

There are things in this world that must be done brilliantly if they are to be attempted at all. Military manoeuvres, opera singing, and interior design are among them.

Celeste Dell'Anna is wary of the road more travelled, of the path of compromise, of the middle way. His designs aim at perfection, and attain it as naturally as a born coloratura glides through the third octave. To falter is to fail, to hesitate is to invite disaster, to settle for second best is to negate everything that has gone before. Only a triumph is ever adequate, a miracle to all but the performer.

The gallery of ordinary miracles, which the images reproduced here fill like a museum of one man's striving for the sublime, is but a fixed point of departure, an autobiographical home. Every new project undertaken by Celeste Dell'Anna is a chance for him to leave that home behind, travelling to the ends of the earth, if necessary, in search of novel means and unexpected meanings. Thus and only thus are new miracles added to the old.

Let the viewer judge. Let him inform himself of the range of creative approaches; let him take stock of the variety of experienced volume, colour, and light; let him thumb through the catalogue of shades and textures; let him sample the fluid movement of a hard stone and the preternatural assuredness of a soft fabric. Finally, let him pose a design challenge, ideally verging on the impossible; and then ask himself whether Celeste Dell'Anna would not rise to meet it.

There is a story about an old woman who jeered when Thales of Miletus, pondering the ways of the heavens, stumbled and fell into a well. What can this fool know of higher things, she cried, when he does not even know where to put his own feet!

But who was right in the end? Thales, now known as the founder of classical philosophy, or the Thracian hag, now only remembered for her misplaced sense of the ridiculous?

Modern interior design may be one of Western philosophy's more humble applications, yet it is one that none the less shares its *modus operandi*, which is the existential aesthetic of man's self-affirmation in time and space through the history and culture of his forebears.

No less than any conundrum of meta physics, every square metre of the aesthetic world inhabited by man is full of claims and counterclaims specific to his epoch. What is luxury? What is vulgarity? What is the ideal? To answer these questions, exhaustively and convincingly, it is not enough to have a few fabric swatches on hand, or to voice the view that giallo antico marble is preferable to pavonazzeto.

Celeste Dell'Anna and the work of his Studio are part of the Western tradition of thought which began with Greek antiquity and is not completely barbarised even at this time of writing, despite the almost universally rising tide of mass-market solutions to complex and deeply individual problems of architecture and interior design. In this is the designer's uniqueness, and in the recognition of this is the satisfaction of his international following of clients.

Completed projects of Celeste Dell'Anna include the interiors of motor yachts, airplanes and helicopters alongside the construction, design and decoration of residential space, furniture and furnishings. While his clients are offered solutions that are technologically of the twenty-first century, what underpins such solutions is not merely the engineer's know-how, but an intellectual framework that is as sophisticated as it is flexible.

It certainly goes without saying that the services of Studio Dell'Anna are not for everybody. For among those who have the need of and can afford these services, as in almost any social microcosm, there are many who believe that the Tracian woman was right when she laughed at Thales.