

HOME FURNISHINGS

Cross-cultural collaboration from Baccarat strikes artistic balance

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A new creation is inspired by signature Chinese blue and white porcelain. Image credit: Baccarat

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

French crystal maker Baccarat is shining a light on a new project.

The brand has collaborated with architect Steve Leung, unveiling Printemps Bleu Zenith Chandelier, a limited-edition centerpiece launching worldwide next year. Baccarat is sharing more about the effort, which helps mark 260 years in business and 60 years of diplomatic relations between France and China, with its audiences.

"Baccarat's brand identity has always been one of supreme elegance, sublime craftsmanship and exceptional innovation," said Lori Zelenko, creative director and founder of [LSZ Communications](#), New York.

"This collaboration with Steve Leung, an award-winning internationally renowned architect, interior and product designer, and restaurateur, affirms that positioning yet reflects a contemporary direction as it takes inspiration from historically significant Asian arts and culture, making it relevant for today's uber-affluent consumer with a love for this Eastern aesthetic," Ms. Zelenko said. "The Zenith chandelier is extraordinary; indeed it is a work of art that not only intrigues with its beauty but with its history as well, having been the choice of royalty to decorate glorious palaces and theaters since its 19th century origins.

"It is a complex piece, highly decorative and, of course, transparent; one that contrasts beautifully with as Leung puts it the 'opaque' and 'modest' nature of porcelain."

Ms. Zelenko is not affiliated with Baccarat, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

White and blue

The man behind the reinterpreted Zenith Chandelier stars in the latest edition of "Spotlight On," Baccarat's digital series showcasing its work with those in creative fields.

Mr. Leung outlines the forces behind his affinity for the brand and speaks to a shared devotion to craftsmanship, detailing the process that went into the reimagining.

"Our collaboration celebrates Baccarat's 260th anniversary in 2024," said Mr. Leung, in a statement.

"Since its establishment in 1764, Baccarat has always been recognized for its exceptional quality, craftsmanship and timeless designs," he said. "Today, Baccarat remains a pristine symbol of luxury and elegance."

"It is our honor to delve into its esteemed history of luxury legacy."

Baccarat unveils the Printemps Bleu Zenith Chandelier

After having many other international designers put their own spin on the fixture, Baccarat now exhibits a vessel that evokes what it calls "the harmony of opposites."

This reflects "yin-yang," a Chinese concept that honors duality and balance. Printemps Bleu, meaning "Blue Spring" in English, is made of blue and white crystal and porcelain.

Eastern and Western artistry is represented, making for a cross-cultural fusion. Just 60 pieces are available, with regard for the commemorative nature of the exclusive release, which first debuted in Asia last month.

"Both our countries have a long-standing appreciation for art and literature," said Mr. Leung, in a statement.

"I believe this collaboration is the perfect way to celebrate our countries' mutual understanding and appreciation of each other's heritage and creativity, especially on the 60th anniversary of Sino-French friendship," he said. "I am thrilled to embark on a design journey with the talented team at Baccarat during such a milestone historical moment."

The blue and white porcelain, or "qing hua ci," as Baccarat calls it, acts as the link between France and China, both of which are key luxury markets. Beloved by nobility on the continents of Europe and Asia since the 16th century, the historical product's patterns have long served as a muse for Baccarat and were an inspiration for Mr. Leung.

"It symbolizes the glamour of crystal and the historical relevance of Baccarat," said Ms. Zelenko.

"Leung's conception of pairing it with equally iconic yet texturally different Chinese blue and white porcelain speaks inventively and exquisitely to the intent of the partnership, a merger of Chinese and Western aesthetics," she said. "Baccarat is perceived as an elite French brand, however, today, it is controlled by leading financing funds based in Hong Kong."

"So the company itself capsulizes this French-Chinese hybrid that is represented in the Leung-designed Zenith Chandelier; creating a product that reflects this Asian heritage yet brings in Western aesthetics as well is indeed a move that stands apart from the competition and should prove lucrative."

"SPOTLIGHT ON" STEVE LEUNG

Unveiling the "Printemps Bleu" Zenith Chandelier by [#Baccarat](#) and [#SteveLeung](#).

To celebrate 60 years of Sino-French relations, world-renowned contemporary architect and product designer Steve Leung was invited to reimagine the iconic Zenith chandelier. pic.twitter.com/qHcqQqMwQC

Baccarat (@Baccarat) [August 5, 2024](#)

Mr. Leung's chandelier intertwines Limoges porcelain, a slightly more modern pottery material produced in the namesake region of France, with clear and cobalt Baccarat crystals.

The cupel, baluster, lampshades and bowl in the central column are made of porcelain in a first for the crystal maker. Swallows, butterflies and floral motifs appear on the surface of these elements, drawing on Baccarat's archival designs from 1878.

For the first time, Baccarat's Zenith Chandelier incorporates the timeless beauty of porcelain.

The "Printemps Bleu" edition by Steve Leung celebrates the harmony of opposites - crystal and porcelain, blue and white, France and China - reflecting the Chinese concept of Yin-Yang. pic.twitter.com/QWEhLK3lSi

Baccarat (@Baccarat) [August 7, 2024](#)

"Cross-cultural marketing is a successful and profitable move when it demonstrates a profound understanding of and respect

for cultural differences,” said Ms. Zelenko.

“It is a strategy, in this case for Baccarat, to forge a deeper connection with their Chinese consumer base, which is obviously an important and valuable demographic for the brand,” she said. “The Leung partnership is globally appealing although it has an Eastern slant, and it will surely capture the interest of Baccarat’s ‘eclectic collectors,’ as Leung calls those who have a love for the brand and an acquisitive passion for its artistic collaborations.

“The Zenith Chandelier has been reinvented before by world-class designers including Phillippe Starck with whom Baccarat has a 20-year relationship, however, the Leung partnership is unique in its East meets West synergy.”

Crafting luxury

As consumer trends shift, heritage and craftsmanship continue to drive engagement in luxury.

Studies show that shoppers want their purchases to go beyond the transactional. As a result, many maisons are rolling out pop-up workshops and placing their artisans in stores so that they can interact with guests and showcase their skills ([see story](#)).

Baccarat has joined in. Long known for its know-how, activations like these that take fans of the brand behind the scenes ([see story](#)) have centered the work of its design team.



The new Zenith Chandelier marks the first time that Baccarat has used porcelain in the product category. Image credit: Baccarat

The “Spotlight On” series continues this. Past editions have applauded the talents of creative collaborators such as French singer-songwriter Anabelle Boule ([see story](#)) and French photographer Thierry Des Ouches ([see story](#)).

Mr. Leung now contributes to the practice, pushing Baccarat deeper into conversations concerning the value of true craftsmanship in luxury.

“A Baccarat Zenith Chandelier can cost over \$100,000, limiting its appeal to a rarified audience,” said [LSZ Communications](#)’ Ms. Zelenko.

“It is interesting to note that the Leung collaboration speaks not only to those who treasure fine crystal, particularly the artistry of Baccarat but also to the audience of connoisseurs of blue and white porcelain rare pieces of blue and white china have

brought more than \$20 million at auction as it draws on classical Chinese heritage and connects with those who cherish this precious collectible,” she said. “Driven by China’s explosive economic growth and earning greater recognition in the international art market, Chinese collectibles are a growth category, expected to grow at 5.83 percent CAGR from 2024 to 2029.

“It appears that Baccarat is tapping into this trend as well, which lends the collaboration even more global appeal.”

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