



EDITORIAL

OF EVA MOLLAT DU JOURDIN (98)
Executive Director ESCP Alumni

Community is everything

It is with great pleasure that we present to you the third edition of our international magazine special.

We have carefully selected the best of our articles and a snapshot of what makes us proud.

Inside, you'll find what truly defines the richness of ESCP Alumni: its community.

Last March, we highlighted 40 Alumni under 40 who represent a true kaleidoscope of our network. The selection process was tough, but the outcome exceeded our expectations: it reflects the incredible talent of our graduates. Whether they are unicorn founders, Olympic champions, or CSR specialists, their stories have inspired us, and we are thrilled to share their journeys with you.

Many more, from across generations, also deserved to be featured in this edition. You can discover them weekly on our LinkedIn page, where we regularly share the latest news from our community. I encourage you to join us there for your daily dose of updates.

All these profiles are shaping the future, and that's what we aim to do at ESCP Alumni: support you in building a future that reflects who we are—open, inclusive, and optimistic.

Join us as we shape it together. |

Table of contents



News

- 5 Zapping
- 10 Schedule

Cover story

- 12 Paris, capital of universalism

Career

Coaching

- 19 How to change careers when you have no idea what to do next

Interviews

- 20 Cécile COUTENS (ESCP 95), the dynamic President of Royal Canin
- 23 Clément DELANGUE (MiM 12), the artificial intelligence prodigy is French
- 27 Normanno PISANI (MiM 17) deciphers the TikTok model

Portraits

- 29 Ambre JARNO (MS 11), in search of lost wax in Burkina Faso
- 32 Roselyne CHAMBRIER (MiM 09), a pan-African success story
- 34 Gian Maria GRAMONDI (MiM 17) and Luca CARTECHINI (MiM 17), co-founders of Shop Circle

Networking

36 News from the network

Campus

Fondation

41 Portrait of a donor, Marlène PELAGE (ESCP 93)

Culture

Interviews

45 Jean-Baptiste ANDREA (ESCP 96), meeting with a Goncourt Price made in ESCP

47 Hassanein HIRIDJEE (ESCP 97), the CEO of Axian Group takes us to Madagascar

Proust Questionnaire

52 Cécile COUTENS (ESCP 95), President of Royal Canin

Business life

53 Business life


FOLLOW ESCP ALUMNI ON SOCIAL MEDIA

 ESCPALumni

 Escpalumni

 @ESCPALumni

ESCP MAGAZINE IS EDITED BY: L'Association ESCP Alumni – 20-22 rue Marius AUFAN, 92300 Levallois-Perret – Tel. : 01 43 57 24 03 • **MANAGING EDITOR:** Bertrand DUMAZY (ESCP 94) • **DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR:** Eva MOLLAT DU JOURDIN (98) • **CHIEF EDITOR:** Arthur JEANNE (MSI 13) • **EDITORIAL ADVISOR:** Brieux FEROT (MiM 04) • **EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:** Brieux FEROT (MiM 04), Luc MAROT (ESCP 83), François VALVERDE (ESCP 46), Henry DE BROSES (EAP 82) • **RÉDACTION:** Houda GHARBI, Adrien CANDAU, Audrey BRACHET, Florian LEFEVRE, Eric MAGGIOR. • **EDITORIAL COORDINATOR:** Linda WAKAM, lwakam@escpalumni.org • **CONTRIBUTORS:** Florence JACOB, Gilles GOUTEUX (MD 12), Jonathan SARDAS • **GRAPHIC DESIGN:** Florent CHAGNON • **ILLUSTRATOR:** COSMO • **PHOTOGRAPHER:** Patrick WACK (MiM 04) • **SPONSORSHIP:** FFE – 15 rue des Sablons – 75116 Paris – Tel. : +331 53 36 20 40 – ffe@ffe.fr – Serge Schando, s.schando@ffe.fr, 01 43 57 91 62 • **TECHNICAL SUPERVISOR:** Yaël SIBONY • **COPYWRITER:** Houda Gharbi • **PRINTER:** Espace Graphic. Joint consultative committee : n° 1121G82354 – Legal deposit : 6090 – ISSN 2108-257X – Subscription (4 issues in French) : 50€

 Cet ouvrage a été imprimé sur papier FSC (Forest Stewardship Council). La marque FSC signifie qu'une proportion de fibres de bois, utilisées dans la fabrication du papier, provient d'une forêt correctement gérée, satisfaisant à des normes rigoureuses au niveau environnemental, social et économique. Cette forêt d'origine a été inspectée et évaluée de façon indépendante sur la base des principes et critères de gestion forestière acceptés et approuvés par le FSC. FSC est une association internationale à but non lucratif travaillant pour améliorer la gestion forestière à travers le monde. www.fsc.org

Cet ouvrage a été imprimé chez un imprimeur labellisé Imprim'Vert, marque créée en partenariat avec l'Agence de l'Eau, l'ADEME (Agence de l'Environnement et de la Maîtrise de l'Énergie), et la FCG (Fédération de l'Imprimerie et de la Communication Graphique). La marque Imprim'Vert apporte trois garanties essentielles :

- la suppression totale de l'utilisation de produits toxiques ;
- la sécurisation des stockages de produits et de déchets dangereux ;
- la collecte et le traitement des produits dangereux.

 **Certim PEFC**

Ce produit est issu de forêts gérées durablement et de sources contrôlées.

www.pefc-france.org

News



Didier TOUBIA changes the game in the meat industry

Didier TOUBIA (MS 96) is the co-founder and CEO of Aleph Farms, a cellular agriculture company specializing in food technology. He is behind the approval of lab-grown beef sales, marking a significant innovation in alternative proteins. A true entrepreneur, after graduating from ESCP Business School, Didier Toubia went on to co-found half a dozen companies, always pushing the boundaries of innovation.

green queen

Green Queen – January 17th 2024



Khaled LAOUTI is one of the 100 managers shaping business in Tunisia

As the General Director of Pierre Fabre Group North Africa and former President of SEPHIRE, the Syndicate of Innovative and Research Pharmaceutical Companies, **Khaled LAOUTI (MIM 08)** has been actively contributing to the group's growth in Africa since 2017. In addition to developing the laboratory and the pharmaceutical industry across the continent, he is committed daily to job creation, especially in Tunisia. This dedication has earned him a spot among the 100 managers making an impact on business in Tunisia by EntreprisesMagazine.

Entreprises

EntreprisesMagazine – January 2024



An Affiliate Professor named Legendary Woman of the decade

At the Global Women Economic Forum in London in October 2023, **Chiara CORAZZA**, an Affiliate Professor at ESCP Business School, was honored with this prestigious award for her projects, actions, and initiatives aimed at creating a more inclusive world. Serving as CEO of the Women's Forum for the Economy & Society from January 2017 to April 2021, founder of the "Cercles des Femmes" du Grand Palais, and a board member of the Arab International Women's Forum, she is a source of inspiration for both current and future generations.



Global Women Economic Forum in London – October 2023



Munishk GUPTA in the Top 10 Indian Leaders in France

With 25 years of experience in the business world, **Munishk GUPTA (EMBA 08)** has been named among the top 10 Indian leaders in France in 2023 by CEO Insights magazine. As the General Director and founder of iValueHealth.NET, Munishk Gupta envisions a healthier and fairer world by dedicating himself to creating innovative solutions accessible to everyone.



CEO Insights – November 2023



An Alumni wins the 2023 Prix Goncourt

On Tuesday, November 7, in Paris, **Jean-Baptiste ANDREA (ESCP 96)** was awarded the coveted prize for his fourth novel, "Veiller sur elle", published last August (Éditions de l'Iconoclaste). This work, which has sold over 50,000 copies, is a dramatic narrative that immerses powerful characters in a story full of twists and turns set in Italy of the inter-war period.



Le Monde – November 7th 2023



Edenred joins the CAC 40

Bertrand DUMAZY (ESCP 94) leads the fast-growing international group. Listed on the stock exchange since 2010 and a member of the CAC 40 ESG since September 2022, the company has reached a new milestone this year by joining the CAC 40. Best-known for its Ticket-Restaurant offering, which accounts for 44% of its revenue, Edenred has also distinguished itself through international expansion and the digitalization of three major services: employee benefits, professional mobility solutions, and inter-company payments.



Le Figaro – June 8th 2023



Exclusive interview with the new CEO of Leboncoin

As the leading classified ads platform, Leboncoin has seen **Amandine DE SOUZA (MiM 04)** take the helm as CEO since April 2023. In her first interview, she reveals her roadmap for the coming years. In a context where e-commerce and the second-hand market are highly competitive, Amandine De Souza's ambition is clear: "We want to become the European Amazon of second-hand goods."



LSA – June 19th 2024



Underdog: the start-up revolutionizing the home appliance sector

With her start-up offering refurbished appliances handled by experts, **Claire BRETTON (MiM 12)**, founder of Underdog, has been giving products a second life since 2022. An expert in artificial intelligence and a natural entrepreneur, Claire Bretton also founded Daco.io, a start-up focused on data collection and processing that was acquired by Veepee, and "Sauvons nos commerces", a solidarity platform selling vouchers to be redeemed post-pandemic. Additionally, she is the author of the book *La Valise*.

LesEchos

Les Echos – September 27th 2023



An Alumna among Forbes' 40 women of 2023!

Each year, Forbes France selects 40 inspiring women who make France shine internationally, and encourages women to excel in their respective fields. In the 2023 edition, **Emeline HAHN (MS 14)**, CEO & Co-Founder of FIZIMED, has been named in this prestigious list. An engineer, former high-level athlete, and mother, this recognition celebrates her entrepreneurial achievements.

Forbes

Forbes France – August 20th 2023



Clément DELANGUE named in TIME 100 AI

TIME 100 AI is a list that features the most influential leaders, entrepreneurs, creators, and artists in the digital and artificial intelligence world. As the co-founder and CEO of Hugging Face, **Clément DELANGUE (MiM 12)** is on this list of emblematic AI figures, alongside Elon Musk, Sam Altan and Demis Hassabis. Hugging Face is recognized as a unicorn specializing in natural language processing, serving researchers, developers, and the general public.

TIME

Time - September 7th 2023



Laurence STOCLET among the top 10 most inspiring women leaders worldwide

As Chair of the Board at Ipsos, **Laurence STOCLET (ESCP 89)** has been named one of the top 10 most inspiring women leaders in the world for 2022 by Industry Era Women Leaders. After nearly 25 years with the company and serving on the Board since 2002, Laurence Stoclet has been a true inspiration in the market research industry, helping Ipsos become one of the global leaders.



Industry Era Women Leaders - July 2023



The olympic flame in ESCP colors

On June 18th, **Farid MEDJOUB (MS 20)** was one of the 28 individuals who carried the Olympic flame in Nice. The torchbearers were selected for their commitment and actions that embody at least one of the three energies of Paris 2024: sport and games, territories, and community. As a national handball referee (FFHandball - French Handball Federation), an elected member of the French University Sports Federation, and, for the past year, a board member of ESCP Alumni, Farid proudly represents ESCP Business School.



Paris 2024 – April 2024



2 Alumnae recognized as top CEOs in Spain

Étodie PERTHUISOT (EMBA 08), CEO of Carrefour España, and **Hélène VALENZUELA (ESCP 92)**, General Director of OUIGO España, have been named among the best CEOs of 2023 by Forbes España! Having climbed the ranks at Carrefour since 2018, Étodie Perthuisot became CEO in September 2023. Meanwhile, Hélène Valenzuela has led OUIGO España since 2020, contributing to the launch of several new rail lines despite the challenges of the pandemic.

