

The *Style Saloniste*

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DATELINE: JUAN-LES-PINS, COTE D'AZUR

International art Dealer Martin Muller at the Legendary Hotel Belles-Rives

The Hotel Belles Rives in Juan-les-Pins near Cannes was the location for the summer house of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald. This glorious thirties-style hotel, privately owned by Marianne Estène-Chauvin, and its private beach inspired locations for 'Tender is the Night'.



Each summer for the last three decades, the Hotel Belles Rives ('beautiful shores') has been the private retreat for international art dealer, Martin Muller. Martin is the founder and owner of [Modernism](http://www.modernisminc.com) gallery (www.modernisminc.com) in San Francisco and a longtime friend. Each year he sends me postcards, small works of art, all handmade and evocative of sea air and the timeless and ineffable beauty of Juan-les-Pins.

In his sea-view suite (the same one each year, with furniture, paintings and décor arranged precisely to his wishes) Martin paints and collages while below on the sheltered beach an international coterie of guests swim, lunch, sip rose, and snooze all along the sun-struck day.





Martin sends his postcards, all with personal notes and beautiful stamps, to his artists and pals around the world, who collect them avidly. At the heart of his art is always the Hotel Belles Rives. **“BIS REPETITA PLACENT”**

“Les choses repetees, redemandees, plaisent”

“Favorite things, enjoyed, savored, experienced, and repeated, bring rare and special pleasure.”

Since the seventies, legendary international art dealer Martin Muller has gathered a stunning roster of artists to his San Francisco gallery, Modernism. He was the first West Coast gallery to exhibit Kasimir Malevich, and the first in Northern California to show Andy Warhol. More than 300 exhibitions have encompassed Dada, Cubism, Surrealism, Vorticism, German Expressionism, and foremost, the Russian Avant-Garde 1910-1930.

Muller has attracted a superbly curated list of artists (John Register, Peter Lodato, Valentin Popov, Charles Arnoldi, Gottfried Helnwein, Naomie Kremer and 50 more) as well as a passionate, curious, devoted and loyal clientele and fans around the world.

Martin has many qualities his friends adore and appreciate. He’s a romantic, he entertains generously, he is not pretentious, and he’s charming and witty. But best of all, if you are one of his artists or one of his inner circle, every August you receive a hand-painted and collaged post card, a miniature work of art to save in an album.

The Hotel Belles-Rives was built in the thirties around the residence where F. Scott Fitzgerald, Zelda swam and sunbathed and entertained friends in the twenties (Villa St-Louis)... Over many decades, the Estene family, which still owns the hotel, has protected the grace and legacy and today it is a shrine to Fitzgerald, the twenties and thirties, and a certain art-de-vivre and joie-de-vivre from that period.

“Already as a child, I used to spend part of the summer in Juan-les-Pins, a small Mediterranean town located between Nice and Cannes,” Muller told me by phone from Paris, in a conversation that we later continued in Venice. “By my mid-thirties, spending the end of the summer at the Belles-Rives became an annual ritual, an essential stop. I dream of it all year. It’s like going home. It is a magical place, infused with an elegant style and glamour reminiscent of the 1920s.”

Muller continued, “Unlike many nearby palaces that are now crowded with Russian oligarchs, Middle-Eastern oil barons, and international movie and rock stars, the Belles Rives has managed to retain a certain Proustian charm. It is a family place of another era, elegant but understated. It is as if time has stopped. It is far away from the otherwise omnipresent loudness of bling-bling”.

“Orgues, calme et volupté”

Muller always reserves the same room, #67, which has a balcony overlooking the Mediterranean and the small cove in front of the hotel, protected by a breakwater.





“I am there for a sense of ‘times past’ and to take a step back,” said Muller. “I savor the privacy, the sense of being away from the crowd. I savor also the sweet sea breeze most of the day in my room, listening to music, reading, writing and making small artworks, most of the time in the form of postcards.”

With windows wide open, the light, Muller, the art dealer, senses the air and light loved so much by Matisse, bathing the space, the glorious and unobstructed view of the sea, the art deco furnishings, create a perfect and sensual stage conducive to restorative daydreaming.

“Noon dominated sea and sky—even the white line of Cannes five miles off, had faded to a mirage of what was fresh and cool. It seemed there was no life anywhere in all this expanse of coast except under the filtered sunlight of those umbrellas, where something went on amid the color and the murmur.”—From ‘Tender is the Night’, by F. Scott Fitzgerald 1933.

Photographs above, by Jean-Michel Sordello, show Martin Muller wearing a bespoke seersucker suite in his favored Belles Rives suite, #67, with is favorite desk arranged with his books, watercolors, inks, brushes, pens and pencils—and post cards ready for collaging, painting, and stamping.