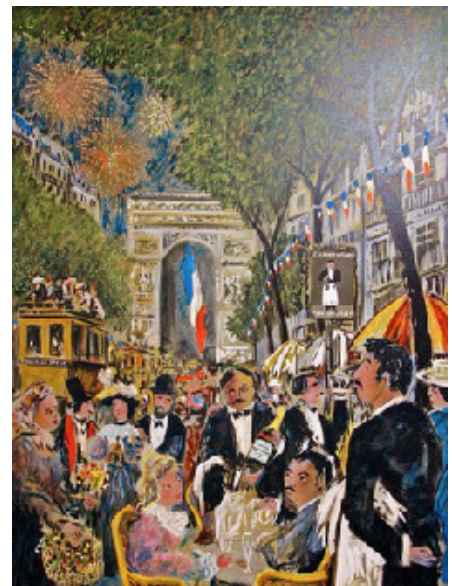


PATHWAY TO STARDOM
CHAPTER 13: La Folie de Grandeur

In 1983, when Mr Sawada senior decided to relinquish control of his business empire which included car dealing, trading and financing to his son Masahko, an art collector and eccentric. Masahko had long identified Paris as his ideal habitat, in common with many wealthy Japanese. However, Masahko was never content to live a low profile existence in the French capital. He determined to take Paris by storm. His first move was to rent the old-established 'Hôtel Particulier' on the Rond Point des Champs Elysées from the Dassault family, reputedly at an enormous sum. Despite the fact that this headquarters of Jour de France was only rented, Masahko proceeded to spend FF hundred millions on its total renovation. The wall paintings were restored, a gold lift installed for his visitors, a practice golf range laid out on one floor, billiard tables on another, fitness and sauna centres on another. His ambition was to create an ambience in which art and leisure would combine.



Hôtel particulier Marcel Dassault on the Rond Point des Champs Elysées

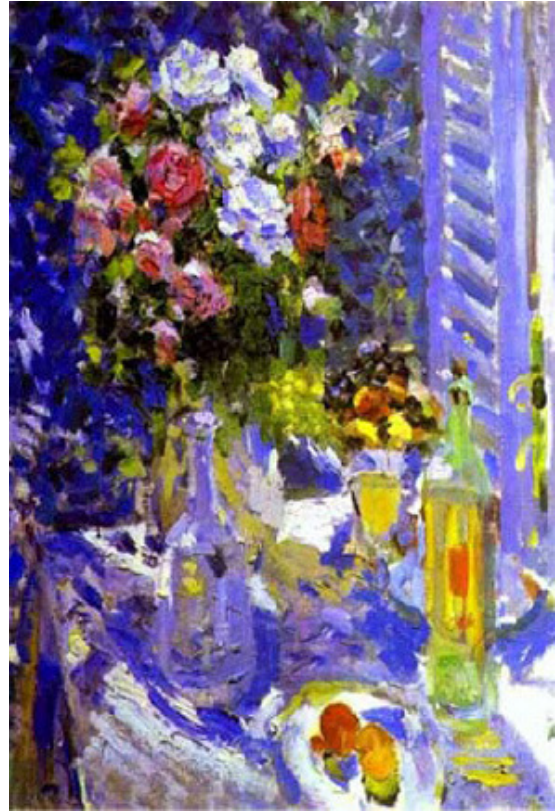


Rond Point des Champs Elysées by Guy Buffet

To this end he plunged into the art market with an open cheque book, buying all the Impressionist works that came on the open market in 1989. His permanent exhibition of Monets, Manets, Sisleys, Renoirs and so on formed the backdrop to what he called the Urban Sporting Club, to which it was counted an honour to receive an invitation to lavish cocktail parties for the beau monde.



Claude Monet - Woman with parasol



Alfred Sisley - Flowers and fruit



Edouard Manet - The Brioche



Pierre-Auguste Renoir - Peaches and Almonds

His next step was to create the Urban Cely Golf Club in the grounds of the Chateau de Cely.



Golf de Cely en Biere



Golf de Cely en Biere, Club House

Not content with bringing sport and art – unlikely bedfellows – together, Masahko Sawada determined to become a major player on the Parisien horse racing scene. Accordingly, he commissioned an incredulous Jean Lesbordes to buy him fifty yearlings with which to take the Parisien flat racing scene by storm in 1990. The trainer fulfilled half of this fabulous order at Deauville, where his purchases included yearlings by such prestigious stallions as Highest Honor, Kenmare and Sadler's Wells. Among his less fashionable acquisitions was a Miswaki filly from a stout German female line.



Deauville sales ring during yearling sale, where Mr. Lesbordes secured Urban Sea in August 1990



Outdoors Parade Ring : Where Mr. Lesbordes inspected his 26 yearlings before bidding for Mr. Sawada.

To complete his high roller's image Masahko Sawada needed a stud farm. Having purchased the Haras l'Hermitage from the Givaudan family – their fortune founded in perfume – he rapidly sank a further significant amount, creating rose gardens, tennis courts and five star accommodation for his guests. Pascal Morabito statues were procured and installed at the entrance gates to the Haras l'Hermitage.

Inevitably, such extravagant expenditure received extensive coverage in the Parisien media, making the Sawada name a household word in high society circles. After all, that was just as Masakho Sawada would have wished.



Mr. Sawada sitting on his dollars



Mr. Sawada tossing his dollars into the air

When all of his money was used up in those extravagant ventures, his income could not cover his expenses no matter how great it was. Masakho's credit lines were severed, forcing him to dispose of his newly-acquired possessions.



Mr. Sawada's bankruptcy

For reasons that I have never been able to explain – even to myself – I decided to put my faith in Jean Lesbordes and his remarkable affinity with the thoroughbred. I informed M. Watrigant of my intention to take up his challenge. However, while I might have decided to take a gamble on Jean Lesbordes, serious obstacles remained in my path.



Apparently Ling Tsui and Jean Lesbordes seemed in good terms. However serious obstacle lay ahead