

Love, Passion, and Dreams

An Interview with Frédéric de Narp, President and Chief Executive Officer, Cartier North America, New York

EDITORS' NOTE *In his current post since September 2005, Frédéric de Narp has worked for Cartier since 1991, serving in such notable posts as retail manager of Cartier Switzerland, retail manager of Cartier Italy, and CEO of Cartier Italy. De Narp holds a master's degree from Le Havre University, and is the cofounder of NeedYou, a humanitarian organization created to aid abandoned children in Cambodia, Haiti, Rwanda, and Brazil.*



Frédéric de Narp

COMPANY BRIEF *Founded in 1847 by Louis-François Cartier and headquartered in Paris, Cartier SA was deemed "the jeweler of kings and the king of jewelers" by no less a connoisseur than King Edward VII. Today, it remains one of the world's most esteemed luxury brands, designing and manufacturing exclusive collections of fine jewelry, wristwatches, leather goods, fragrance, pens, eyewear, and scarves, which are distributed worldwide through more than 200 Cartier boutiques. Additionally, Cartier watches and accessories are distributed through select dealers and Saks Fifth Avenue carries a limited selection of Cartier jewelry. The firm is a subsidiary of Compagnie Financière Richemont AG, a Swiss luxury-goods conglomerate.*

Cartier has a long and storied history, but what about the future of the brand? Are you optimistic for 2006 and beyond?

Cartier, as a brand, is about dreams and dreams come true. We interest people because our designs evoke love, passion, and dreams. And that is why I am very positive about 2006 and beyond. In North America, we feel we can grow the jewelry segment. Cartier is surely considered the king of jewelers in Europe and Asia, but not yet in America. Our image in North America is very good, but we can achieve better results and returns. So we are very happy with the strong growth we are experiencing in the jewelry segment in

North America, but there is still much to be done.

For example, we are going to start using new tools to communicate with the public – with Cartier's fans – about our new products. Up to four or five years ago, Cartier was launching just one jewelry collection every year, but in 2006, we're launching four. So we have to promote those collections and communicate to people that Cartier is passionate about jewelry and that they should be passionate about jewelry as well. In Italy, women think of their jewelry as a living thing; it's something they play with and give life to by wearing new pieces and trying out new styles. American women, though they enjoy their jewelry, approach it in a more static way; they may wear one ring and their grandmother's heirloom necklace, for instance. So, even though it is an ambitious one, it is our goal to encourage Americans to be more passionate about jewelry. After all, American women are richer than European women today. So they have the money to spend, but the culture isn't yet supporting the spending, at least not all the time. So we want Cartier to have a role in educating American women to have more fun with their jewelry, and we will endeavor to do that with our communications.

We will also gain exposure for Cartier in North America through other efforts, including museum exhibitions of our vintage jewelry. Recently, Cartier jewels owned by famous people, such as Coco Chanel and J.P. Morgan, were showcased by the National Jewelry Institute in an exhibit called the Treasures of the Titans. We also chose to launch Cartier's Caresse d'Orchidées collection in New York, rather than France as we normally do, because we wanted to send a message to the

American consumer that we are making them a priority. So there are many ways that we can communicate with the American public.

So jewelry, for sure, is a mainstay of our business that we can grow and develop. We also see no limit to our watch business, and want to increase our accessories business. Today, Cartier is a brand for both men and women. We want the Cartier brand to be able to touch people in each moment of their lives – from birth, on their wedding day, their anniversaries, and so on. So we are having fun looking through our design archives and bringing historic products back and projecting them into the future. We have been very successful in that.

Are you also interested in extending Cartier's reach in the corporate-gift market?

Yes, absolutely. Many of our customers are business owners, and Cartier has an entire collection of accessories for their corporate gifts. In fact, we recently refurbished the second floor of the Cartier mansion in New York and dedicated the entire space to accessories. The space is very relaxing; it's designed like a lounge, in fact. There, we welcome heads of different companies, and they can relax and choose gifts for their clients and employees from all of the accessories Cartier offers.

Are you happy with your current portfolio of retail outlets in the United States?

We are happy with most of the places where we are sold, but we are also involved in a huge program to develop and improve our distribution channels. First, we shall refurbish our boutiques and, in some cases, enlarge them in order to feature more of our product line. Our boutiques were traditionally designed using a lot of green mar-

Caresse d'orchidées par Cartier; platinum and diamond necklace

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ble. The new flock of boutiques will feature a different architectural concept, using wood and bronze and other materials. That look is more alluring, more welcoming, and warmer. It makes customers feel that they can browse without pressure and that they can just enjoy the jewelry. The new boutiques will be more inclusive, and will give first-time customers a very warm experience with Cartier.

Does Cartier focus on developing shops-within-shops or so-called corners with department stores and other large retail outlets?

Within the retailers, we have surely developed a strong program for corners. It's part of the brand identity and visibility. We cannot accept a presentation of our products that doesn't match our culture. So sometimes it is necessary to improve the presentation of our brand in a particular store. And as a matter of fact, after developing a Cartier corner in a store, our products sell better, and that makes both Cartier and our retailers happy.

Are you pleased with the caliber of the employees working for Cartier in the U.S.?

Cartier has a very, very strong culture. I always tell our people that we are here to sell dreams and allow people to see their dreams come true. So we have to transmit to the customer our culture of emotion, passion, love, history, craftsmanship, beauty, and excellence. And, as a manager of the brand, I have to transmit the same things to my people. And I think that people are comfortable working for Cartier because deep in their souls, they feel this passion themselves. Most of the time the people working for Cartier are really passionate. It's hard for people to find a reason to leave the brand, because of our strong culture and because they are part of a group. The people make Cartier strong. So we don't have much turnover, but I make decreasing even low turnover a priority. I want our people to be pleased with what they gain professionally from working for Cartier. They must be happy with what the brand gives them, so I focus on making sure everyone is happy – and so far, so good.



Of course, as we grow, we will need to hire and train more people. It may be challenging to find people who are on the same page as the rest of the organization right from the beginning – people who share our passion. But with time, we are usually able to bring people onboard with our culture.

You have been with Cartier for 15 years. Did you imagine in your early days with the company that you would achieve such success?

I wouldn't say that I knew I would have such a career as this. I remember my first meeting with the president of Cartier Japan. I was 21 at the time, and he asked me where I thought I would be in 15 years.

I told him I would be the retail manager of a big country. So I am proud to be ahead of myself.

When I joined Cartier, I felt something deep down – that I could be part of the Cartier image and bring success to the company. I felt like I instantly began a new life. I have always given the best of myself to this company – my professionalism, my values, my emotions – and in turn, they have given me opportunities to grow. I like speed, productivity, energy, and passion, and those four things are a part of my daily life at Cartier. ●

Santos 100 watch in yellow gold and diamonds