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In a design made solely for the private collection of an Arabian royal family, a rearing horse holds up the bowl above an etched round platform, all in 24K gold-plated bronze. Bowls hold 3 ounces of caviar, but similar designs of assorted sizes can be ordered.

BELOW: Interior decorator and artist Ruediger Benedikt.

caviar

COUTURE

Ruediger Benedikt Designs of Spain

creates the ultimate presentoirs

by Michele Meyer



ARTIST RUEDIGER BENEDIKT HAS NO LIMIT TO HIS IMAGINATION — OR HIS BUDGET -- FOR THE 24K GOLD-PLATED BRONZE ONE-OF-A-KIND CAVIAR PRESENTOIRS HE DESIGNS FOR ROYALTY AND ELITE IN EUROPEAN AND ARABIAN COUNTRIES. Inspired by nature, the artist's fantastical and luxe themes include caviar bowls held up by rearing horses, leaping sturgeon or prowling bears.

Exclusively for the U.S. market, he's now creating "Temptation," with a Biblical theme.

A green enamel-plated serpent will wrap itself

around a 24K gold bowl and reach for a red enamel apple on a branch. As with Benedikt's other pieces, all work is by hand in limited editions and 14-18 inches tall. At least another dozen Ruediger Benedikt Designs will follow, then bone china and other table top creations.

Benedikt uses lost-wax casting (cire-perdue in French), a pre-18th Century process by which a small silver, gold, brass or bronze sculpture is cast by pouring molten metal into an original wax and plaster model. The mold is destroyed to remove the final cast item — thus making each piece unique.

"He's a complete artist from beginning to end," says Bruce Petricca, his exclusive U.S. distributor (bpdesigns.org), who has worked with Lalique, Limoges and Baccarat.



ABOVE LEFT: In another custom piece for a private collection, a falcon with 30-inch wingspan perches on branches that appear to balance on the edge of a large bowl for ice, with a smaller bowl within for the caviar itself. Feather details are executed flawlessly, again in 24K gold-plated bronze. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Three sturgeons leap out of the water and support the ice bowl, which also is carved with aquatic themes. As with his others, it is 24K gold-plated bronze, all hand-formed. The piece can be ordered, at about \$16,000 retail. Clients and retailers can contact Bruce Petricca, the exclusive U.S. distributor for Ruediger Benedikt, for further details.

“When I saw what he does, I got very excited. I love getting in on the beginning of something. When you see the dream realized, it’s amazing.”

Benedikt works with old-world artisans, including goldsmiths, jewelers and bronze-casters in Barcelona, Spain. “Altogether it takes 15 people and three months to finish one piece,” Benedikt says. “We are like a big family where everybody is important.”

Born in Wurzburg and son of an engineer, Benedikt never dreamed of creating tabletop designs. He studied fine arts in college, dabbled in pottery and drawing and was obsessed with the Roman Empire and the baroque époque still so visible in his homeland.

“This period was a moment of maximum splendor and inspires me daily – but so does a blank sheet of paper.”

Nonetheless, when he graduated his only ambition was to explore American history and culture. He followed some friends to Florida, working first as a dishwasher. “I loved the laid-back way of life.”

He met “the right people,” members of St. Charles Yacht Club in Fort Myers. They loved his style sense and took a chance on him, commissioning small interior design gigs.

“It all came naturally,” Benedikt admits. “My work is very intimate and personal and I almost have a soul romance with my clients.”

With his success, he returned to Europe 18 years ago, lured to Barcelona by the beaches, sea, climate and the Mediterranean lifestyle. There he has built a successful high-end interior design business via word-of-mouth.

He was asked to transform a mansion. The owners wanted everything made-to-measure, down to the bone china and gold cutlery and serving dishes.

“They wanted truly unique Champagne and caviar presentoirs, and that’s where my latest career path began,” Benedikt says. “I appreciate a luxuriously laid table, but I knew tabletop design was for me when so many orders suddenly came in. This was like a car accident; You can’t plan these things.”

The same client has commissioned Benedikt to design every element of the members-only Gourmet Caviar Lounge in Dubai, to open in 2015. “The (Saudi Arabian) royal family is involved, which is an honor for me.”

The inspiration for six intimate dining rooms, “social” room, cigar lounge, bar and boutique is French Rococo, the

extremely ornate 18th Century style. The results are so opulent they outshine Versailles in its heyday.

It’s as if the heroine of *Frozen* had spun not icicles but 24-K gold leaf frosted scrolls, moldings, wall panels, mirror frames and chair frames.

Weighty gold and crystal chandeliers glitter like a queen’s bounty of jewelry. Appropriately, Watteau paintings, Versace pillows and Benedikt custom presentoirs, Limoges china and gold serving ware adorn the intimate yet grand salons. Even caviar tins are custom-designed, some set with gems, for the restaurant’s own private-label caviar.

As for which caviar brand Benedikt prefers, he cites Baby Beluga and Almas, admitting to twice monthly indulgence.

“Eating caviar is a side effect of my work: meeting with clients very often leads to eating this fantastic treasure of the sea – and also to new inspirations and projects. So I associate caviar with exciting experiences.” 🍷



RUEDIGER BENEDIKT
BARCELONA