to assert oneself uniquely. At school, we learn that there is only one specific way to solve problems, whereas there is no correct way to generate new ideas in creative subjects.

Unlike the single-path education that academia provides, the creative one teaches how to see the world from different perspectives. In my experience it also increases productivity and efficiency. When children come up with an idea, they are more likely to be able to find ways to work around potential barriers and achieve this idea because of learning to think outside of the box.

When my children were younger, I used to take them around museums and galleries in Paris and London to learn elements of philosophy, politics, history and creativity through painting, sculpture and architecture, as much as for fulfilment and enlightenment. For example, I am a member of the commissioning committee for the Hayward Gallery, directed by the inspirational Ralph Rugoff, as I believe that art makes us see the world differently. It is essential in nourishing us and creating an escape from the everyday routine. Art touches you on multiple levels and unlocks emotions. This year we commissioned the large outdoor interactive sculpture The Hop displayed at the South Bank Centre by the artist Jyll Bradley.

This way of conceiving art inspired me to create Spirit Now London, an international community of art and culture lovers that aims to promote emerging and mid-career artists from France and the UK. Despite the challenges of Brexit, we create bridges between culture, art, and design between the two countries. We also support institutions and some of their exhibitions. For instance, this year we chose Iranian artist Soheila Sokhanvari for her exhibition at the Barbican, curated by Eleanor Nairne, whom we have been following for a while. Other special projects will be revealed this autumn.

Critical thinking and problem-solving are alive and well in the art room, as we are confronted with analysing and being faced with decisions that help develop the brain. Open-ended problems always need solving by an individual. Furthermore, the foundation I established with my husband Jean-François de Clermont-Tonnerre in 2009 has been involved in the art world for many years, awarding a yearly scholarship to a student at the École des Beaux-Arts de Paris, as well as supporting the Zao Wou-Ki Foundation and the French Cinémathèque.

Overall, our ambition is to bring young people who need it the boost that will allow them to understand tomorrow’s world in the best way, to become relevant players who understand the ethical, scientific and artistic issues of the future. We firmly believe that it is through education that we can engage.

Marie-Laure de Clermont-Tonnerre is co-founder of the Jean-François and Marie-Laure de Clermont-Tonnerre Foundation and founder of Spirit Now London, a non-profit association whose funds are distributed to cultural institutions to support emerging artists, exhibitions or cultural institutions in France and the UK.
Wu Chi-Tsung, Cyano-collage 012, Cyanotype, paper, acrylic gel, 2017. The artist is supported through Spirit Now London.
French luxury and fashion houses are reaffirming their commitment to artisanal heritage.

by Clara Le Fort and Shane Wilkinson

To survive and thrive in a competitive landscape, French luxury fashion houses are seeking to protect and breathe life back into the grassroots of their heritage. We look at how four bastions of the French luxury industry are nurturing craftmanship with flair and creativity with their charitable foundations.
Founded by Hermès Foundation in 2016, the Manufacto programme offers students of all levels (primary, middle and high school) the opportunity to create an object during 12 workshop sessions with a craftsman, an assistant and a teacher.
“It can change how their families and teachers perceive them, it can reveal skills, as well as have a positive impact on the orientation of the child.” — Laurent Pejoux
In 2021, LVMH Métiers d'Art’s artistic residency invited Franco-Danish painter Eva Nielsen to work with two of the group’s expert tanneries.
“The artistic foundation promotes the know-how and possibilities of the materials; in return, this stimulates the spirit of creativity and innovation of craftsmen, when faced with the vision of an artist.” — Léa Chauvel-Lévy

LVMH
Founded in 2016, the artistic residency LVMH Métiers d’Art sets out to encourage and stimulate the spirit of innovation among artisans. “We invite an artist and one or more manufacturers together to work in close partnership for six months. The principle of this cooperation is to use the raw materials and know-how of leading manufacturers in their fields as sources for a major artistic project,” says director Léa Chauvel-Lévy.

