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HOMES & ESTATES

LUXURY LIVING WORLDWIDE | FALL/WINTER 2013



CLIVE CHRISTIAN
MASTER OF LUXE

ASTON MARTIN
IN THE FAST LANE

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1stdibs

BY ALYSON PITARRE

The explosive growth of the 1stdibs site and its enviable collection of “the most beautiful things on earth” has ignited an online spending frenzy by a passionate audience of affluent buyers, while voyeurs have coined the term “1stdibs envy.” Lamented one writer: “Why aren’t country songs written about being unable to afford a luxury item you really want?” This heightened sense of aspiration is a luxury brand’s dream, and a 1stdibs reality.

Founded by former real estate agent and collector Michael Bruno, 1stdibs launched as a trade-only website in 2000. Recalls Bruno: “We hand-selected items available from dealers at the Paris Flea Market and shared the images with interior designers in the U.S. market. Our goal in the beginning was 100 items a week, yet today there are over 4,000 new items every Wednesday.” The site now has a presence in 11 countries, and boasts wares from 1,700 dealers with over 2.5 million visits and 10 million page views each month.

The idea for 1stdibs first came to Bruno during the Internet boom in the late 1990s, while he was working in San Francisco as a real estate agent. “I was on the lookout for my next chapter, and I was very open to what was going on around me and in search of things that interested me,” he remembers. “Later, as I was shopping in Paris’

historic Marché aux Puces for items to add to my own collection, I realized what I wanted to do. I wanted to create a vehicle for sharing special finds with the world.”

What followed was a decade of unprecedented growth, as 1stdibs grew to become the premier online luxury marketplace for not just Parisian antiques and furniture, but estate jewelry and vintage fashion. The site added fine art in 2010, followed by real estate in 2011. The venture into real estate marked an important realization of Bruno’s long-term vision for his company.

“Real estate was my first love,” explains Bruno. “Part of what fascinated me was the lifestyle that came along with some of the great old houses I love. After fulfilling demand for furniture and objects, we expanded into all of the elements that make up a lifestyle, from fashion to fine jewelry and fine art. The ultimate final touch was offering the house for it all to go in.”

Of course, finding buyers who can afford things as special as the world’s finest estates was, and always will be, a challenge. 1stdibs responded by increasing its exposure worldwide. The company has welcomed parties from across the globe, with dealers in the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, France, and, most recently, Germany and Austria. These global additions mean new buyers join the fold on a





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near-daily basis, as well. Bruno says these new visitors are not window shoppers, but true buyers “who are snapping up everything from Hermès handbags to Cartier bracelets and Jean Michel Frank chairs.” He points to several notable international sales this year: a \$45,000 pink diamond ring sold, as well as a \$36,000 pair of Giacometti floor lamps and a \$46,000 sofa, which sold online to a buyer in the United Kingdom. But their love for beautiful things also extends to extraordinary homes.

“We continue to meet this demand by curating our real estate section in new and innovative ways, and have done so by creating searches focusing on lifestyle, notable architects, landmarked estates, as well as vineyards and orchards,” he adds. “No other website takes the time to hand-select the world’s greatest properties and present them in such a manner. That’s why buyers keep coming back week after week. Now, we are contacted regularly by home sellers who see the value of putting their home in front of our global audience.” There is little doubt—Istdibs has created one of the world’s most enviable destinations for finding the most beautiful homes on earth. ♦

To read more about Michael Bruno and his advice for uncovering the ultimate real estate finds, visit www.previewsinsideout.com/michaelbruno.