Forbes

Forbes España – May 2024



An Alumna among the 100 best talents under 30

Annamaria BARBARO (MiM 18), co-founder and CEO of Empathy, has been named among the 100 best talents under 30 by Forbes Italia. During her studies, she joined leading consulting firms such as PwC, Intesa Sanpaolo, and Bain & Company. She was later recruited by Barclays Investment Bank, where she became an Analyst and Associate in Global Markets. In 2022, she co-founded Empathy, Italy's first platform connecting animal shelters, individuals, and businesses.

Forbes

Forbes Italia – April 2024



CEO of the year is...

Global Private Banker has recently revealed its 2024 ranking of CEOs of the Year, and **Vincent LECOMTE (ESCP 85)**, CEO of BNP Paribas Wealth Management, won this prestigious title! Starting his career at KPMG in 1985 before moving to Accenture France, he joined BNP Paribas in 1992. Appointed CEO of the Wealth Management division in 2020, his career and achievements are now honored with this award.



Global Private Banker – May 2024



October 2024

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4TH • 7:30PM
PROVENCE ALPES CÔTE D'AZUR
REGIONAL GROUP
Back-to-school cocktail
Nice (France)

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8TH • 6:30PM
UK GROUP
ESCP Startup Events
London (UK)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9TH • 6:45PM
MEDIA GROUP
'AI in cinema and TV series' round
table discussion
Paris (France)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9TH • 7PM
ESCP AU FÉMININ GROUP
'Gender equality in the financial
sector: solutions that work'
round table discussion
Paris (France)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10TH • 5PM
ESCP BUSINESS SCHOOL EVENT
"Building Bridges: Education,
Entrepreneurship and Private
Equity" round table discussion
Hamburg (Germany)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10TH • 7:30PM
CLASS OF ESCP 1984 - 40TH
Anniversary
Paris (France)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12TH • 10AM
FINANCE BOOTCAMP
Paris (France) & Online

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18TH • 12:30PM
ESCP AU FÉMININ GROUP
Lunch with Mayssa Chehab (Netflix)
Paris (France)

November 2024

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15TH • 9AM
AUVERGNE-RHÔNE-ALPES
REGIONAL GROUP
Visit to the Bugey nuclear
power station
Saint-Vulbas (France)

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15TH • 12:30PM
ESCP AU FÉMININ GROUP
Lunch with Véronique de la
Bachelerie (Administrator)
Paris (France)

December 2024

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20TH • 12:30PM
ESCP AU FÉMININ GROUP
Lunch with Kousée Vaneecke
(EuraTechnologies)
Paris (France)

Find all our events
on the website
escpalumni.org



JOYEUX
SERVI AVEC LE CŒUR

UN CAFÉ QUI REVEILLE AUSSI L'INCLUSION

100% DES BÉNÉFICES
POUR L'EMPLOI DE
PERSONNES EN
SITUATION DE HANDICAP

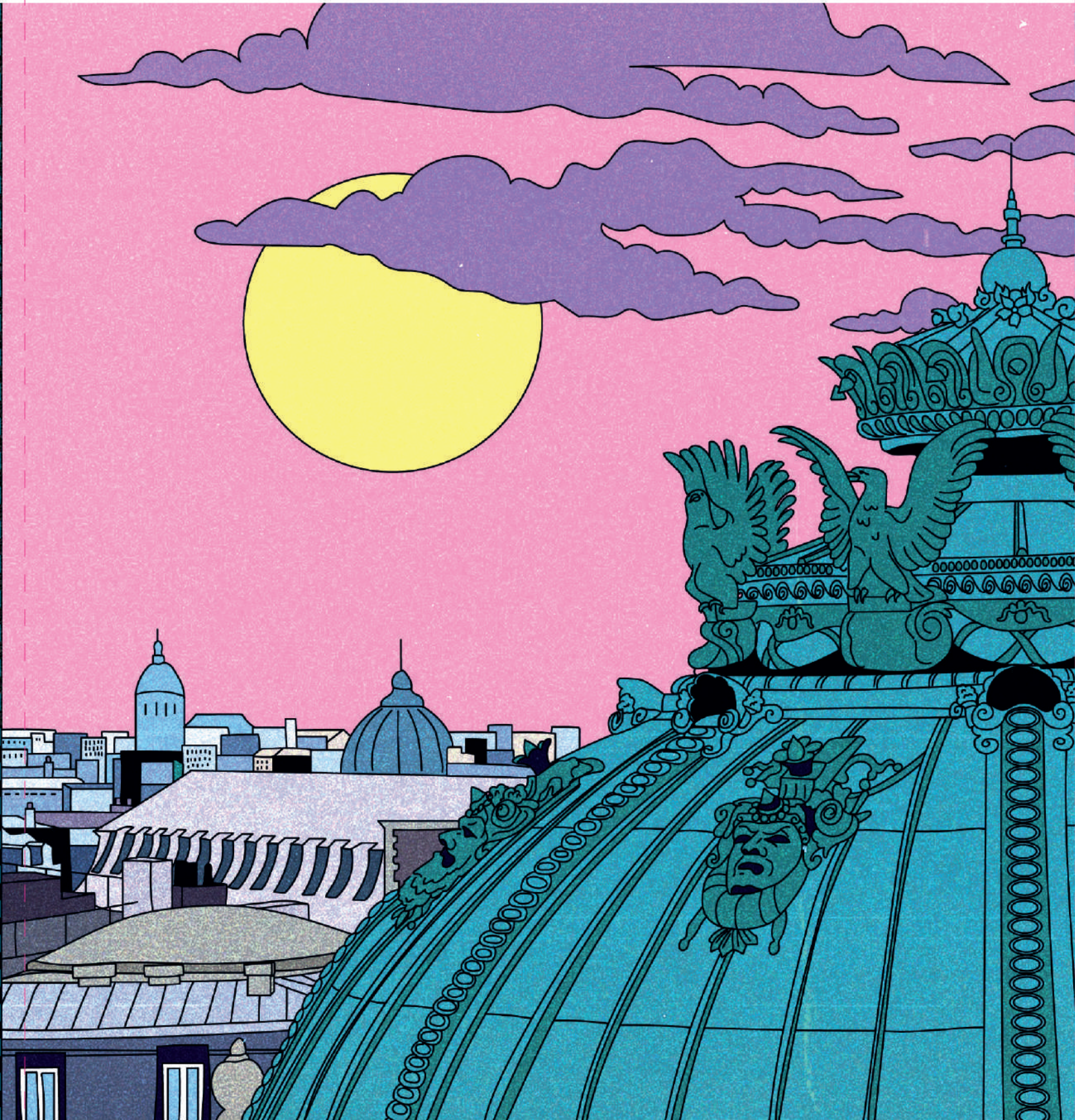


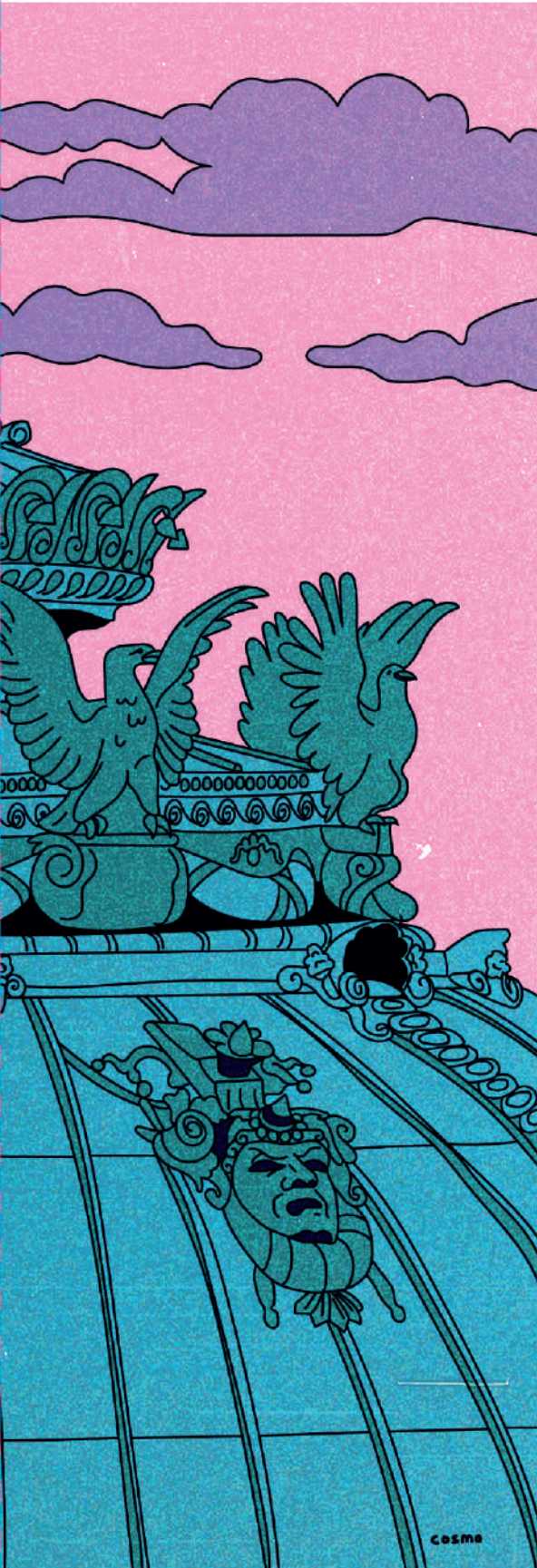
ARNAUD, ÉQUIPIER AU CAFÉ JOYEUX
SAINT-PHILIPPE-DU-ROULE

Cafés d'exception disponibles en grains, capsules et moulu,
torréfiés et conditionnés en France. 🇫🇷

En vente sur [CAFEJOYEUX.COM](https://www.cafejoyeux.com)







Paris, capital of universalism

This summer, Paris was in the spotlight more than ever. The least we can say is that it passed the Olympic and Paralympic test with flying colours. Often criticised by its own inhabitants, not always friendly to its visitors, the French capital continues to fascinate thanks to its perfect balance between history and modernity, its contrasts and its dynamism. Here's the proof.