In early 2021, the foundation welcomed the Franco-Danish painter Eva Nielsen, winner of the Aubusson Tapestry Grand Prix in 2017, to create works of art combining leather and silk in collaboration with two French manufacturers: Tanneries Roux, recognised for its know-how in calfskin tanning and finishing; and Twinpix, a silk-printing workshop using double-sided printing technologies. “The artistic foundation promotes the know-how and possibilities of the materials; in return, this stimulates the spirit of creativity and innovation of craftsmen, when faced with the vision of an artist,” adds Léa Chauvel-Lévy.
Chanel

At Chanel, fine craftsmanship is at the forefront, as seen with its 19M, the new 25,500-square-metre, triangular workshop dedicated to artistic craftsmanship. Located at Porte d’Aubervilliers in the north of Paris, it carries the initial ‘M’ for Main, Métier and Mode, and 19 as a reference to Coco Chanel’s birthdate of 19th August 1883, as well as being in the 19th arrondissement. The building brings together 600 craftsmen and women on five levels: embroiderer Lesage; shoemaker Massaro; feather and flower expert Lemarié; and hatter and milliner Maison Michel rub shoulders there.

In choosing 19M as the setting for the Métiers d’Art 2021-22 show, Chanel reaffirmed its desire to celebrate artisanal heritage. In this same environment, eight authors were invited to talk about the craftsmanship of the house and to celebrate its richness and diversity. Initiatives were born out of their visits: intimate stories; micro-fiction; poems; letters; and free association of memories all paying homage to an artisanal heritage and movement.

Fondation Bettencourt Schueller

The founding sponsor of the Campus Versailles, Heritage and Crafts of Excellence project held at the Château de Versailles is the Fondation Bettencourt Schueller. It supports a training, research and economic development programme intended to shine a light abroad.

“This campus fully fits into the philanthropic commitment of the foundation to promote the contemporary dimension of fine crafts. It will contribute to training a new generation of artisans more concerned with societal issues and more open to dialogue, and bring a better match between training and the needs of professionals,” says Olivier Brault, director of the foundation.

Since the 1980s, Fondation Bettencourt Schueller has been committed to contributing to the influence and revitalisation of heritage professions, supporting craftsmen as the engines of ecological transition.

The foundation also sponsors Villa Albertine, a cultural institution building a community for arts and ideas between France and the US. It has supported artistic and design residencies in 10 US cities since November 2021. “Accessing the US market for artists and craftsmen contributes to the influence of the sector internationally by allowing craftsmen to meet the major players in the US,” says Brault.
Inside Chanel’s 19M, a new 25,500-square-metre building dedicated to artistic craftsmanship.
Regenerative Design

The future of sustainable design lies in an approach that questions the whole process.

by Clara Le Fort

It can be difficult to navigate between so-called ‘green washing’ and design innovations that truly foster change and positive impact. The first approach pushes towards consuming more and doesn’t really look at changing the system from within. Just by selecting an alternative or better-sourced material (for example, adopting recycled plastic or FSC-certified wood) is usually enough to call a design ‘sustainable’ when such processes should really be the norm.
A truly sustainable approach to design questions the whole process, from the hand that produces it and delivers it through to the product’s longevity and the way it can be repaired, reused or completely recycled. Generated from waste and/or designed to outlive its buyer, this definition of sustainable design looks into having a regenerative impact, offsetting what production takes away from the natural world and, sometimes, to create something that is better.

The following projects are some examples of truly regenerative design.

Brodie Neill, Material Consciousness
Presented at Sotheby’s London, London-based Australian designer Brodie Neill unveiled his new Material Consciousness collection this spring. Showcased as a triptych, the nine limited-edition pieces reveal Neill’s restless approach to material research. For over a decade, the designer has investigated materials to resolve complex issues of waste and the world’s finite resources. In 2016, Neill produced the critically acclaimed installation Plastic Effects for London Design Biennale, launching a Gyro table composed of thousands of ocean plastic fragments. Material Consciousness expresses Neill’s deep understanding of process and his desire to reshape the world’s most precious materials.

Elena Checci, specialist 20th century design at Sotheby’s London, says: “What is captivating about Neill’s work is his creation of beautifully crafted designs realised through the development of innovative processes. From salvaging, transforming and ennobling abandoned materials to plastic waste, recyclable metal and reclaimed wood.”

The nine limited-edition pieces are made out of Ocean Terrazzo, upcycled timber and recycled metals. Ocean Terrazzo was developed in collaboration with an international network of scientists, researchers, environmental experts, beachcombers, engineers, artisans and manufacturers. The terrazzo-like composite is made of reconstituted small fragments of plastic washed up on the shores around the globe.

