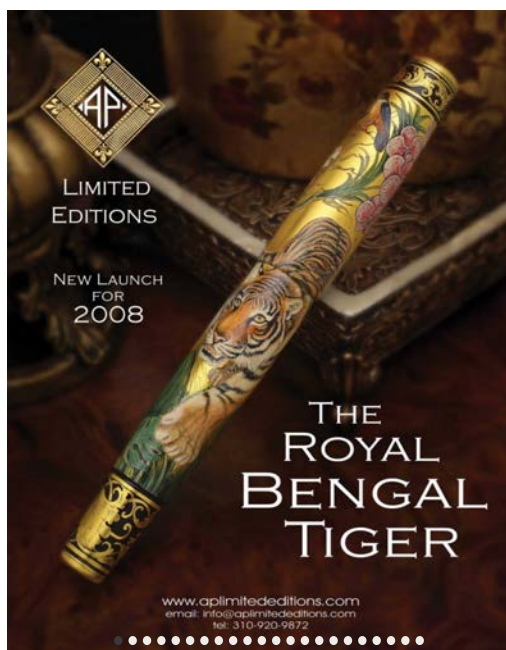


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AP Limited Editions – the story of a brand

Nicholas Yeo on 28th January 2016 / 0 comments

In just one decade, Anuj Poddar and his wife Smita have transformed **AP Limited Editions** into one of the leading names in exquisite Maki-e masterpieces. In this *exclusive* interview, **Inky Passion** speaks with them about their story and the brand's direction for years to come.

Early beginnings

It all began with the iconic Parker 51. On his eighth birthday, Anuj Poddar was gifted the Parker fountain pen by his mother. The pen had a turquoise blue barrel, silver cap and gold accents – it was the beginning of a lifelong love.

He says: "I grew up in the city of Calcutta, India, where I learned to write with a fountain pen which was mandatory at my School run by Jesuits."

Over time, Anuj grew a passion for writing, which in turn developed into a fascination with collecting fountain pens. "As the years went by, I began to collect and enjoy fountain pens – instead of buying a toy, I would end up spending my pocket money on pens," he says.

Though his family has been in the real estate, banking and finance business for generations, Anuj decided to go his own way. He says: "I wasn't as inclined to get into any of those areas of business, and my desire was always to do something which was more consumer focused – more creative, more brand oriented."



AP "Jamawar" Limited Edition.

A brand comes to life

It was in America in 2004 that Anuj decided to start AP Limited Editions. "I brainstormed this idea with Smita and the two of us decided that we should

launch our own brand of fountain pens,” he says.

He added: “We decided to start looking for vendors and artists and it took us almost two years to actually bring the product to market and be satisfied with what we did. We officially launched the brand in February of 2006 at the Los Angeles Pen Show.”

Apart from AP Limited Editions, Anuj also runs a business in America which manufactures forensics equipment. He says: “Neither one is more important than the other. I do end up spending a great deal more time in the pen business but that is probably out of my own passion for it.”



Andy Poddar and his wife Smita Poddar.

Only the best will do

Today, AP Limited Editions produces some of the most impressive Maki-e fountain pens in the market. AP fountain pens are sought after by celebrities, heads-of-state and professionals worldwide.

He says: “We honestly and truly believe that if we do our best in terms of the love we have for what we do, the rest will follow. We don’t tell our artist ‘this is your budget’. We want the artist to give us their best for that given subject. We honestly don’t even know what price at which we are going to sell a pen until we are finished.”

Smita shares that the brand has introduced new ideas to an otherwise traditional artform. She says: “We took different genres of art forms from different cultural contexts around the world, and applied them to traditional maki-e techniques – introducing European, Oriental Chinese, Indian themes.”

One of the best examples of this is the “Tree of Life“, which the both of them agree is one of their most challenging projects to date. The nine-piece Limited Edition was created by renowned artisan Kosetsu-san. He says: “I don’t think I have seen a Maki-e product as exquisite as the Tree of Life, and I don’t just say this because I own AP. I truly believe that.”



The AP “Tree of Life” Limited Edition, by Kosetsu, pays homage to a symbol which represents the evolution of the soul.

A labour of love

Anuj’s passion for fountain pens eventually won over his wife, who now takes on an active role in the business. “It is fun for us because every single pen tells a story, and at some level the story resonates deeply within us. It could be his inspiration or mine, or an idea which somebody has shared with us that has in turn inspired us,” she says.

She adds: “Inspiration is your starting point, and you have different characters who become part of that story – the artists and designers we employ to execute the concept also become part of the story with their interpretation of our idea.”

