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AP Limited Editions beats the odds and creates success with a focus on art and culture.

Uncommon Artistry, Uncommon Success

BY NICKY PESSAROFF



It's not uncommon for new names to pop up in pen-dom now and then, but it is somewhat rare for an unknown brand to demonstrate staying power. That's one of the things that makes AP Limited Editions unique; the relative newcomer continues to make some serious noise in artistic limited editions.

Anuj Poddar, founder of AP Limited Editions, began his company in 2006, and the response was astonishing. AP pens quickly garnered a reputation among collectors and connoisseurs for quality and craftsmanship. But make no mistake, it's taken constant hard work on the part of Poddar and his staff to consistently create fine works of art. "I divide my time between the United States and Singapore with frequent visits to Europe and other parts of the world,"

Poddar says. "The travel gives me the opportunity to find inspiration in various different cultures and environs."

Poddar's entire experience with pens is informed by culture. His love for pens began at age nine, growing up in India, where he was introduced to fountain pens. After relocating to England in his teenage years, Poddar saved his money for pens and dreamed of having his own pen line. However, Poddar spent years building his own collection, meeting other collectors and attending pen shows before finally putting the proverbial pen to paper and starting AP Limited Editions. Perhaps that is why AP's pen offerings seemed so dynamic so soon: they were years in the planning.

Essentially, AP's production is divided between limited editions and one-of-a-kind pieces, and production

numbers—even in the largest editions—are kept low. For example, the Water Snake Pen, new this year in honor of the Chinese Year of the Snake, is limited to only nine pens. Total. Poddar says, "Our edition sizes are very limited, so our pens are very scarce and unique. Our collectors enjoy the fact that our pens are so rare and special."

Poddar understands the nature of pen collectors, and as a result, he creates a product that attends to every detail. "Our customers are discerning and understand the value of their acquisitions," Poddar says. "We are driven by passion and the continuous pursuit of perfection in quality of the art form and technical features of our pens. We have constantly engaged customer feedback in our creations. Our pens are both works of art and perfect



Le Cirque, an example of Russian miniature art and a tribute to the history of the circus from AP Limited Editions

opposite, from left Wisdom and Power, Ganesha 108 and Garden of Tsuru pens by AP Limited Editions



Commemorating the Year of the Water Snake, which begins on February 10, AP Limited Editions launches the Water Snake pen, a limited edition of nine pieces, featuring maki-e lacquer work by Tatsuya Todo.

writing instruments.” The pens are eyedropper fillers, except in the Writers Series of Japanese lacquer pens, which uses converters. The pens carry 18 karat gold nibs, and the company has begun offering rollerballs in addition to fountain pens. A new draw is the company’s “bespoke” service, in which customers can special order one-of-a-kind pens.

Poddar’s staff is small: just a handful of artisans on staff, a few special artists whom Poddar has met on his travels, and his wife, Smita, who heads the creative team and is responsible for the design of many pens. She and Anuj keep things simple, eschewing metal clips and rings for an aesthetic that focuses on barrel and cap.

The pens feature one of two main types of art: the ancient Japanese lacquer art of maki-e, often with inlaid mother-of-pearl, abalone, gold, silver and other precious metals, or Russian miniature painting with its stark black background, vibrant colors and

precise attention to detail. “Our pens are expressions of our dreams and experiences,” Poddar explains. “They are inspired by our interpretations of nature and culture. We create our pens based on what we love and are passionate about. When we come up with an idea, we want the artists we work with to give us their best. We give them a great deal of freedom, and we almost always get more than we expect in return.”

That could be applied to the Water Snake, a maki-e pen that features a brown snake slithering up an aquamarine path, all atop lush black lacquer. The art is by one of Poddar’s favorite maki-e artists, Tatsuya Todo, known also as Kosetsu. Poddar says, “Maki-e allows us to depict an idea in two or three dimensions. It is one of the most unique art forms anywhere in the world. The maki-e technique used on this particular pen and the manner in which the inlay is done is different from most of our previous offerings.


There are more than 1,000 pieces of mother-of-pearl and abalone used on this pen. The minute detail can only be appreciated under magnification.”

This attention to detail is prevalent at AP Limited Editions, and that includes Poddar’s recruitment process. He works with artisans he genuinely admires and scours the globe for new talent. The success of his Russian Miniature Art line is a striking example. Russian miniatures showcase profoundly detailed and colorful images, often on a flat black background. The art form is closely associated with the Russian Orthodox church, whose icons adorn cathedrals and homes alike. The miniaturists Poddar works with took to translating scenes onto caps and barrels quite naturally. “Russian lacquer art is strictly two-dimensional but shows up the minutest detail and is vibrant in color with no restrictions. The artist is able to capture still life or nature and wildlife in their truest form,” Poddar says. “My wife says Russian miniature art offers her ‘endless opportunities’ of creative experience, and we have expanded the scope and depth of the Russian miniature techniques by introducing the rich art history of different cultures,” he adds.

Above all, Poddar is passionate about creating art that lasts. Like the collector that he is, Poddar wants his pens to be cherished, and he has built his business upon that foundation. He says it best: “It is a marriage of innovation, passion for art and perfection in what we do that drives our brand.” And that’s something to make some noise about.

Visit aplimitededitions.com.

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The Blade of Magnificence pen in maki-e, depicting an eighteenth-century sword characteristic of British India; the diamond-shaped AP logo is seen both on the 18 karat gold nib and on the crown of the cap.

Exclusive Distribution

According to brand founder Anuj Poddar, AP Limited Editions intentionally limits itself in terms of retail outlets for its pens. Our retail customers are very carefully selected, says Poddar. We visit each store to see what they sell, how they present the products and how they treat their customers. Once we are satisfied that there is a passion and a pulse that beats in the store, we present our pens to them. As a result, AP pens are sold in the finest writing establishments in the United States, Southeast Asia, India and Europe. Recently, Poddar introduced a special edition line sold exclusively at Aesthetic Bay in Singapore.