By Ana Boyric
Artwork: Cosmo

In 2023, it all went downhill. One year ahead of the Olympic Games, the very serious *The Economist* published its ranking of the “world’s most liveable cities”. The elected representatives of Paris had reason to grimace: the capital had slipped from 19th to 24th place, far behind the gentle way of life in Vienna or Copenhagen. The cause: demonstrations against pension reform. The tip of the iceberg, if we are to believe Parisians, who are quick to complain about their mayor, the hellish traffic, the gloomy weather and the incessant roadworks. The locals are perhaps quick to criticise their city. But one year on, Paris has put everyone in agreement. During the Olympic and Paralympic Games, which everyone agreed were a great success, the city reconciled itself with its own inhabitants and amazed the world more than ever. The Olympic effect is undeniable and should boost tourism in the years to come. Paris has always known how to amaze, fascinate and seduce. You only have to leaf through the last hundred years of musical repertoire: in song, the Paris ravaged by the Second World War mingles with romantic Paris. Edith Piaf’s Paris joins forces with Gaël Faye’s “*Paris Métèque*”. The Franco-Rwandan rapper is probably the one who best tells the story of the capital: this city of light that is home to lovers, but whose darker side is also home to social misery. In the end, what matters is the conclusion: “*Paris, beautiful, I love you, when the lights go out. You don’t write poems for a city that is one.*”

When she arrived in Paris for the first time, Sarah Sanders - originally from Allendale, a farming town in South Carolina with a population of 2,500 - decided to let herself be surprised. Not so easy for the young student, because at the time, the first season of *Emily in Paris*, Netflix’s flagship series renowned - or rather mocked - for its clichés, had just come out. “*It was a big hit in the United States, but fortunately I hadn’t watched it, she says. All I could think of were the most famous monuments, but I had no idea what the layout of the city was like, or what the atmosphere was like. When I arrived at Charles de Gaulle airport, I just took a taxi and met up with a friend. I remember the first thing we did was go for a drink on a terrace.*” As soon as she landed, Sarah immediately got into the Parisian mood. Namely, moving into a 15 square metre studio apartment. “*It was completely*

new to me to open the window of my flat from my bedroom, which was also my kitchen”, she laughs. Moving first to Oberkampf and then close to the Centre Pompidou, Sarah took advantage of the specific characteristics of each arrondissement. The 11th, for its neighbourhood life. The 3rd for its tourism. But the student remembers her landlady above all: a woman in her fifties who had fled the capital for a house in the countryside, with a dozen Parisian flats under her belt. It was important to cover her tracks. “*Every month, I’d meet her on a street corner to pay her my rent in cash. She was so nice, we texted a lot, I ended up meeting her daughter, we had lunch together... We were almost friends, in fact! I remember that when I contacted her for information about the flat, she replied: “We’re going for a drink first.” How Parisian of her!*”

“**If you look at the number of museums, the number of theatres, the number of cinemas - there are still around 400 screens in Paris - it’s an extraordinary cultural offering.**”

No to Paris syndrome

Not even Craig Witmer would disagree. This young American, also from South Carolina, quickly discovered the pleasures of studying in Paris: “*In the morning, I drank a coffee on my balcony. Then classes, classes, classes. I usually followed that up with lunch with friends in a*

nearby park. And we’d try to meet up for an evening picnic on the banks of the Seine, he says. It could also end with a cocktail in the Marais.” Clearly, Craig doesn’t suffer from ‘Paris syndrome’, the strange illness that affects a few dozen tourists a year - mostly Japanese - who are devastated to discover that Paris is not a Chanel N°5 advert, nor Amélie Poulain’s city, nor the black-and-white landscape photographed by Doisneau. “*It’s true that the city can be dirty and smelly in places, but that’s also part of its charm, says Sarah. Take all those little restaurants in the Belleville district. They may be off the wall, but they’re delicious and have so much personality. Just like the third spaces, which we don’t have in the United States, and that’s a shame...*” Rand Gerges-Yamine, who has been a professor at ESCP for nearly three years, also recognises the culinary strengths of the City of Light. You can find everything here, from every region. But beware of the ‘tourist traps’ whose Instagrammable facades and more or less positive reviews cleverly disguise the frozen food served on the plate. “*Good places are all about word of mouth,*” she says. The same applies to nightlife. Bars, nightclubs, houseboats, rooftops... Young night owls are not left out: “*We generally went on the Shotgun app and chose at random, confides Sarah. We were never disappointed, we often ended up in completely unusual places.*” A great way to discover the city, according to the young woman, who remembers one or two raves on the banks of the Seine.

A cultural world city

When Martin Ajdari - CEO of the Opéra National de Paris - tries to describe Paris, one word instantly comes to mind: “*hub*”. A crossroads where countless cultures and arts meet. “*If you look at the number of museums, the number of theatres, the number of cinemas - there are still around 400 screens in Paris - it’s an extraordinary cultural offering,* he says. You have four opera houses: Bastille, Garnier, the Opéra Comique and the Théâtre des Champs Élysées. That’s pretty rare.” To counter the ‘Paris bashing’ trend, the director also draws on the world of fashion and artistic creation, which has reinvested in the capital: “*Between the Art Paris fair, the renaissance of the Palais de Tokyo and Fashion Weeks - which are unstoppable successes - we can see many pillars that have returned to the forefront of the scene.*” Closer to home: the Paris Opéra.

“Brexit has made London and the City’s star pale in this respect, therefore boosting Paris’ attractiveness for international investment.”

This prestigious institution alone is proof of the cultural crossroads that is Paris, a “world city”. “Every year, we welcome directors, singers and productions from all over the world, he continues. For example, you can see the work of Kirill Serebrennikov - a Russian director - and attend Offenbach’s French opera ‘Les Brigands’, directed by the Australian Barrie Kosky.” If Paris has been at the service of culture for years, culture also knows how to give back. March 2019: PNL surely offer one of the best promos in the city of Paris, revealing the video for their track “Au DD”, shot at the top of the Eiffel Tower. While the brothers are renowned for their masterful communication skills, this is not the first time the capital has been chosen as a filming location. Tom Hanks at the Louvre (The Da Vinci Code), Tom Cruise on a motorbike without a helmet on the Place de l’Étoile (Mission: Impossible 6) and fireworks from the Iron Lady (Sense 8). According to Martin Ajdari, “These are fantastic triggers for the presence of Paris in the imagination of the entire world population.”

Startup-city

Beyond the Paris of art and nightlife, let’s take a look at the playground of entrepreneurs: the Parisian startup ecosystem. With more than 11,000 startups and no fewer than 500 incubators, Paris is one of the five most dynamic cities for entrepreneurship in the world, according to the Global Startup Ecosystem report 2020.

For Rand Gerges-Yammine, who made this the subject of her study, Paris is anything but a pretty shop window, but rather an exceptional springboard for start-ups. For her, there is no better city to “test, fail, learn and start again”. So Paris “gives you wings”. “The capital remains very centralised and has a dense network of investors, she adds. When I lived in Lyon, I used to travel to Paris all the time to meet potential partners or to go to events. Although they have their own qualities, France’s other major cities don’t have this entrepreneurial ecosystem.” Far from being an El Dorado free of difficulties - the high cost of living can restrict newcomers - Paris is also not an arena in which entrepreneurs hope to survive. The city helps. Or rather, the Île-de-France region, which is behind a host of incentives and business support programmes that make the Paris region attractive to entrepreneurs and start-ups from all over the world. As for the State? “There’s no denying that government support is plentiful. Given the strong social security system and unemployment policies, many entrepreneurs feel that they have a safety net for setting up a business, unlike in the United States or the United Kingdom. There are also a lot of great initiatives contributing to the growth of the ecosystem, such as Le Galion, which offers entrepreneurs a place to share their experiences and feel less alone,” confirms the start-up ecosystem specialist.

But above all, what would Paris be without Station F? Opened in the summer of 2017, the Parisian incubator in the heart of the 13th arrondissement is one of the largest startup incubators in the world, housing a community of 1,000 startups - in an area of 34,000 m² - and offering nearly 30 support programmes. For Martin Adjari, it is now clear: Paris is in the process of confirming its vocation as a “centre for economic decision-making”. Atomico’s 2022 State of European Tech report confirms this and goes even further, declaring that France has overtaken the UK as a technology nation. “Brexit has made London and the City’s star pale in this respect,” continues the director, “therefore boosting Paris’ attractiveness for international investment.” As for Rand Gerges-Yammine, who lived in London and Silicon Valley and moved to Paris 3 years ago, she notes that in terms of the dynamism of the startup

ecosystem, Paris no longer has much to envy the British capital or even California: “Paris has become an ideal model of a successful startup ecosystem in a very short space of time. Growth has been very rapid and impressive. There’s so much potential compared to Silicon Valley and London, which are both more mature. What I also like about the Paris startup ecosystem is the diversity of sectors. In Paris, you can find startups in many fields, from AI to foodtech to the circular economy.”

“Some Parisian cobblestones are older than Uncle Sam’s country.”

In the family of capitals - the most renowned - Paris is often thought of as the one designed “on a human scale”. Jacques Prévert wrote in 1978: “Paris is very small; that is its true greatness; everyone meets there; the mountains too”. Paris is so small that in recent years the City Council has stepped up initiatives to encourage people to walk in the capital. Would walking in Paris be a crazy idea? Not at all, according to our friends from across the Atlantic. “If you have enough time, you can walk to two opposite points in the city”, praises Sarah, before Craig takes up the baton: “In my opinion, there’s nothing as wonderful as walking in the centre



of Paris. The fact that you can go from one end of the city to the other in 2h30-2h45 is just incredible. You can go anywhere. And it's not a city where you walk with your head down. You look up and admire the architecture." And not just any architecture: Haussmannian. This style, which dates back to the Second Empire, shapes the Paris of today and still fascinates thousands of tourists strolling along the Ile de la Cité. "It's impressive to see how much of Paris' architectural heritage has been preserved, Sarah says. Coming from the United States, whose history is fairly recent, it's something new. Some of the paving stones in Paris are even older than Uncle Sam's country." Another historical speciality, perhaps a little less glamorous: strikes. The American student remembers a year in Paris marked by numerous protests linked to transport, women's rights and the climate. Not enough to disturb the young woman. On the contrary: "It was fun to see Parisians leave work to go to a demonstration. Some German friends and I took part in the women's rights demonstration on March 8th. I loved it, it was great to see so much camaraderie between French people." At the mention of the farmers' parade last February, during which dozens of farmers rode through the streets of Paris on their tractors, Sarah can't help but react: "Something like that would never happen in the United States! Even though the streets are wide enough."

It was worse before

Paris is also - and above all - its surroundings. Yes, the inner suburbs are not as exclusive as they once were. And let's not forget that Marne-la-Vallée, just under an hour from Paris, is home to Disneyland - one of Europe's biggest theme parks, where every year around 10 million visitors come to watch Mickey Mouse's parade. "Compared with other megacities, Paris may seem to be hemmed in by its ring road, says Martin Ajdari. But this is changing, especially with the arrival of the Grand Paris Express." While it is commonplace to criticise Paris for its insalubrity, haphazard traffic, noise pollution and poor air quality, and while many Parisians are considering leaving the region for the provinces - 64% according to a survey carried out in 2022 by LinkedIn News - the director of the Paris Opera is keen to put things into perspective. On the subject of traffic, for example: "30 years ago, Paris

was at times an urban motorway in the middle of historic monuments. You only have to think back to rue de Rivoli and rue Lafayette. The rue de Rivoli was four or five lanes of traffic, the Grands Boulevards were constantly saturated with cars parking on the narrow pavements... I'm not even talking about pedestrians with strollers. We quickly forgot how important cars were just a few years ago. Today, almost all my journeys are made by bike." On the other hand, a subject on which everyone agrees - including the two Americans - Paris is cruelly lacking in green spaces. Rand Gerges-Yammine admits that Sunday strolls to the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont have their limits. Not to mention the Champs-de-Mars: "We've seen better greenery, she says openly. Paris is still a polluted city, and you quickly get the feeling that it's hard to breathe." Her solution: every weekend, the young Lebanese climbs aboard a Transilien train and sets off to discover the Ile-de-France region. Almost with stars in her eyes, she admits: "I end up in some magnificent places. It's nothing like the idea you might have of the Paris region. In 30-40 minutes, you spend your Saturday in a charming village, there's not a cat in sight and the few locals take the time to say hello. It's refreshing!" Now based in New York, Craig Witmer makes no secret of his desire to return to the capital. Chicago-based Sarah Sanders feels the same way. "But in

my opinion, to really feel 'Parisian', you have to be there for a while", she admits. After thirty years living in Paris, Martin Ajdari knows the capital like the back of his hand but regrets not having had the opportunity to spend a few years elsewhere in his career. "I'm very happy in Paris but I wouldn't be against the idea of leaving," he admits. Probably only to come back again. |

“ Compared with other megacities, Paris may seem to be hemmed in by its ring road. But this is changing, especially with the arrival of the Grand Paris Express. ”

Casting



Craig WITMER (MiM 22),
Innovation Project Manager in the Office of Analytics, Performance, and Innovation of the City of Syracuse



Rand GERGES-YAMMINE,
professor at ESCP Business School - Campus Paris - who studies the start-up ecosystem



Sarah SANDERS (MiM 22),
Consultant at Euromonitor International



Martin AJDARI (ESCP 89),
Managing Director of the Opéra National de Paris

DEPUIS 30 ANS FACE AU VIH,
ON N'A PAS ARRÊTÉ...

