

POTERIE DES 3 TERRES

This is the story of a young talented potter, Christian Ploix, who, already as a child, found his vocation, and honed his skills in the finest schools of pottery in Vallauris and Biot, under the symbolic inspiration of the sun in the South of France, there where generations of artist-potters had thrown their clay and given form to their genius.

In 1959, Christian Ploix, with his young wife, Florence, decide to cross the Mediterranean Sea and try their fortune in Algeria where they opened a studio. Their stay was brief, ending with the repatriation of the French in 1962. On their return, by chance, they visited Grimaud, a pretty village on a hill overlooking the bay of St. Tropez - it was love at first sight. As in a dream, they then and there decided to drop anchor in an earthly paradise, rich with the scent of flowers toppling over balconies and thrusting out of the crevices of multi-coloured rocks. Thus, in 1964, the 'Poterie des 3 Terres', was born, a name and number which would bring good fortune to this young couple, by becoming, over the years, over countless journeys and orders and encounters, feelings and emotions, a generator of work whose sole criteria were, and are, quality and creativity, creativity and quality. Witness to which, the host of famous Tropezians, Kings and Princes from all walks of life, Captains of Industry, top models, racing champions, movie stars, artists and artisans, who beat a path to their door. And for all of them, without exception, Christian and Florence, turn out the same exquisite work, exclusive to the particular needs of each client, but inclusive in the thought and energy, love and emotion brought to every commission.

Since this was the era of St. Tropez taking wing under the impetus of Brigitte Bardot, just back from shooting 'Viva Maria' and wanting tiles with a Mexican theme for her kitchen in 'La Madrague' (her famous house on the Baie des Canoubiers) it was to PLOIX she turned (of course!) - shortly followed by commissions for Jeanne Moreau, Johnny Hallyday, Eddie Barclay...etc. and so on. Perhaps the most intriguing of these orders was one from the most famous architect-decorateur on the peninsula, Phillippe Tallien, who wanted nothing less than a persian carpet made of mosaic tiles for the bottom of his swimming pool. Challenging? Christian Ploix got to work and the successful result brought in commissions from the brother of the King of Morocco, numerous Princes straight out of the 'Thousand and One Nights', whose vast fortunes commanded the wildest and most excentric schemes, leading up to the biggest challenge of all, Port Grimaud.

The fabled adventure that was the '70s ushered in the daring experiment of the architect, Francois Spoerry, to turn a marsh into a mini-Venice on the Cote d'Azur and he co-opted the Ploix into collaborating with him. Over half the kitchens and bathrooms of Port Grimaud are tiled by the Poterie des 3 Terres, and all the ceramic street names, house names, architectural and urban details and commemorative plaques have been designed and made by the Ploix, so much so that the 'little potter' of Grimaud grew into one of the most important manufacturers of Provence...despite which success, Christian Ploix has kept his feet firmly on the ground, and his hands in the clay - of the 3 Terres!

Today

The inspiration behind the ateliers at the Poterie des 3 Terres is still the same that existed at the beginning. Of course there are new ideas now, new innovations, and it is due to

Alexandre, the youngest son of Florence and Christian, who joined forces with his parents several years ago, served his apprenticeship and matured into a formidable artist who has taken the reins of this now venerable establishment, to lead the company into ever more demanding artistic adventures. The Alexandrian scenario has conjured up huge, spectacular jars and pots at stage-center, many with strange, contorted shapes, multi-coloured, demanding prodigies of technical and artistic invention. However, as the saying goes, 'never change a winning team', and the on-going tradition of work, handmade, hand-thrown, where the clay is directly modeled on the wheel, enamelled in exquisite, singing colours, highlighted in gold or silver, or bursting out in a bright patchwork, continue to enchant, something the Fauves would recognise as belonging to them if only they could have pulled off such brilliant colourations. It is this, all of this atmosphere, this charged, creative climate, that Alexandre is determined to conquer and offer the world a magical moment of history, blended in the crucible of an artistic family, that of the 'little potter' become master.