The first trio is composed of the Gyro Second Wave, Jetsam and Flotsam tables. The second set of pieces (Torso side tables, Longitude bench and Altitude chair) is sculpted out of exotic hardwoods salvaged from demolitions: for example, a 60-year-old herringbone floor from a school or mahogany floorboards from a hospital. The last three pieces (Atmos console, Atmos desk and @Chair) explore the potential of stainless steel and bronze.

www.brodieneill.com
For Sotheby’s show Material Consciousness, Brodie Neill produced new limited edition pieces like the Gyro Second Wave (top), a contemporary rendition of a 19th century tabletop that substitutes traditional marble, timber, and ivory with Ocean Terrazzo; the @ Chair sculpted in recyclable metal (middle); and the Atmos Desk finished in a two-toned technique of a mirror-polished void and satin metallic exterior. All © Angela Moore.
Royal College of Arts, Terra Carta Design Lab winners

The Royal College of Art is collaborating with HRH The Prince of Wales’ Sustainable Markets Initiative to deliver the Terra Carta Design Lab, inviting students and recent alumni to develop credible and sustainable solutions to the climate crisis.

This year, the four winners of the Terra Carta Design Lab competition are: a wearable device for cows to reduce methane emissions; a clean-tech start-up spearheading the capture and monitoring of tyre wear (a greater source of pollution than car emissions); a recyclable and chemical-free outdoor performance textile; and aerodynamic seed pods made from food waste that can activate plant and tree restoration.

Called Aerseeds, the latter looks at deforestation and climate change in an innovative way. Founded by twin sisters Begum and Bike Ayaskan, they hope “Aerseeds will inspire people to bring nature into the centre of the discussion, and work with nature’s forces to find simpler solutions to climate change”.

Trees naturally absorb and store carbon dioxide but when forests are cleared, or even disturbed, they release carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. Today, forest loss and damage are the cause of around 10 percent of global warming, so reforestation and restoration are an important part of the fight against climate change. The sisters designed Aerseeds as aerodynamic nutrient and seed pods made from food waste that work with nature to accelerate regeneration. Mimicking natural processes, the pods are carried by the wind to cover large areas and reach difficult terrains, where they deliver nutrients and seeds to soils depleted by human activity.

www.rca.ac.uk/business/terra-carta-design-lab

“Aerseeds will inspire people to work with nature’s forces to find simpler solutions to climate change.” — Begum and Bike Ayaskan
Aerseeds, an award-winning regenerative design project by Royal College of Art graduates Bike and Begum Ayaskan.
Based in Burkina Faso, Maison Intègre Editions has been committed since its inception to actively supporting and fostering the country’s craft legacy. Founded in 2017 by Ambre Jarno, Maison Intègre creates bronze objects based on the ancestral knowledge of lost wax. Hand-made in small series from recycled metals, each piece is sculpted in collaboration with Burkinabe bronzesmiths. From reinterpreting everyday Western African objects, Maison Intègre moved on to inviting designers or artists to imagine bronze design pieces. In 2022, Jarno even built a studio that supports 15 local artisans and their families.

French designer Noé Duchaufour-Lawrance spent time in Ouagadougou sculpting seven unique objects. Each draws inspiration from Burkina Faso’s vernacular architecture and archetypal forms, such as the Lobi Ladder he saw when visiting a Kassena village. Duchaufour-Lawrance also translated forms traditionally sculpted in wood or hand-formed in clay into bronze, an example being the Mask Sconce. Premiering at New York’s Ateliers Courbet, the collection is a perfect example of regenerative design in that it ‘repairs’ and highlights the essential links and craft techniques of a community.

“Everyday life in Burkina Faso is craft-based. You have to be creative, engage with makers and constantly find solutions. Everything is repurposed, repaired, and transformed with a natural grace, yet designs always remain essential and functional. Inclusive and community-based, this process is what drives Maison Intègre Editions today,” says Jarno.

www.maisonintegre.com
Newly released in New-York, Maison Intègre Editions x Noé Duchaufour-Lawrance’s collection of bronze objects is handcrafted in Burkina Faso.
Fernando Laposse, Totomoxtle/Dogs

London-based Mexican designer Fernando Laposse develops objects and materials to have historical and cultural ties to a particular location. For example, Laposse often works with indigenous communities in his native Mexico to create local employment opportunities and raise awareness about the challenges such communities face in a globalised world: loss of biodiversity, community dissolution, migration and the negative impacts of global trade in local agriculture and food culture.

