

GALERIE MARCILHAC

XXth CENTURY DECORATIVE ARTS
PARIS



PRIMAVERA (1912-1972)

The Primavera art workshop, launched in 1912, is the fruit of the happy collaboration between Gustave Laguionie, director of the Printemps department stores, his son Pierre, who succeeded him, and René Guilleré, lawyer, collector and founder of the Société des Artistes Décorateurs (SAD). These three men wish to innovate by marketing utilitarian works of art, both beautiful and of high quality, in small series and at affordable prices. Their common will and enthusiasm resulted in the opening of an original creative workshop within Le Printemps, which they named Primavera after the name of the store. René Guilleré took over the running of the workshop alongside his wife Charlotte Chauchet, herself a painter and decorator.

The couple surrounded themselves with numerous collaborators and recruited young, fashionable artists such as Louis Sognot and Marcel Guillemard for the furniture department. Production, suspended during the First World War, is immediately important and devoted to all sectors of interior decoration: furniture, lighting, wallpaper, carpets, mirrors, glassware... The production of ceramics that will make Primavera's popularity and become its trademark. The workshop entrusts and commissions the models proposed by its artists to artisanal workshops such as those of Paul Jacquet and Simonod in Savoie, or factories such as Longwy, Malicorne, Soufflenheim, Lunéville or Quimper, which these commissions help to revitalize. The workshop even bought out certain factories such as the Sainte-Radegonde earthenware factory in Touraine and the Céramique d'Art factory in Bordeaux.

Important means are deployed by the management to promote the art workshop, which participates in all the major fairs devoted to the decorative arts. The construction of a pavilion dedicated to Primavera productions on the esplanade des Invalides during the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in 1925 marked the culmination of its success, both popular, especially with a modest clientele that had hitherto been neglected, and critical.

The workshop lasted more than thirty years under the direction of Colette Gueden. Its production ceased in 1972 although the Primavera brand continued to be used until 2007. These artisanal workshops have unquestionably enabled it to assert itself as a distributor anchored in modernity. By being the first of the department stores to offer this revolutionary concept, it paved the way for the creation of other initiatives of this kind, such as the Atelier de la Maîtrise des Galeries Lafayette under the leadership of Maurice Dufrene (1922), the Pomone du Bon Marché workshop run by Paul Follot (1923) or the Studium des Grands Magasins du Louvre run by the tandem Martel-Kohlmann (1923).



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