DE PLEURER

ET DE CHERCHER

N'ARRÊTONS PAS LE COMBAT.

FAITES UN DON DE 10€ PAR SMS EN ENVOYANT DON AU 92110



The Good Company SIREN 398 945 543 - Photographe : Maxime Coué



DON PRÉLEVÉ SUR VOTRE FACTURE OPÉRATEUR. DISPONIBLE UNIQUEMENT EN FRANCE MÉTROPOLITAINE POUR LES ABONNÉS BOUYGUES TÉLÉCOM, ORANGE, SFR, FREE ET EI TÉLÉCOM. COÛT DU SMS GRATUIT.

Career

How to change careers when you have no idea what to do next?

If you find yourself stuck in a job that isn't the right fit for you, this article is for you. If you are ready for a career change but have no idea where to start, this feature will help you think ahead and take action.



**Eléonore Moreau (ESCP 96),
Career Coach & Expert for ESCP Alumni Career Department**

Eléonore Moreau is a Certified Professional Coach passionate about helping people regain their confidence to live their best professional lives and supporting them in achieving their goals. With 24 years of corporate leadership experience at global and local companies in top management positions, including six years on an executive committee, she brings expertise in marketing and sales. Currently, she has embarked on a new career as a Career Coach.

Career Management is a Lifetime Skill.

Let's address the elephant in the room: we are responsible for our lives. Career Management is a crucial aspect of self-care. Patricia Romboletti, author of *"Bulletproof Your Career"*, writes: *"Nothing will change until you make yourself, your career, and therefore your financial security a priority. And if you don't put career-related actions on your schedule, then you are not making them a priority."* Are you ready to give yourself permission to take time and think?

Career Change: Clarity is Power.

Before diving into updating your CV and searching for jobs on LinkedIn, take the time to clear your mind and listen to your heart. Don't start your search until you have complete clarity about WHAT you want.

Seek Help To Brainstorm Your Career Options.

There are three ways to get help: find an accountability buddy, seek support from your ESCP career department, or enlist the help of a career coach. Or why not explore all three options?

Brainstorm And Create Your Career Plan.

It all begins with defining your life purpose. What does it mean for you to be fully alive? What impact does your life have? As a career coach, I delve deeply with my clients into what truly matters to them. Together, we define their values, life purpose, identify their saboteurs, and discover their superpowers. We start with their dreams and thoroughly examine their past professional experiences. At the end of this initial step, my clients choose up to three career projects to assess.

Take Action To Assess Your Dream Career Projects.

Once you have defined your dream projects, meet people who work in those fields – use and expand your network. Interview these contacts to understand their motivations, their challenges and work environment. Gather the key information about their work, financial aspects, required education and qualifications. If possible, try it out. Finally, assess and determine what you are saying yes to and what you are saying no to!

Is it easy? No.

Is it feasible? Absolutely!

Would like to know more: see our webinar on March 28th at 12:30
Registration at [escpalumni.org/agenda](https://www.linkedin.com/in/eleonoremoreau/)
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/eleonoremoreau/>

By Arthur Jeanne (MS 13)

“Pets make us better people”.

After 15 years in the pet industry, **Cécile COUTENS (ESCP 95)** has a solid pedigree. That's what it took to become the first woman to head Royal Canin, the world leader in healthy pet food. Her mission is to ensure that the success story of a small company based in the Gard region, in France, continues to flourish, conquering the world without ever losing sight of its roots or its desire to innovate.



Cécile COUTENS (ESCP 95)
CEO of Royal Canin

Hi Cécile, can you tell us more about your career? How do you become President of Royal Canin?

Cécile COUTENS: I never said to myself: ‘one day I’ll be President of Royal Canin!’ A succession of stages and chapters led me to this position. For a long time, I was a marketing professional. After graduating from ESCP, I started with an internship at Colgate, like many of those who wanted to go into marketing, and then moved on to the chocolate business at Cadbury in 1995. In 2000, I joined the American group Mars, where I became Marketing Director of the Pet division for the general public. After a spell at Blédina, I returned to Mars as World Brand Director for Whiskas. I joined Royal Canin in 2015. At that time, I broadened my scope to include sales and then General Management, and I moved to the United States as Director of the Americas region. I came back just over a year ago to take

over as Chairman of Royal Canin. This is my fourth job on Royal Canin's Global Management Committee.

Do you have to love animals to work at Royal Canin?

C.C.: I think so. In any case, I love them: I've got a cat, my brother's a vet, my sister's an illustrator and her favourite characters are cats and dogs, so there's a fibre in the family! I think you have to love animals and love those who love them to understand their needs. That's bound to help, especially as in a company like ours you can bring your dog into the office, so it would be a shame not to take advantage of that! When I get up in the morning, arrive at the office and the R&D manager's labrador jumps on me happily, my day gets off to a great start!

Can you tell us more about the history of the Royal Canin brand?

C.C.: In France, the brand is best known for its famous 1986 advertisement, in which a German Shepherd runs in slow motion to music by Ennio Morricone. This extraordinary ad made its mark at the time and boosted the reputation of a brand that was born more than 50 years ago in Aimargues in the Gard region of France. It was born of the intuition and genius of its founder, Dr Jean Cathary. Like Hippocrates, Mr Cathary believed that nutrition could be the first form of medicine. As a vet, he treated a lot of German Shepherds, which are sensitive

dogs from a digestive point of view. That's why he had the idea of putting the care directly into the food these animals ate. The result was his first product, yellow soup, which was designed to be super-digestible. From Dr Cathary's original intuition was born a multinational company that has become the world leader in healthy food for dogs and cats. Today, Royal Canin is present on 5 continents, with 60 subsidiaries, 16 factories and 8,500 employees. Our success has never waned, thanks to the innovation at the heart of our success and the conviction that individualised, recommended nutrition can transform the health of animals.

How would you define the brand's mission and promise?

C.C.: Our mission, really, is this: to transform the health of cats and dogs through individualised nutrition. It's a mission that hasn't changed since the brand was created. What has changed is our strength and our ability to innovate in the service of this core mission. We have expanded not only geographically, but also in terms of professions and animals. Royal Canin has been able to evolve with science and observation in order to best meet the needs of cats and dogs. We now have a huge number of specific ranges to suit different breeds, ages and sensitivities. And there's still a lot of work to be done when it comes to feeding sensitive populations, particularly in terms



“At Royal Canin, our culture is to put cats and dogs first. When we design a project, we always come back to the animal and its basic needs.”

of care for the first stages of life. All too often, young animals are still treated like adults.

What challenges are you facing as President of Royal Canin?

C.C.: The company has grown enormously and very quickly. A company that continues to expand worldwide has to put in place an infrastructure that allows it to change scale while continuing to commit its 8,500 employees to its vision and corporate culture. We need to make sure that everyone, whatever their job is and wherever they do it, understands what we do and where we're going. The other issue is sustainability. We must continue to make precise products that meet the needs of each animal, but we must do so responsibly, with a carbon footprint that conserves the planet's resources. In fact, our ambition is to be carbon neutral by the end of 2025. The Mars Group's ambition is to be net zero by 2050. So this is a critical transformation challenge, as well as a challenge of total innovation.

Royal Canin has become an international brand, but it has done so without leaving its roots?

C.C.: The brand has been present in the

Gard since its origins. The Aimargues site is the brand's largest. It employs 1,200 people of almost 50 different nationalities. It is home to our global research centre, our international headquarters, three laboratories and a factory. This site gives Royal Canin a global reach from a small town in the Gard region. It's true that it's not an everyday occurrence.

How do you maintain a vision and unite 8,500 employees while changing scale?

C.C.: This requires strategy, but you know the saying: “culture eats strategy for breakfast”. Corporate culture is essential. At Royal Canin, our culture is to put cats and dogs first. When we design a project, we always come back to the animal and its basic needs. I recently visited a factory in India. Every time they start production, the team leader reads a consumer testimonial and explains the benefits of the product. So everyone knows what they're working for and understands the importance of their job. It's essential if we're to achieve our vision.

The pet economy is booming. How do you explain this growth?

C.C.: I think that the status of animals has

changed. When I was a child, I used to see a lot of dogs living outside the house. Now they're in the bedroom rather than outside. Pets have really come into the home and become members of the family in their own right. In fact, before, we often got a pet once we had children. It was a bit like ‘adding to the family’. Nowadays, pets often arrive in the home before children. As far as the boom in the sector is concerned, I also think that there has been a COVID effect. During the lockdown period, the rise in the number of pets increased from 2% a year to 6%. I think this is due to the fact that in an increasingly virtual world, the need to connect with nature has become more important. Animals connect us deeply with nature, with other people and they transform our lives. They make us better humans. As the writer Milan Kundera said: “*The true moral test of humanity is its relationship with those who are at its mercy: animals*”.

Personally, what motivates you when you get up in the morning?

C.C.: I believe that as a woman CEO, I have a role to play. There aren't many of us in this position because, historically and culturally, it hasn't been seen as a job for women. To be the CEO, you're always told you have to be tough, competitive and assertive. Yet, I believe that there are values that are culturally carried by women in society, such as empathy, love and care, which are not contradictory with this job, on the contrary.



“It’s important for me to embrace feminine values and make room for them. I have a responsibility to create a breach so that women can see themselves in this type of position.”

In the way I do my job, which is shared by many other women, it's important for me to embrace feminine values and make room for them. I have a responsibility to create a breach so that women can see themselves in this type of position. It's a real ambition to do my job in this way and to do it in an inclusive way. That's why I have a very diverse management committee, with

8 nationalities, a very high level of parity and people with very different characters to carry out the type of leadership I believe in.

Coming back to ESCP, what memories do you have of the school?

C.C.: If I had to sum up, for me the school is 3 things: Paris and Parisian life, the quality

of teaching and the richness of community life. At ESCP, I took full advantage of this because I was a member of several associations and that opened me up to the world. I took part in rowing, which taught me a lot about teamwork, effort and consistency. I was also involved with ACCEDE, an association that promotes professional reintegration. Finally, with Génépi, I gave classes to prisoners at the Maison d'arrêt de la Santé. All this opens up new horizons and anchors you in different realities that broaden your vision of things.

What advice would you give to current students who want to work in the pet industry?

C.C.: It's a very dynamic sector in which there's a lot of investment and innovation, so it's very stimulating. Especially as the levers of its growth are here to stay. And then there are all kinds of companies and professions in the pet industry. More generally, I'd advise students to go for their passion, because it drives energy and performance. You're building a career, but you're also living in the present, and you have to love what you do when you do it. I always say to my children, go where your energy takes you.

By Arthur Jeanne (MS 13)

"Artificial intelligence must have a positive impact on the world".

Clément DELANGUE (MiM 12) is the co-founder and CEO of Hugging Face, one of the major players in the artificial intelligence sector. With its open, collaborative machine learning platform, this Franco-American unicorn is defending an ambitious, democratic and inclusive vision of AI. Far from the pipe dreams sometimes associated with the subject. Meet an alumni who will make you love artificial intelligence.



Clément DELANGUE (MiM 12)
co-founder and CEO of Hugging Face

Can you tell us more about how Hugging Face came about?

Clément DELANGUE: The Hugging Face adventure began just over 7 years ago. The project was born out of our shared passion for artificial intelligence, with my co-founders Julien Chaumond and Thomas Wolf, who both come from École Polytechnique. At the time, we had already begun to familiarise ourselves with the subject and we were all following its development closely. We really wanted to work on it. That was the driving force behind the creation of Hugging Face.

Originally, Hugging Face was nothing like the company it is today?

