

Historicism and Modernism are Together Represented by Two New Creative Partnerships at Artaissance

When Larson-Juhl introduced its fine art publishing division, Artaissance, in September 2006, to pilot markets in Atlanta, San Francisco, and Indianapolis, it was with the intention both of bringing its customers a wide range of artwork and of allowing them to customize their selections in scale and framing options. Artaissance has since introduced its collections nationwide. Its library of some 2,000 reproduction prints—a number that will eventually grow to 5000—includes photography and printwork, watercolor, oil painting, and collage in a broad range of categories that includes floral, abstract landscape, figurative, nature, modern, americana, and still life. Two new design partnerships now further assure the company's creative growth.

The first is with The New York Botanical Garden, whose rare book room in its LuEsther T. Mertz Library is one of the world's pre-eminent horticultural research centers. It has also proven to be an exhilarating creative resource for Artaissance. The traditional seventeenth-, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century botanical prints collected in these archives were usually made in the service of science and medicine. Exact representations that answered to the need for accuracy, they provided a logical way to study plant life that was itself too fragile to endure close examination. Even when such renderings were made simply to commemorate a particular garden or estate, precision in root, seed, bud, stem, flower, and stamen was required.

No surprise, then, that although they were executed in the name of science, such paintings and engravings came to be regarded as pieces of art in themselves. The collection includes the prints of such known artists as Basilius Besler (1561 – 1612), a celebrated pharmacist and botanist who produced his own portfolios, along with the work of other unsung, anonymous artists. To date, Artaissance has licensed some forty images from these archives, although the hope is to grow that number to about seventy-five. When reproduced faithfully, such prints are evocative documents not only of grand European gardens, but of the time and culture that produced them. Yet when given a wash of new color or reproduced on a larger, more dramatic scale suited to open loft living, these images can become more expressive, reflecting a more modern view. Fully appreciative of the resource the library offers, Artaissance is committed to supporting the New York Botanical Garden and returns a percentage from the proceeds of all sales back to the garden.

Artaissance has also forged an innovative alliance with renowned artist and designer Jonathan Adler. Originally a ceramic artist, Adler now designs textiles, rugs, lighting, and stationery, and more recently, two collections of fine art mouldings for Larson-Juhl. Now, his hip, contemporary graphics can also be found in printed images in the Artaissance collection, where his bold colors and clean lines add up to a crisp, modern sensibility. Adler's play with shape developed in his ceramic work finds new expression here in geometric patterns of half circles and figure eights, along with more amorphous ovoid shapes. In all cases, the designs work in a variety of scales—on a diminutive scale, they read as delicate abstract drawings; when enlarged, they convey a more explosive, dramatic expression.

Artaissance is proud and honored to introduce these two known brands in its collection. Though representing vastly different eras and divergent sensibilities, both have made immeasurable contributions to design history. Now as part of the Artaissance collection, both bring their own rich expressions to the design marketplace. And in doing so, assure the continuing growth of Artaissance as an innovative design resource for modern living.