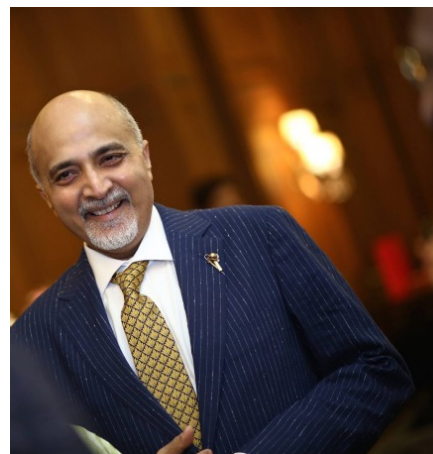
Anuj has great respect for other products in the market. He says: “I don’t think we are the be-all and the end-all. I think we make great products but there are also others who make great products, and I always appreciate what they do, learn from them, and get their pens – I use them and enjoy them.”

With his wife by his side, Anuj reluctantly shares that he continues to add pens to his collection, which numbers in the hundreds. “I’m not going to admit it so easily in front of Smita, but the truth is I do. I still do collect pens and I still end up buying pens from other brands,” he says.

He adds: “I sometimes do that on the sly, but I do enjoy collecting – it is the love affair with pens that I cannot stop. I also haven’t stopped at

appreciating my own. I love vintage pens as well.” Thus far, the Namiki Double Dragon is one pen that has eluded his reach. The 200 piece Limited Edition launched in 2000 last sold for US\$ 11,875 during a [Bonhams auction in 2014](#).

He says: “I had it at one point – I bought it at a good price at an auction, and then I got tempted to sell it because I was making a little profit and I thought I would stop collecting at the point. I sold it and I wish I hadn’t because that is the one Namiki that I still love.”



Looking to the future

Anuj is thankful that their efforts over the past decade have paid off, and that today the brand is respected by collectors. He says: “We’ve been fortunate and blessed that our brand has been very well received. We’ve had excellent feedback from everyone around the world, whoever’s seen our products.”

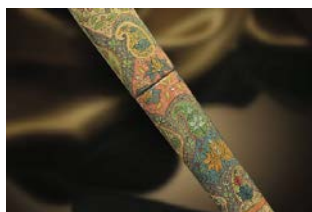
Despite their success, Anuj and Smita are not about to rest on their laurels. “Achievement is relative. I don’t like to tell myself that I have achieved anything, and I don’t think it’s fair to believe that you’ve achieved anything because there’s just so much more to achieve,” he says.

When asked about the future of AP, Smita shares that they have launched a new range of pens with abstract designs to cater to a younger audience. “We’ve developed a new line of pens that will fall under the Writer’s Series, which play on abstract concepts – it could be flowers, nature or culture inspired forms” she says.

Anuj has made it his goal for AP Limited Editions to be amongst the leading brands in the upper tier of the market. “I think what we need to do is broaden our product lines and horizons in terms of the dealer network. Once we achieve that, and when we enter our second decade in business, we not just hope but expect to be there,” he says.



AP “Splendid Synergy” Limited Edition
by Tatsuya Todo.



For more information about AP Limited Edition fountain pens please visit the official site [here](#). You may also drop them an email at info@aplimitededitions.com or contact an [authorised dealer](#) near you. [Aesthetic Bay Pte Ltd](#) at Ion Orchard is the official dealer for AP Limited Editions in Singapore.

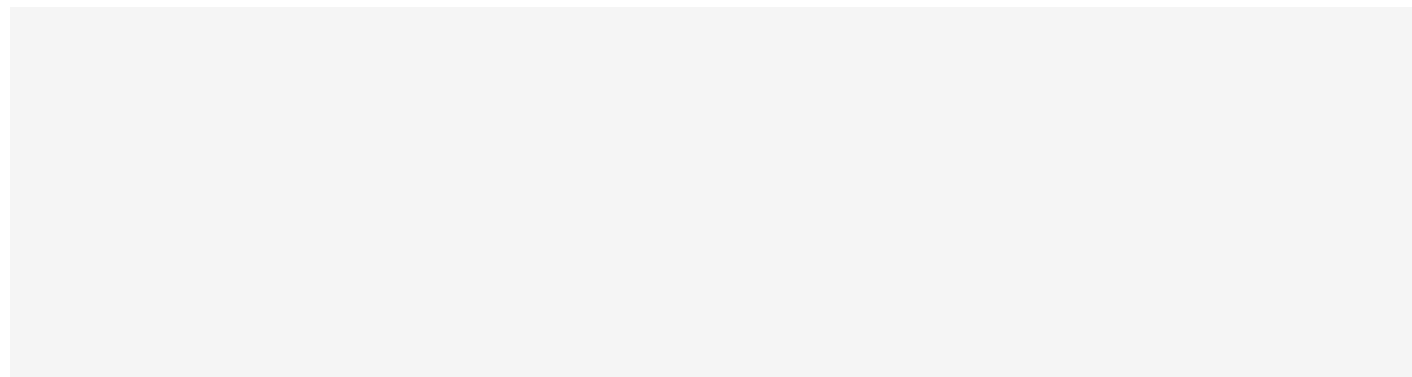
Photos: AP Limited Editions





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