C.D.: In fact, we started with something

very different from what we do today. Initially, we were making a kind of entertaining chatbot. And then we began to realise that our technology, in other words our artificial intelligence platform, was the real value we were creating for the ecosystem. In short, the infrastructure underlying our final product attracted more attention than our product itself. After 3 years, we completely changed the company's business and became a platform for all the companies creating artificial intelligence technologies.

How did your interest in artificial intelligence come about?

C.D.: It was born during my gap year at ESCP. At the time, I'd already been passionate about new technologies and the Internet for a long time. I was doing a work placement at eBay and as part of that I was sent to the e-commerce fair in Paris to man the stand that was shared with PayPal. It was awful because all the sellers whose money was blocked on PayPal came to the e-commerce fair to complain and say: "you have to unblock my money". It wasn't a very fun day! At one point, a big geeky guy with round glasses came up to me on the stand and said, "Oh, you're eBay, you've bought a start-up that does barcode recognition, but it's rubbish. Now there's no need for barcodes, we can recognise

images automatically using machine learning". I was intrigued and that evening I did a bit of research and realised that this guy was quite serious - he was a graduate of the Ecole Centrale who'd set up his own start-up, Moodstocks. A month later, I found myself starting my second internship with this company, which uses artificial intelligence technology for image recognition.

Why did you immediately fall in love with this technology?

C.D.: Because I started to see the potential of this technology to create things that just weren't possible before. I think that's what excites me the most, is that you're really on a technology that allows you to do new things, things that were impossible to do 5 years ago. It's fascinating to see what AI can create in the world.

Getting back to Hugging Face, what is the company's promise today? What is its core business?

C.D.: Hugging Face has become the platform most used by AI builders, i.e. all the people who work with artificial intelligence. These people use us to share models, datasets and artificial intelligence applications. For example, when we hear about Mistral, LLaMA from Meta, or Stable Diffusion.



“
AI is a new paradigm for building technology, but it depends on individuals. It's not at all independent or autonomous as a system.”

All these models are on our platform and people who want to use them come to our platform to use them. Hugging Face is a bit like their toolbox, their collaboration platform that enables them to develop features, workflows and artificial intelligence products much more quickly than they could without us. Hugging Face is really the platform, the toolbox for anyone building artificial intelligence.

Is the collaborative aspect of the platform important?

C.D.: Absolutely, we have a huge community dimension, since it's the community that contributes models, datasets and applications to the platform. Today, we have just over 2 million users who have

shared over 1.5 million models, datasets and applications.

Talking of figures, what does Hugging Face represent today?

C.D.: We employ just under 200 people in total, around sixty of them in France and forty in the United States. We're a fairly hybrid company between France and the United States. In fact, in the US, people think we're French, and in France they think we're American. In reality, we're lucky enough to have the best of both worlds, i.e. French expertise in training engineers and scientists, which is truly exceptional, but also the financial support and ambition that are quite unique in the United States. I think this model is good for the ecosystem,

because it brings a lot of international talent to France and raises France's profile. Getting back to the figures, we've raised just under \$500 million since Hugging Face was launched. This year we're going to pass the 100 million mark in annual revenues. This is an interesting indicator, because it's true that it's interesting to look at the valuation (see: the company is now valued at over 4 billion dollars), but it's also interesting to look at the revenues. We were pleased last year to have confirmed our ability to generate significant revenues.

What are the applications of Hugging Face's machine learning models?

C.D.: The fields are very broad. They range from simple text for support chatbots to autonomous vehicles, search engines, audio recognition like Siri, image recognition and generation like Stable Diffusion, and even estimating the waiting time when you order an Uber. It's a really broad range of applications. In reality, what's happening is that artificial intelligence is becoming the default tool for creating all technology.



Why do you think machine learning is a potential solution to a huge number of social issues?

C.D.: Firstly, I think it reshuffles the deck. I find it quite interesting because, as an entrepreneur, it allows me to do things a little differently to the way they have been done in traditional companies. And indeed, it creates new capabilities for solving society's problems. For example, it can have a major impact on the creation of medicines. If we talk about autonomous vehicles, the number of road deaths is far too high today. If we can reduce the number of accidents by even 10% using artificial intelligence, it will save hundreds of thousands of lives. So, yes, we are very interested in all these new ways of solving society's problems. And we are very much involved in ensuring that artificial intelligence is really geared towards these issues, so that in 10, 15 or 20 years' time, we will be able to say that artificial intelligence has really had a positive impact on the world and on us. That's also why we hired Meg Mitchell, our head of ethics. She's an authority on the subject, having set up and run the AI ethics department at Google before joining us.

What is your vision for artificial intelligence and what are the pitfalls to be avoided for the future of AI?

C.D.: One of the major risks that we are working hard on is the risk of a concentration of power and capabilities, since artificial intelligence requires an enormous amount of resources, both in terms of infrastructure and skills. There is a risk that all artificial intelligence will be concentrated in the United States and China in a few very large companies. Our aim is to build tools so that France can also build artificial intelligence systems that are competitive with the rest of the world. That's why we're working hard to put in place tools that will enable everyone, anywhere, in any country, to participate, understand and build artificial intelligence themselves.

Should artificial intelligence be everyone's business?

C.D.: I think it's really important that people really take ownership of the

“
I think it's really important that people really take ownership of technology, understand it and apply it where it's needed. If we leave technology solely in the hands of a few companies, they're going to do what companies have always done, which is to try and maximise their profits.”

technology, understand it and apply it where it's needed. If we leave technology solely in the hands of a few companies, they'll do what companies have always done, which is to try to maximise their profits and achieve monopoly situations. On the other hand, if we democratise this technology and make it more accessible to everyone, it will enable us to focus on issues that are important to people, such as the environment. We should be making greater use of the potential of artificial intelligence to solve problems such as global warming. One of our team members, Sasha Luccioni, is one of the most recognised experts on the subject of artificial intelligence linked to the environment. She is working on assessing the carbon emissions of training artificial intelligence models. Beyond this example, I'm convinced that giving people access enables us to focus the technology as a whole on use cases that are important to them and beneficial to everyone.

How do you see the future of artificial intelligence?

C.D.: I think that all areas of technology and all areas of society will be affected by artificial intelligence. It really is a new paradigm: all the technological products you use today are going to be built using artificial intelligence. In a few years, artificial

intelligence as a field will become bigger than the general field of computing or technology today. I think that in a few years' time, you will have 100 million AI Builders, in the same way that you have 100 million software engineers today.

But there will always be a need for humans. Don't you believe in the fantasy of independent artificial intelligence?

C.D.: No. AI is a new paradigm for building technology, but it depends on individuals. It's not at all independent or autonomous as a system. It's really a methodology for creating technology that depends on the people who build it. The kind of dystopia where artificial intelligence takes over everything autonomously is science fiction.

One prediction you make that may be of interest is the creation of a media entirely generated by artificial intelligence.

C.D.: Studies are beginning to show that humans sometimes prefer to read automatically generated content rather than manually created content. So it's possible that this year, we'll see the development of media that are mainly automatically generated. What really interests me about this is the potentially unlimited capacity

for personalisation. We could, for example, see a medium that adapts to the time available to its readers. For example, you could imagine someone who wants to read my interview in ESCP Alumni magazine being able to determine the length of the version they want to read.

Getting back to less forward-looking things, what memories do you have of your time at ESCP?

C.D.: ESCP is the school that really opened me up to the world. Today, I'm based in the United States and I think it was the school that gave me this openness and this desire to create a two-headed company between France and the United States. Before joining the school, I hadn't travelled much. During my studies at ESCP, I spent a year in Madrid, 6 months in Bangalore in India and 6 months in Dublin. When I was in Madrid, I was president of the Junior Enterprise and I had two vice-presidents, one German and one Spanish. I remember very well that it was my first experience of intercultural management, as the way in which management and leadership are commonly accepted in Spain and Germany are quite different! I enjoyed this multicultural leadership experience and it helped me a lot in my future career. I was at the Blue Factory with Maeva Tordo, with lots of really cool people who went on to set up great companies. It's a great memory.

What advice would you give to students wanting to get into artificial intelligence?

C.D.: Experiment. These days, with open source, you can find ways of testing things very quickly on GitHub or Hugging Face, for example, even if you don't have a technical background. It's pretty easy to try out AI functionalities. For example, we've just launched the Hugging Chat Assistant, which allows anyone to create an assistant without having to code, just by giving it instructions. I'd really advise anyone who's interested to try things out, to go to the Blue Factory and launch a project. Then, you have to take things one step at a time, put one foot in front of the other and progress gradually.

By Ana Boyrie

“It’s a privilege to be made constantly uncomfortable by new things you need to learn and comprehend”

Ever since he was a child, **Normanno PISANI (MiM 17)** has always been a globetrotter. After Argentina, Spain and France, the 31-year-old Italian landed in Great Britain. For the past five years, he has worked at TikTok as Global Head of Editorial. Despite the London greyness, it’s with a smile that he looks back on his career and talks about the great opportunities offered to brands by the platform.



Normanno PISANI (MiM 17)
Global Entertainment Partnerships Lead
at TikTok

You’re from Rome originally. You have now lived in London for six and a half years. You’re quite the city guy...

Normanno PISANI: I’ve always been a city guy! I have a very international background. When I was 2 years old, my dad got a job offer in Argentina. In one month and a half, he decided to move the whole family – I have two brothers and one sister, four kids is quite a big family – to Buenos Aires. I lived there for four years. The family motto is: you’ve got to be international. That is why in Argentina – despite both my parents being

Italian – my brothers, my sister and I went to a French school. Even when we came back to Rome, I passed my ‘baccalauréat’ – my major was economics and social sciences (ES) – in a French high school. The idea my parents wanted us to integrate was: yes, you are Italian, but you’ve got to expand your horizon as much as possible, you’ve got to learn as much as possible, you’ve got to travel as much as possible. In some ways, that’s what led me to choose ESCP as a business school.

Thanks to ESCP’s program, you visited five different cities in two years, in four different countries, right?

N.P.: Yes, the first year was in Turin. Then I ended up in Milan for an internship, where I worked in venture capital. I’ve always been very passionate about technology. So I was really interested in understanding how startups financing was functioning at the time. The second year at ESCP was in Madrid. Then I did an internship at Amazon in Luxembourg. The third year was in Paris and I finished back in Milan at Google Cloud.

What impact has traveling had on your career?

N.P.: It’s had an impact on my career in several ways. In Madrid, I had a friend who had done his internship at Nintendo. That’s when it hit me: *“I can actually work at the intersection between creativity, entertainment and technology”*. I could choose something that I enjoy, that is interesting to me.. It was quite a turning point. Then, I think traveling makes people very adaptable. Every time you change countries, you basically have to restart all over again. Even the basics like a bank account, your phone number, finding a flat, learning how to navigate the culture... You’re used to constant change. Traveling is the best way to connect with new people, with new cultures, new ways of thinking. It also teaches you empathy, I think.

As it happens, adaptability is quite a crucial skill in your current position at TikTok...

N.P.: Definitely! That’s the important bit. As far as I’m concerned, it’s a privilege to be made constantly uncomfortable by new things you need to learn and comprehend. When you work in an organization like

“
When we finish university, we naively think we’re going to become CEO in three years. A professional career is 40-years-long, if not more. So being resilient, constantly curious and accepting that you have a long road ahead of yourself is crucial.”

the one I currently work for, things are constantly evolving. We are constantly looking for new ways to empower creativity. I’ve been in the company for five years now, but looking back, my experience has changed so much! Even in a day-to-day perspective. I started leading operations for TikTok in the Italian market – which basically meant focusing on content strategy, creator strategy and the partnership strategy – building a team of ten people, managing them through the pandemic. We recently gathered a global team trying to understand how we could scale entertainment on the platform. Even this year, I’ve done so many different things that require learning to adapt and understand how you can thrive

despite the circumstances that might have changed. Some people might see this as challenging, I see it as an extremely positive and necessary ‘discomfort’.

