Comité Colbert reaches out to French youth in novel move

By Godfrey Deeny  
1 June 2017

The Comité Colbert – French luxury’s key promotion organization – has unveiled the first winner of a pioneering new short movie series. And, to some surprise, it’s a witty little movie from the very gritty community of Mantes-La-Jolie. In terms of timing, the short film seems to capture the newer inclusive mood in France, notable since the election last month of Emmanuel Macron as president.

Designed to encourage young people to learn a specialist skill, or métier, in luxury, the Comité Colbert short movie series is called Je filme le Métier qui me Plait, or I Film the Craft that I Like.

“We wanted a young generation all over France to understand the importance of a learning métier, and how it is an investment in an individual that builds a treasure,” explained Elisabeth Ponsolle-Des Portes, Comité Colbert President & CEO.

She also presented a series of video interviews of six winners of France’s prestigious L’ordre des Arts et Lettres award, given to six brilliant artisans from luxury brands within the Comité Colbert: Baccarat, Faïenceries de Gien, Hermès, Champagne Krug, Puiforcat and Yves Delorme. Under the Comité Colbert’s auspices, 37 skilled workers have received this distinction since 2006, joining the ranks of a distinction previously reserved for Nobel prize winners, rock stars, literary legends and Hollywood greats. Founded in 1954, the Comité Colbert boasts some 70 members, including Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Christian Dior, Chloé, Boucheron, Hermès and hotels like George V, where Ponsolle-Des Portes hosted a chic business breakfast for media.

The winning film prize Le Clap d’Or, or Golden Clapperboard, went to L’Empreinte, or The Loan, from College Jules Ferry in Mantes La Jolie, a tough neighborhood which was named in the 1990s a Zone de Sécurité prioritaire – meaning a high risk area – following a prolonged period of bloody rioting in the poorer quarters of large French cities.

L’Empreinte features three young teenage actors of apparently Arab origin, where a detective interrogates a young man on suspicion of selling drugs. But the mysterious liquid turns out to be a perfume developed by the young suspect.
“You should change your scent,” says the suspect to the policeman, who then enquires about salaries in the perfume business.

“You could make 2,000 a month euros, but it can bring a lot more if you are good,” he smiles in the film, self-consciously shot like La Haine, the brilliant 1995 French film about a trio of young men of arab, black and white origin growing up a deprived area like Mantes-La-Jolie.

All told, the Comité Colbert’s film committee presided over by distinguished Greek film director Costa Gavras, received some 90 short films. High-schools throughout France competed in the competition, in a clear symbol in luxury and French life of the desire for change.

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