Totomoxtle is a new veneer material made with husks of heirloom Mexican corn. Ranging from deep purples to soft creams, Totomoxtle showcases the wealth of diversity of the native corns of Mexico, which are naturally colourful and essential for the rich gastronomy of the country. The project also focuses on regenerating traditional agricultural practices in Mexico and creating a new craft that generates income for impoverished farmers, promoting the preservation of biodiversity for future food security. Totomoxtle operates in partnership with the community of Tonahuixtla to reintroduce native seeds in the village and return to traditional agriculture. The husks collected from the harvest are now transformed by a group of local women into the veneering material, thus creating much needed local employment. This project exemplifies the power of design to transform, repair, and promote social cohesion.

The Dogs follow a similar approach. Benches are made with sisal, raw fibres from the leaves of the agave plant that are typically used to make ropes, carpets and fishing nets. Once a large industry in Mexico, the production of sisal came to a grinding halt after the invention of plastics. By replanting agaves to produce sisal, Laposse contributes to the fight against the erosion of soils. He harvests the plant to extract fibres and knot them by hand. “I hope this complete process can remind us that some answers to environmental challenges can be found in traditional crafts rather than exclusively in new technological discoveries,” says Laposse.

www.fernandolaposse.com
Mexican-based designer Fernando Laposse’s latest project is the Dog Bench designed using a local agave fibre, called sisal. The designer only works with natural materials.
The secular French manufacture has been working with the bees since 1643.
Trudon’s relationship with history is a rich one. Founded in 1643 by merchant Claude Trudon, the candlemaker supplied local customers and churches before the invention of electricity. In 1719 it became a Royal Manufacture, the one and only candle manufacture to ever obtain this title. By 1737, the manufacture run by Jérôme Trudon was further perfecting the art of manufacturing white beeswax candles. Its meaningful motto was ‘Deo regique laborant’, which means: ‘The bees work for God and the King.’ In 1811, the manufacture started supplying the imperial court of France and in 1889, the Carrière brothers, successors of the Trudon family and knowhow, won a gold medal at the World Exposition for the innovation of their candles.
“Trudon is still built on a secular expertise that was never interrupted… Napoleon was one of the first high-profile customers of the Royal Manufacture.” — Julien Pruvost

With excellence at its core, Trudon continues to thrive today on its rich historical legacy. “Trudon is still built on a secular expertise that was never interrupted,” says Julien Pruvost, the brand’s creative director, who has developed a series of products around Trudon’s expertise as a wax-maker and perfumer. Recently unveiled, Marquis de Lafayette’s bust is hand-crafted in wax after Houdon’s famous sculpture of the Franco-American hero. Lafayette joins Napoleon and Marie-Antoinette in this prestigious gallery of portraits developed in collaboration with the Réunion des Musées Nationaux — Grand Palais. The council has granted Trudon exclusive rights to reproduce in wax a few masterpieces from the Molding Atelier catalogue.

In the same manner, Trudon is also revisiting history with a contemporary approach to imagine noble perfumes, creative scented candles and elegant objects. For example, the Cyrnos candle was designed after Napoleon III’s wife Empress Eugenie and her magnificent Villa Cynnos at Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, which overlooks the Mediterranean Sea on the French Riviera. “Napoleon was the first customer of the Royal Manufacture. As a tribute to Villa Cynnos’s gardens, we created a floral perfume as a mix of lavender with the dry aromas of Provence: lemon, myrtle, thyme, black fig and pine,” says Pruvost. The candle adorned with a gold emblem is joined by L’Œuf, a resolutely modern perfume diffuser and scented object for the home. Standing out as a Renaissance symbol inspired by ancient ‘cabinet of curiosities’, its satin-black, turned-wood base welcomes a sculptural biscuit egg, complete with a handful of black sticks. Beyond its minimalist elegance, L’Œuf also evokes Imperial Fabergé eggs.

Trudon also recently unveiled a genderless line of perfumes. Created by Lyn Harris, Revolution is a “smoky messenger of
A Royal manufacture, Trudon has modernised its craft while respecting the brand’s heritage. Left, the Trudon room spray was designed by Pauline Deltour and is handmade in Italy. Above, scented candles are finished manually. Below, Trudon supports a conservation project that helps protect the endemic European black bee.
From top: Hand-finishing a historical bust.
Middle: Each scented candle of The Alabaster collection is unique, handmade from a solid block of alabaster.
Below: The Trudon diffuser designed by Pauline Deltour.
“Revolution captures a moment in history, a period when smells were raw and prevailed everywhere. History is alive in this composition where smoke, wood, leather and incense reign.” — Lyn Harris