Earlier you talked about the “intersection between creativity, entertainment and technology”. Would it be your definition of what TikTok does?

N.P.: Ultimately, I think TikTok provides a set of tools to express creativity. The same way the painter uses a canvas and paint-brushes. What is interesting about TikTok is that it’s a video platform which empowers everyone to be a creator. With the idea that everyone has a story to tell. Everyone has something to express. How precisely do we build the tools to empower that kind of creativity? That’s for me the most fascinating thing about TikTok. And I think I’m interested in technology as a way for people to share and create things.

A way for brands as well, right?

N.P.: Indeed! As I was responsible for TikTok’s development in the Italian market, I started thinking: *“Hang on, we focus on creators a lot, but what about brands? They have their own stories to tell”*. At that time, users and creators were creating these amazing short-form videos. But what about if Netflix was to start creating their own content? So I started asking myself: how can we implement this for brands? How can we empower brands to act as creators? That’s where we began seeing a different behavior; before brands were very polished whereas on TikTok, brands started to be very approachable, commenting on videos, almost acting like creators. HBO is the perfect example, with the *“House of the Dragon”* series: they put online an interview with one of their actors (Emma D’Arcy, editor’s note) who had to reveal their favorite cocktail. Their *“Negrone Sbagliato”* reply instantly became a source of inspiration for other videos! It’s fascinating to see how something that you think is not useful or interesting is actually extremely useful and interesting to the TikTok audience. From that point, we really became aware of one thing: people really want to see the ‘behind-the-scenes’ of brands.

How do you explain the late arrival of certain brands on TikTok?

N.P.: It can be a little bit scary to share certain parts of your brand to the community. It basically means that you have to trust your audience and the co-creation elements of it. And surely, there is a classical tendency of *“no one wants to jump in first”*. But as soon as a brand is doing it well, others will follow. That’s what happened when we started getting Liverpool Football Club – first Premier League Club on TikTok – on the platform, all the other teams began to follow. But you need best practices, you need cases, you need someone shaping it. Especially because it’s a platform where the feedback is immediate. But also at the same time, you’re not necessarily connecting with your followers. You are connecting with audiences potentially interested in your content. A fact that requires a lot of courage in terms of brand experimentation, a lot of trust and a lot of trials. Something that we often encourage: to test the platform, to test new things.

It could almost be a pep talk, given to current ESCP students...

N.P.: Almost (he laughs). If they were in front of me, I would probably give them three pieces of advice. One: to acknowledge that there isn’t any right way of doing things. If there was, everyone would be doing the same thing and we would be all starting and ending in the same place. Second: from my experience at TikTok, it’s very important to be accountable and to build trust. What I mean by that: having other people able to count on you, having them to trust you in order to lead them, to manage them, is the most important skill and asset you can have in an organization.

And third?

N.P.: Be resilient! When we finish university, we naively think we’re going to become CEO in three years. A professional career is 40-years-long, if not more. So being resilient, constantly curious and accepting that you have a long road ahead of yourself is crucial. Take my parents for instance: they are in their 60s, both of them are still working as teachers and learning new things. Neither of them wants to retire. That’s what I’m looking for. |

By Pauline Ducouso

Searching for lost wax

A former commercial officer for Canal + in Burkina Faso, **Ambre JARNO (MS 11)** has since fallen under the spell of the country and local crafts. In 2017, the designer founded Maison Intègre in Ouagadougou, which makes lost-wax bronze furniture. It's a way of showcasing ancestral skills while helping Burkinabé bronze craftsmen.



© Sophie Garcia

Ambre JARNO (MS 11)
designer

One day in 2014, Ambre Jarno, a recent graduate of ESCP with a Masters in Media Management, came across an offer to work as an international volunteer for Canal + Afrique in Burkina Faso. *"It was a superb opportunity that attracted me straight away"*, recalls this native of Brittany, France. At just 24, she arrived in Ouagadougou to help set up a new Group subsidiary. Sales, marketing, communications, human resources, office site management... Ambre was on all fronts. *"I remember it as a very constructive, ground-breaking first experience that made sense and allowed me to immerse myself in the work world in Burkina Faso. I discovered a whole country through my professional encounters. I was in the right place at the right time"*, she recalls.

In her spare time, the young woman with an overflowing curiosity scoured antique shops, met craftsmen and began to design furniture and light fittings that she had made for her home. It was the perfect way to start sharpening her eye and getting

to grips with the country's traditional crafts and skills. This sensitivity to African crafts and handicrafts didn't come out of nowhere: it goes back to her many childhood trips to the continent, from Kenya to Senegal, via South Africa. But it was during a visit to Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso's second largest city, that she made an incredible discovery, that of the foundrymen and their lost-wax bronze casting technique. *"The use of natural, recycled*

and locally-produced materials, the use of and mystical relationship with fire to cast the bronze, the production of complex pieces with so few materials and often difficult working conditions - their work fascinated me", says the designer. From a hobby, the art of casting became a passion for the woman who, far from being homesick in a country "bubbling with energy", did not return to visit her family in France for a year.



© Sophie Garcia

A project based in Ouagadougou

At the end of her two-year assignment with Canal + and her wanderings around the small landlocked country in West Africa, the young woman returned to Paris to take up a position as 'communications manager for African affiliates'. Her time was now divided between the capital and the African continent. But she missed her life in Burkina Faso and was beginning to wonder what direction her future should take. *"I wanted to get involved in a personal project over there, to go back and spend time with the craftspeople and see what we could come up with together to show the world and promote the skills of lost-wax bronze, a craft of excellence"*, says Ambre. At the end of 2016, the decision was made. The globetrotter resigned from Canal + and returned to Ouagadougou to set off on her own in search of the best craftspeople and launch her project. But this time, for good. *"I had a great job in Paris and promising career prospects. But I didn't feel like it anymore, I'd reached the end of my experience. My inspiring encounters in Burkina gave me the strength and the will to create something else and to get involved in a project rooted in Ouagadougou"*, she explains.

At first, her entourage didn't really understand the point of building a project in a red zone country ravaged by an unprecedented security, economic and health crisis. What's more, a country where arts and crafts were unfortunately disappearing, leaving dozens of families with no resources and no prospects. Despite her fears, Ambre put all her savings and energy into setting up her lost-wax bronze workshop, Maison Intègre. A nod to the meaning of the name Burkina Faso, 'Land of Honest Men'. In the early days, Ambre spent her days in the craftsmen's family courtyards. *"I would suggest designs and shapes to the craftsmen and I would follow the creation of the objects. I was learning a trade by trying to understand and experiment with the skills involved,"* she confides. The young designers Charlotte Thon and Marc Boinet joined her to spend time with the bronze makers and develop the first pieces. In 2019, she was invited by Wallpaper Magazine to collaborate with American designer Brendan Ravenhill for the Milan International Fair. Other designers such as



François Champsaur and Noé Duchaufour Lawrance soon took an interest in the project, leading to initial collaborations and economic spin-offs. After five years of going back and forth between Africa and Europe, and with patience, passion and increasingly successful sales, the 400 m² workshop finally came into being in Pissy, a working-class district of Ouagadougou. The Maison Intègre foundry was created in 2022.

Making a living from know-how

Today, 10 salaried craftsmen from different backgrounds work in the workshop. They include moulders, founders, modelers, welders and finishers, supervised by

three master bronze makers. To support the team, Ambre has taken on board three French bronze craftsmen who work on the finishing touches. *"It's essential to work together, share skills with Burkinabé craftsmen and create synergies. I also invite the designers on site so that they can understand the project and the local problems"*, insists the designer. Using recycled metals (old taps, defective machined parts, gas can knobs, etc.), these craftsmen make furniture and accessories inspired by everyday life and traditional objects that celebrate West African cultural heritage. One example is a set of candlesticks derived from the slingshots of an ethnic group from the south-west of the country.



© Sophie Garcia

devotion to the families of bronze workers by opening the Maison Intègre Association at the end of 2022. Its mission? To provide regular assistance to the craftsmen and their families through access to education for children and access to healthcare, and to provide support for women.

For the time being, Ambre's career is full of successes. In early 2023, Maison Intègre presented a retrospective of all the pieces it has produced since 2017 for the first time in Paris. An exhibition was also held the previous year in New York at the Ateliers Courbet. Several hundred pieces have already been sold to architects, interior designers and luxury houses in the United States, Spain, Germany, Italy, England and Australia. More recently, their work in hand-crafted bronze has been enriched by a new 'Maison Intègre Studio' collection, which offers smaller objects for homes, such as door handles, coat hooks and lamps, at more affordable prices. Increasing and diversifying production means training new young craftspeople in bronze. This is another mission that motivates the designer, who is determined to help pass on ancestral skills to the younger generation. In the land of upright men, a few have already started down this path. |

Making crafts a lever for economic and social development is at the heart of the approach and commitment of this passionate and determined designer. "Marketing our creations helps to improve the living conditions of our talented craftspeople", says Ambre, keen to ensure that they have a steady stream of work so that

they can make a living from their skills. Before adding: "I want to show that we can create sectors of excellence in Burkina Faso through craftsmanship, and that creative and cultural industries can generate development in a poor country that is completely cut off from economic exchanges, to the detriment of craftspeople". The designer extended her



Roselyne Chambrier's pan-African commitment.

She's betting everything on industrialisation in Africa. Her name is **Roselyne CHAMBRIER (MiM 09)**. For six years now, in Abidjan, this young Gabonese woman has been running the Arise Ivoire group with an optimistic hand, convinced of the potential of the African continent. A land of opportunity.



Roselyne CHAMBRIER (MiM 09)
CEO of Arise Ivoire group

Roselyne Chambrier takes the call from the Abidjan airport in Côte d'Ivoire.

For the CEO of Arise Ivoire, a group specialising in the development of infrastructure and industrial ecosystems, there's no time to log off her computer. With one ministerial call after another, the 38-year-old is always on the move. That's hardly surprising when you consider her parents' international background. Her father was based in Washington for more than ten years as an administrator at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and her mother was a customs attaché in London. "We travelled all the time, she recalls. With my father, it was every six weeks, whenever there was a holiday. It inevitably contributes to an open mind, a command of languages, and you realise at a very young age that you can aspire to an international career." So, the apple didn't fall far from the tree. From primary school onwards, the schoolgirl went back and forth between Paris and Libreville (the capital of Gabon, her country of birth, editor's note). It wasn't until her final year of secondary school that

she moved to the land of the Union Jack to attend the prestigious Lycée Français Charles de Gaulle. At the time, the school was run by the former headmaster of the lycée Henri IV. "I can't tell you how much pressure there was to get results, she smiles. They used to bring in scholarship holders from France, students who generally got 20 (the best possible mark, editor's note) in their baccalauréat, just to push all the classes up. It put you in the mood, you had to be on your toes all the time. It was a kind of emulation that I hadn't experienced in Gabon."

