



## Art and Cigars: Why Davidoff Supports Caribbean Artists

Inspired by its own passion of crafting cigars and accessories as artistic expression, Oettinger Davidoff continues to expand its support of the arts in the Caribbean. >BY CRAIG WILLIAMSON

If you've ever enjoyed a Davidoff, a Griffin's, or any of Oettinger Davidoff's other cigar brands, you know that there's more to these cigars than just a good smoke. Davidoff turns cigar smoking into an art form.

As a global leader in the manufacture of premium cigars, Oettinger Davidoff AG prides itself on its long-standing commitment to artistry, craftsmanship, community, and quality.

"Everything Davidoff Cigars does is about art and craft—the art of growing and blending tobacco, the art of rolling cigars, and the craftsmanship that goes into the design and production of all of our beautiful and luxurious cigar accessories," says Paloma Szathmary, senior vice president of corporate communications of Oettinger Davidoff AG.

Davidoff has carried that passion for art and craft into the community by launching the Davidoff Art Initiative, a program designed to bring attention and opportunity to the arts and artists of the

Caribbean and Dominican Republic.

It's called, simply enough, the Davidoff Art Initiative, and its aim is to strengthen the cultural community of the Dominican Republic, where much of Oettinger Davidoff's production and many of its more than 3,500 employees are based.

"Since 1875, Oettinger Davidoff has been not only a successful, but also a socially committed family enterprise," says Hans-Kristian Hoejsgaard, c.e.o. of Basel, Switzerland-based Oettinger Davidoff AG. "Wherever we go, we aim to support the local community and improve the environment of our people. As a global Associate Partner of Art Basel—the world's leading art fair for contemporary and modern art—we have in particular sought to make a contribution in the sphere of art and culture. That's why we launched the Davidoff Art Initiative in 2012."

The Art Initiative has four elements, all of which benefit both individual artists and the art organizations. In fact, Davidoff just inaugurated the last of these elements in February: the Davidoff Art Residency.

In keeping with the global scale of its business, this final piece is truly international—a sort of foreign exchange program for artists. It has quickly become the cornerstone of the Davidoff Art Initiative.

"The Davidoff International Art Residency seeks to offer opportunities for creative exchange between the Caribbean and the Dominican Republic and the rest of the world," said Hoejsgaard.

Each year, the Davidoff Art Initiative will welcome five international artists to Altos de Chavón School of Design to work on their own projects, interact with the students and faculty, and travel inside the Dominican Republic. In ex-



>Top: Artist Mathilde Rosier. Above: The Davidoff Art Initiative Studios in Altos de Chavón, Dominican Republic, site of the second Davidoff Art Weekend, held February 11–16, 2015.

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> Clockwise from top: Artists Nuria Montiel, Soledad Salamé, and Cathleen Mooses at work at the Altos de Chavón School of Design in La Romana, Dominican Republic.

change, five artists from the Dominican and Caribbean will participate in selected artist-residency programs worldwide, including New York, Berlin, and Beijing.

This exchange creates a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the country's budding artists to work in a different social and creative environment from their own.

"The possibility of doing a residency in Berlin is a crucial opportunity for my career as it will allow me to produce new work, experience a culturally active city and connect to a new community," said Raquel Paiewonsky, one of the artists selected for the Berlin Residency (Künstlerhaus Bethanien) in April 2015. "I will be able to contribute in some way to creating a more open and diverse dialogue in my country."

The other three elements of the program include Art Grants, Art Dialogues and Art Editions. The Art Grants program supports contemporary art and artists in the Caribbean by awarding grants each year to art organizations that provide opportunities and expo-

sure for artists of the Dominican Republic and the Caribbean.

Through the Art Dialogues, the Davidoff Art Initiative encourages an open exchange of information and ideas between artists, collectors, professionals, and newcomers to the world of art.

Art Editions invites contemporary artists from all over the world to create special editions related to Davidoff products or the brand, which provide a new platform for important creative voices emerging from the Caribbean.

"The Art Initiative is just one expression of the Oettinger Davidoff group's enduring commitment to craftsmanship and community—values that have informed the history of our company for over a century," said Szathmary. "Supporting Caribbean art and artists means giving back to the Dominican Republic, the home of Davidoff cigars, and a country we owe so much." **S**

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