both a beginning and an end” with notes that encapsulate the streets of Paris during the French Revolution. “Revolution captures a moment in history, a period when smells were raw and prevailed everywhere. History is alive in this composition where smoke, wood, leather and incense reign. Yet modern elements in the formula let the scent breathe. A form of harmony is born out of these contrasting notes, leaving a chic, clean, smoky wood-scented backdrop that remains on the skin,” says Lyn Harris. Recent additions to the perfume collection include Elae, Medie and Aphélie. Extremely feminine, bathed in light and freshness, Elae unfolds like a bouquet of white petals with woody notes, filled with warmth and tenderness; Medie is a symphony of citrus, the perfume’s roots evoke the kingdom of Alexander the Great, under which the province of Medie abounded with rare citruses; and, imbued in romanticism, Aphélie is a cocktail of green, vegetal notes filled with sap that speak of a nature that bounces back.

The Alabasters collection marries strength and elegance. Sculpted in Spain out of a single block, each scented candle reveals the alabaster’s white minerality, delicate veins and remarkable finesse, which ideally filters light. Praised since antiquity by Greeks, Egyptians and Romans, alabaster is a soft stone. Countless artefacts carved out of alabaster are held in museums around the globe. Replacing the traditional Trudon green candle-glass, the alabaster container together with a one-of-a-kind matching top are manufactured by hand. Exclusive to the collection, Héméra, Atria and Vesta are a trio of luminous scents that are altogether sensual.

Equally part of Trudon’s rich heritage, the bee present on the brand’s golden emblem continues to be an obvious source of inspiration for the brand. The Cire candle diffuses a rich mix of beeswax, which Louis XIV and the royal court must have embraced and surrounded themselves with four centuries ago.
For chef Antoine Gras, Val d’Isère in France is more than a ski resort, it is a rich ecosystem of producers, dairy farmers, wild herbs, scents and flavours. His stellar cuisine at Les Barmes de l’Ours is showcased inside a vast room redesigned and hand-manufactured by local carpenter Christophe Mattis: salvaged and reclaimed wood is mixed with mirrors and textiles that hint at rocks and rivers to compose a unique alpine décor.
“I want my cuisine to be part of the local culinary history and, when products travel longer distances, I cook them using alpine techniques.”
— Antoine Gras

The chef’s approach is both contemporary and rooted in rural traditions: “I want my cuisine to be part of the local culinary history and, when products travel longer distances, I cook them using alpine techniques,” Gras adds.

Made with carrots, gentian and hazelnuts, his langoustine is a tribute to mountain fields, the gentian being traditionally used to distil strong liqueurs. The turbot wrapped in cabbage leaf has become another signature dish; it is simmered slowly in a casserole dish, like a hearty Savoyard stew. The chefs also hand-pick aged cheese vintages and source local freshwater fish such as féra (which is similar to pike). His cuisine would not be complete without his jus. “It is what gives personality to a dish: we develop complex bases that are worked on over time, then rested and further reduced. My passion for sauces was passed on to me by Arnaud Donckele [three-Michelin-starred chef], with whom I worked a lot with and learnt even more from.”

Born in the Auvergne and raised by a father who was a cabinet maker, Gras likes working from a raw product to refine it; his grandparents were farmers who raised pigs and grew vegetables, which pushes him to work with the best seasonal produce.

Spending winters in Val d’Isère and summers in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, Gras adapts his recipes to the local terroir. His goat’s cheese tartelette with mousse, combined with a cottage-cheese sorbet, is made using fresh goat’s milk from an organic farm two minutes’ away from the restaurant, local mountain milk and walnuts, and cottage cheese from the nearest village.

In a similar manner, Gras prepares daily a combination of smoked butter, raw butter and whipped butter that he places on every table, every night. During summer months he forages herbs and plants to either dry or preserve them for the next season. Gras even prepares gentian and juniper oils and vinegars in summer that add a twist to hearty winter stews. His daily commitment to local farmers and community is clearly what helps him steer his cuisine in a creative, sustainable and alpine direction.

www.hotellesbarmes.com
Clockwise from Top: Young 1-Michelin star chef Antoine Gras promotes local alpine produce with a stellar, gastronomic vision. Dinners take place near the fireplace in the heart of winter. Local crozet - small buckwheat square pasta – gratinated with aged Beaufort cheese, served with smoked sausage, black truffle and oxalis leaves. Charcoaled leek served with smoked eel condiment, French schrenki caviar, nasturtium leaves and lemon zest.