From London to Douai

When she came of age, Roselyne's scenery changed: she spent her two years at the Saint-Jean preparatory school surrounded by the Douai belfry and a mountain of maroilles cheese. While going from London to the 'City of Giants' might scare some, the young woman was ready for the change. Admittedly, the distance between her and her nearest and dearest widened a little, but she quickly made up for it with the family values that 'people from the north' demonstrate. "Well, I did go through a bit of an adjustment phase, she admits. Up until then, I'd only lived in big cities or capitals, so landing in Douai was a bit strange for me." If arriving at ESCP meant returning to France, it was never meant to be a long one. Having achieved a high ranking at the end of her preparatory course, the student was able to choose the school's European pathway, oscillating between Paris, London and Berlin. There are many advantages to being on the move, holding several nationalities and being multilingual, but when it comes to having one country, one

city, one homeland, it's more complicated. She recalls: "I went to South Africa for a three-month work placement. So I was French, from France, but black and I'd lived in Gabon anyway. As a result, black South Africans thought I was African and white South Africans thought I was French. This duality that has never left me". Despite all her travels, Roselyne couldn't help but have a very special thought for Gabon - her native country - and more broadly for Africa. She was travelling the world, but in the back of her mind - and her heart - she kept the desire to return to the African continent one day. The question was not so much if, but when: "I always knew it would happen, she replies. I just didn't expect it to be straight after the ESCP."

Back to Africa

The year was 2009, and with her degree in hand - a Master's in Business Administration - Roselyne saw her future mapped out at HSBC, where she had already completed several internships. The financial crisis ended up having the last word, and the project fell through. But at the same time, she was approached by the CEO of the BGFIBank banking group, also from Gabon. "He was looking to develop a finance and investment bank and offered me to help him set up and implement the project". That's how the young businesswoman found herself in Gabon, looking after the 150 largest accounts in the sub-region. She recalls, laughing: "Knowing that when they say 'major accounts' over there, compared to what I was used to doing, for me, they were practically SMEs". One of her clients was the Olam Gabon group, which quickly

“

By 2050, Africa will account for half, or at least 40%, of the world's workforce. So now we need to support governments, because although they often have the vision and the will, they don't have the capacity to mobilise the funding to develop their industrial base. What is certain is that, for me, the future lies in Africa.”

saw the young woman's potential. It hired her and gave her the job of Business Development Manager, which she held for six years. 2018 saw the consecration of her career: killing two birds with one stone, Roselyne was appointed head of the Terminal Industriel Polyvalent de San Pedro (TIPSP) and General Manager of Arise Ivoire. In this role, she oversees the development of infrastructure projects – used to transport processed raw materials – as part of a public-private partnership with the Ivorian government. *“I've always said to myself that there are enormous opportunities in Africa, she says. I wanted to make a modest contribution, to participate - thanks to what I had learnt - in the development of our countries”.* On a daily basis, the young woman negotiates partnerships to ease the burden on governments and bring agility to the private sector: *“In terms of potential, when you look at agriculture, mining, even energy... Most of the resources are here but they're not being exploited properly.”* She adds: *“By 2050, Africa will account for half or at least 40% of the world's workforce. So now, we have to support the governments, because although they often have the vision and the will, they don't have the capacity to mobilise the funding to develop their industrial grids. What is certain is that, for me, the future lies in Africa.”*

The promise of youth

Local processing of raw materials, youth unemployment, digitisation, environmental protection... These are issues that are now at the heart of African questions, and which are being taken up by young people, whom Roselyne describes as ‘uninhibited’. She points out that in Côte d'Ivoire, 400,000 young people enter the job market every year – adding that 65% of the population is under 30. *“For me, young people are essential, she says. African countries have certainly understood the need to create jobs locally, which in my view means industrialisation. But before that can happen, we need to ensure the quality of the vocational training systems that would enable us to be as competitive as Vietnam or Bangladesh.”* But for the CEO, Africa is still a long way from achieving this. This enthusiast of the industrial revolution of the 19th century applauds the continent's ambition to industrialise but is keen to point out the time it will take – it's well known that Rome wasn't built in a day – and the importance of providing human resources. *“Paradoxically, Africa's good fortune and opportunity lies in the fact that it is lagging behind, she says. Because it knows what models have been tried and tested elsewhere. From the outset, it has the capacity to do things well, to do them better. We won't be reinventing the wheel.”* And it's



well on the way to doing so, given that the African diaspora is increasingly returning to its roots. In fact, according to the French Development Agency, in 2019, 70% of African MBA students wanted to return to Africa after their degree. A promising sign, according to Roselyne: *“Today, we have young people who are trained, who can be at the disposal of their continent, who aspire to better things, to great things and who show themselves to be capable, whether in terms of training, ideas or execution. In short, we have young Africans who want to take their destiny into their own hands.”* |

By Houda Gharbi

Resilience, the key of a successful entrepreneurship journey

Led by ESCP Alumni **Luca CARTECHINI (MiM 17)** and **Gian Maria GRAMONDI (MiM 17)**, Shop Circle provides incipient e-commerce brands the tools they need to start, grow and sustain their businesses. Gian Maria tells us more about his journey and his experience as an entrepreneur developing a business that has known an exponential growth during the past three years.



Gian Maria GRAMONDI (MiM 17)
co-Founder, Shop Circle



Luca CARTECHINI (MiM 17)
co-Founder at Shop Circle

After a first experience as a strategy consultant in Deloitte in Luxembourg, Gian Maria joined Amazon in London. *"It was an incredible experience that gave me the chance to dive deep into the e-commerce world and to discover this sector from different perspectives"*, explains the Italian. His journey at Amazon started in the marketing and advertising field working with some of the largest brands on their go-to-market plans, the launching of their new products... Then, Gian Maria moved to a more operational position as a category lead manager. *"Through my regular interactions with the e-commerce managers, who are at the front line in the e-commerce space, I became more aware of the needs and the challenges of the sector. That's how the idea of Shop Circle was born!"*

A good idea, the right co-founder and a founding team

Gian Maria started working on Shop Circle with Luca Cartechini, his best friend, that he met in ESCP. *"Our two profiles are perfectly complementary. Luca, as an investor, has a relevant experience in the investment field, while I bring a more operational experience and a strong knowledge of the e-commerce sector"*, explains Gian Maria. Since the beginning of their entrepreneurial adventure, three years ago, the two entrepreneurs closed four funding

rounds, which allow them to fuel a fast and strong growth.

Indeed, with Shop Circle addresses basic needs of the merchants and e-commerce retailers who have to deal with the proliferation of softwares, tools and technologies. A situation that creates a lot of challenges for store managers. *"Shop Circle has been designed as an integrated one-stop shop of tools and*

“ Many of my peers and friends at ESCP became business connections during the development of Shop Circle. ”



technologies who aims at supporting brands, online merchants, online entrepreneurs, end-to-end, by providing them with a very comprehensive and integrated set of tools and technologies and by helping them to unify their communication channels with customers”, explains Gian Maria. To strengthen its value proposition, Shop Circle follows two main strategies: the integration of various tools and technologies and the building of new apps from scratch. “Today, Shop Circle has a team of more than 160 people based all over the globe and 43 apps trusted by more than 80 000 global e-commerce entrepreneurs worldwide”.

Entrepreneurship, a rewarding experience

Gian Maria considers entrepreneurship as a very rewarding job on a day-to-day

basis. “Being an entrepreneur means that you have managed to build your business with resilience and to keep your trajectory, despite the highs and lows. To reach a certain stability in the professional and private life, it is very important to focus only on the matters than you can control and be more relaxed with the externalities that you can’t control. Personally, I enjoyed facing new challenges since I consider them as a new opportunity to develop Shop Circle”.

Shop Circle is also a human experience that started at ESCP. “Many of my peers and friends at ESCP became business connection during the development of Shop Circle. Moreover, ESCP has been an incredible bridge towards the professional world, entrepreneurship and the building of a successful career”, concludes Gian Maria. |

“
Shop Circle has a team of more than 160 people based all over the globe and 43 apps trusted by more than 80 000 global e-commerce entrepreneurs worldwide.”

Networking

Andrea Campione (EMBA 09)

Many alumni activities in 2023 and 2024 for the Italian Alumni Community and with great participation!

Among which we want to highlight the event on the history of Champagne with our Christian Roger (ESCP 80).

What we did and how we did it. The recovery of Alumni activity in Italy in the post-lockdown period accelerated in 2023 and the activities continue to grow in 2024.



So many events. Each of them in presence, many, almost all of them, with the involvement of the other Alumni Associations of the Grandes Ecoles network; several activities initiated by us or carried out together with the other groups and some of which we joined. Unity is strength! And the events have been in fact all very well attended, with number of alumni participants, even with regard to us ESCPs only, which we had not seen in such a constant way before the lockdown period.

The activity was concentrated mainly on Milan, where the alumni are more numerous and also where there is a greater presence of the other Alumni Associations of the other Grandes Ecoles. Soirée Galette des Rois, alumni/student meeting/cocktail in Turin, conference/cocktail on Biodiversity, Alumni Gala in Turin, institutional event France Alumni Day in Milan, the history of Champagne with our Christian Roger (Escp 80), a guided tour of

Hangar Bicocca (Pirelli Foundation Museum), Alumni evening in Rome, as usual the presentations of our Alumni Association to the new students at the beginning of their courses at the Turin Campus, Rentrée Cocktail and End of Year Greetings Evening. And in 2024, the usual Soirée Galette des Rois, Quantum Technology Conference in Rome, Grandes Ecoles event in the presence of the Consul General in Milan, Gala Alumni in Turin. In preparation, among others, the two France Alumni Day events in Naples and Milan, the Grandes Ecoles Conference/Cocktail in Milan, and we are thinking and planning, before the summer break and in autumn, several initiatives including in Milan: a wine and literary evening, a conference/cocktail and a vernissage, and in Turin the usual presentation of the Alumni Association to the new students of the Campus and an Alumni/students meeting/cocktail.

A great program behind and ahead of us!



By the ESCP Alumni Communication and Network team

Summer Party 2024: La Dolce Vita at La Felicità!

A look back at the fabulous summer evening of June 12th, 2024, where more than 600 people gathered at La Felicità in Paris to experience a night with Italian vibes.



Last June 12th, La Felicità in Paris was transformed into a true Italian paradise for the much-anticipated Summer Party 2024. Over 600 alumni and students came together for a memorable evening under the theme of La Dolce Vita. La Felicità, adorned in the colors of Italy, prepared a wide array of culinary delights...

The evening began after the General Assembly with the Alumni of the Year 2024 awards ceremony. Under the leadership of the ESCP Alumni General Delegate, Eva Mollat du Jourdin (98), the winners in the Corporate, Entrepreneurs, and For Good

categories were honored. In the Corporate category, the award went to Amandine De Souza (MiM 04), Managing Director at leboncoin. The winner in the Entrepreneurs category was Claire Bretton (MiM 12), Co-founder and CEO of Underdog. Lastly, in the For Good category, Roselyne Chambrier (MiM 09), Country Head & Managing Director at Arise Ivoire, was distinguished. All three will embody the values of ESCP Alumni throughout the coming year, and we once again extend our heartfelt congratulations to them.

After this ceremony, the party was in full swing. Participants enjoyed refreshing cocktails created by our bartenders while

savoring Italian flavors at the food stands: crispy pizzas, tasty pasta, creamy tiramisus, artisanal ice creams, unlimited antipasti, and much more! The background of Italian music added an authentic touch to this unforgettable evening.

In addition to the culinary delights, the evening featured numerous activities. Guests could have fun playing foosball and pinball, and capture precious moments in our photo or video booths.

Friendliness, good humor, and laughter filled this exceptional evening. The beaming smiles of our alumni were the most beautiful reflection of the event. We warmly thank everyone who contributed to the success of this event: La Felicità for its warm hospitality and perfect cuisine, Eddy, our incredible DJ, Lucile, who captured the unforgettable moments of the evening, and of course, all the participants.

A big thank you to everyone, and see you next year for new adventures and even more unforgettable memories!



Campus

Portrait of a donor

Through their donation, each person expresses a unique story with ESCP Business School. Here we hear from **Marlène Pelage (ESCP 93)**, a major donor to the Foundation, who shares with us her international career path, from her studies to her career in finance, where she overcame discrimination to become the first CFO of a major American bank. Her commitment to women's education and her involvement with ESCP reflect her desire to support future generations. Through her inspiring journey, Marlène highlights the importance of contributing to the community and promoting diversity and inclusion in the professional world.



