



spades quickly developed a cult following and thus became (virtually) the most expensive sparkling wine in the world overnight. Unfortunately, the brand has strictly forbidden us from publishing tasting notes in this issue – so we must not mention that the Brut proved to be not so terrible after all, a cleanly made, trendily creamy sparkling wine by the dozen, that the rosé (which is twice the price) is somewhat old-fashioned and very ripe, and that neither (unsurprisingly) are worth the price paid for their questionable design. But is this why the aesthetics of champagne bottles are in such a sad state? Because winemakers fear the silent majority which seems to stubbornly insist that sumptuous packaging will have worthless content? The clothes make the man, as became clear to Gottfried Keller's spurious Polish count Wenzel Strapinski who only ultimately put a ring on his Beyoncé because he strutted well-dressed through Goldach, despite having to eventually out himself as a simple tailor's apprentice!

There have of course been some design experiments of varying levels of success. How about the ostentatious,

hand grenade-esque Cuvée Palmes bottle from Nicolas Feuillatte, which is definitely neither particularly aesthetic nor doing justice to its high-quality contents (a bit of my personal 'not my cup of tea', I admit, I studied art history), but does at the very least surprise? Or the new Mumm bottle which plays skilfully with the most important element of its predecessor (the imposing red band) but at least makes a nod to the 20th century in its design, despite reminding me somewhat of a member of the Order of the Garter. Or the Cuvée 7xx by Jacquesson, with its unostentatious style perfectly matching its wonderful contents. Or Soutiran's vintage champagne bottle, which as well as going exceptionally well with its (also exceptional) contents also fits the current millennium, and shows that even small businesses do not have to be afraid of design. It is timelessly chic with polished sophistication, pleasing to the eye: it would not set any Gallic rooster in Italy crowing, but in France it surprises as a shrine to champagne. I like it, but many old customers consider it an eyesore. Conclusion: pleasing everyone is an art which not even champagne can achieve.