Marlène PELAGE (ESCP 93)
chief Financial Officer Gen II Fund Services

Can you introduce yourself and outline the main stages of your career?

When I joined the School, I was one of the few students from the French West Indies - there were 2 or 3 of us and I was the only one in my year. What's more, I'm of mixed race and that has given me a lot of advantages in the way I've managed my career. Today, I'm the mother of 3 children, aged between 21 and 26, to whom I've passed on my love of learning.

During my 3 years at ESCP, I obtained majors in finance and marketing and in my 3rd year, I applied for an academic exchange with Drexel University in the USA, where I was able to spend an extra term and obtain an MBA. ESCP today continues to invest and create new partnerships with international schools and universities, which I think is a distinct aspect of the school that has helped shape and launch many graduates.

This was an important turning point because I decided to stay in New York where I started a career in finance with Crédit Lyonnais. After a year, they sent me to Hong Kong, which was booming, and I was in charge of developing all the market risk and counterparty risk management platforms. I travelled a lot to Taiwan, Indonesia, the Philippines, China and Singapore. I was about 22-23 years old, so it was an absolutely fascinating job. I ended up spending 6 years in the Asian region, where I also set up branches for Crédit Agricole, and I had my first son in Hong Kong.

After that, there was a lot of political and monetary instability in the region and I was transferred to London in 1999. I returned to New York in 2000, expecting my second child and wanting to be closer to my family. I recontacted Crédit Lyonnais, who were looking for someone to look after all their healthcare finances, but the day before my first day, I learned that my 2nd child was profoundly deaf and I decided to put my career on hold to look after him. However, I went back to school to prepare for the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) exam, which takes between 3 and 6 years and is recognised worldwide. In the meantime, my 3rd child was born and we moved to San Francisco, close to my children's father's family. There, I launched a start-up producing wine, olives and soap in Napa. I worked endlessly for 3 years while bringing up my children. In 2005, I decided

to put my navy blue suit back on and joined Charles Schwab in San Francisco, in the risk and credit department. I worked my way up for 16 years and became the Group's first female CFO. Then, the Covid pandemic hit and I had to question a lot of things, particularly the involvement of women of colour and the importance of diversity and inclusion, which were not very prevalent in the finance world. I had the exceptional opportunity to become CFO of a 650-strong media group, with branches in 117 countries, for 2 years. But it's an industry in decline with AI and the rise of the digital giants, so when the CEO of GEN II contacted me and said that he was expanding internationally and was looking for a Chief Financial Officer with experience in international M&A, I didn't hesitate. He presented me with a business plan that was incredible and, as a result, I've been back in asset management for 6 months now and I'm in the process of managing a very large acquisition in Europe. I've taken over the reins of this company, which has around \$1 billion in funds under management, and I'm the first woman CFO of this company and the first woman of colour to hold this position.

How did your involvement with the ESCP Foundation come about and which projects are closest to your heart?

To be honest, I kept a bit of a distance from the Alumni network because I was very focused on building my career and

my family. When I came back to New York, I met Brynhild at an Alumni lunch and it turns out that we knew each other through our children, when she was living in Philadelphia some twenty years ago. We got back in touch and there was a connection, as they say. I had already started to get involved in women's education causes. I'm on the board of the Asia Foundation, which funds the studies of young girls from Asian countries because they have a major impact on the community. And I said to myself, if I'm doing this for the Asian Foundation, which works with Médecins Sans Frontières and the Red Cross, there's no reason why I shouldn't do it for the school that propelled me to my current position. When we started discussing the concept with Brynhild, I really wanted to offer a young woman of colour, who would be a 'mini Marlène from 30 years ago', the opportunity to open doors. And this young woman, in 25-30 years' time, will in turn be able to help another woman. I then met Professor Léon Laulusa, before he became Dean of the School. He has boundless energy and is very attached to the international aspect of ESCP, with all its exchange agreements. He gave me confidence in the School's position and the way it prepares future leaders and managers, and I decided that I wanted to be part of this project.

**“
As Alumni, we
have a moral
imperative to
give back to the
school.”**

You support a school with European and humanist values, yet you have spent little time on the old continent in your career. Are you attached to it?

Ah, that's a good question. Yes, my professional experience in Europe has been relatively limited, apart from the time I spent in London. However, I've kept in touch with some alumni who have done international work. But I'm currently working on an acquisition that will rebalance the weight of GEN II towards Europe and I'll be going back and forth every six weeks to Luxembourg, London and Paris. I hope to reconnect with the School. Its European scope is important, but I see ESCP Business School as a global school that encourages exchanges in India, China and the United States. That's why I'm here today, thanks to ESCP, which

enabled me to go to the United States and get my career off the ground.

How is the involvement of alumni crucial to ESCP's development?

I think that mobilisation is absolutely essential. I've had three children go to American schools that cost around \$80,000 a year, not including living expenses. These are absolutely astronomical costs, whereas at ESCP I was lucky enough to pay about 24,000 francs, or about \$5,000 at the time. ESCP has invested in us, to train us, educate us, prepare us, raise our awareness, open our minds and strengthen us to be ready for different challenges, different situations, different countries, different cultures, different ways of working, different industries, in an agile way. As alumni, we have a moral imperative to give back to the



school. This can take the form of sponsorship, taking part in courses, mentoring and making donations. Financial donations are fungible and can be allocated to projects. It is absolutely essential that there is this continuity and involvement. We see it in the United States, where many graduates of the top schools make a point of sponsoring their schools, it's an awareness that's happening and I don't see why it would be any different for us, with implications that can be excessively diverse. In my case, it's really a very specific support for young women because I want to give them this opportunity that they wouldn't otherwise have. But there are also a lot of projects to support, as well as research and teachers. I'm making a general appeal to my class, but above all to all ESCP alumni, to get involved and to give, it's absolutely essential and critical.

An exemplary commitment



It is thanks to the unfailing commitment of Alumni like Marlène Pelage that the Foundation is able to carry out its missions. A big thank you to Marlène and to all the Alumni, companies and friends of ESCP who, like her, are committed to equal opportunities, inclusion and diversity. Many of our actions are aimed at our young female students. Our role, as a large ESCP community, is to open the doors to all professions, including those with higher responsibilities. The Foundation is actively committed to this goal, as demonstrated by the launch of the 'Women in Finance' Chair last December, the awarding of scholarships to encourage women to enter professions that are not yet dominated by women, the collaboration with ESCP au féminin, and the funding of programmes aimed at offering women the same opportunities for academic, personal and professional fulfilment as their male peers. All this is possible thanks to all of you who are involved with the Foundation. Once again, a very big thank you!

Brynhild Dumas, Executive Director of the ESCP Foundation

A word from the Presidents “



ESCP Business School is today:

- 6 campuses in Europe and a branch in Dubai
- More than 9,200 students and 5,000 managers of 130 different nationalities
- 145 university alliances in Europe and around the world, in 48 countries
- 85,000 active alumni in over 170 countries

The ESCP Foundation and ESCP Alumni share values of diversity, inclusion and solidarity which are at the heart of our respective missions. We look forward to connecting past, present and future generations of the community through a series of joint actions and events at the end of the year and hope you can join us.

By making a donation to the ESCP Business School Foundation, you are giving back to the school what it has given to us by helping current and future students to follow this course of excellence and by ensuring that the ESCP dynamic continues over the long term. Together, we can double the number of donors and develop high-impact projects for the entire community. ”

Jean-Stéphane ARCIS (EAP 8g), President of the ESCP Foundation
 et **Bertrand DUMAZY (ESCP 94)**, President of ESCP Alumni

Culture

By Richard BOURRELLY (ESCP 96)

“The joy I get from writing is something I want to experience again and again”

Winner of the 2023 Prix Goncourt, **Jean-Baptiste ANDREA (ESCP 96)** is the writer of the moment. His career path has not been a linear one, but Jean-Baptiste has never given up on his vocation. In this exceptional interview, he talks to his classmate **Richard BOURRELLY (ESCP 96)** about his passion for writing.



Jean-Baptiste ANDREA (ESCP 96)
Writer, laureate of the 2023 Prix Goncourt

Jean-Baptiste, first of all, congratulations on winning the Prix Goncourt. As a screenwriter, director and multi-award-winning writer, you've had an unusual career for an alumnus of Sciences Po and ESCP! Was this your plan from the start?

Jean-Baptiste Andrea: It wasn't my plan to win multiple awards! Awards are the icing on the cake. But from the start, my plan was to write. I wanted to be a writer from a very early age, even as a child. It's more my studies that are a bit of a sidestep in my career. I did my studies to please my family. But if I'd listened to myself, I would have studied music to complement my literary side a bit. I wouldn't necessarily have done 'serious' studies like that. Perhaps it was also a way

of testing my resolve, of testing the strength of my will to write literature?

With that in mind, how did your studies at ESCP go and how did you leave the school?

J-B.A.: Good, because I never gave up my desire to write! Even before finishing ESCP, in my last six months at school, I started working as a translator for Harlequin. This gave me financial independence and, finally, very early in my career, I was able to make a living out of writing. It's the only thing I do reasonably well and which, in any case, gives me joy. And that, frankly, is worth all the seven-figure salaries in the world! For me, the true measure of success is never giving up. It's doing this job, the job you love, and never losing the joy.

Alexandre Jardin says that when you're writing, you need to have a smile on your face, to feel a kind of ecstacy. Do you?

J-B.A.: I couldn't agree more. If you don't have that feeling, there's no point in writing. I can't write unless there's an urge to do so, like a hunger that makes up for the difficulties of the exercise. That's the sine qua non of creation. Otherwise, what happens? It becomes commercial, it becomes calculated. If we lose the joy, all that's left is calculation.

In 2017, at just over 45 years old, you published *Ma Reine* already published by *l'Iconoclaste*. In other words, you succeeded where hundreds of thousands of first-time authors fail: getting a first novel read and appreciated by a recognised publisher. What have you done differently from the others?

J-B.A.: Initially, I sent it to fifteen publishers and got fifteen rejections. So I decided to contact smaller, more targeted publishers, one by one, instead of sending out one big mailing. At that point, someone told me about *l'Iconoclaste* and, a month later, I got a phone call saying: “Don't show it to anyone, we're publishing you, we love it”. And that's when my life changed. Knowing that it was a publishing house that wasn't doing novels at the time, Sophie de Sivry, the founder, and I jumped in together. Apart from that, I don't feel I've done anything different from other authors. If someone writes a good novel, it will be published. It's not like the cinema: if you write a good film, you can never be sure it will be made, there are so many contingencies, budgets, deadlines... This first novel was sincere, intense, pure. In all my writing, I strive for this kind of purity. And then there was something burning too. It was the result of an energy that had been contained for years.

A different kind of energy to the one you put into your job as a scriptwriter?

J-B.A.: In the film industry, I was always writing and directing under pressure. I gnawed away at myself for years and then one day, I felt like moving on to something else, to stand on my own two feet, and for me that meant moving into literature. I wrote a novel at the moment when, unconsciously, I realised that I was capable of doing so. After twenty years in the cinema, where you write exclusively with a view to making a film, the question I had to answer was how you can write without a destination. I used to write a film saying: "This is going to be a film" and this first novel was an act of pure creation, of freedom.

“
**Loving what
 you do is worth
 all the 7-figure
 salaries in the
 world.**”

In *Watch Over Her*, your latest novel, you give pride of place to this very notion of freedom. Is that an important driving force for you?

J-B.A.: Yes, it is! I fought for it very early on. In fact, when I said "I want to be a writer", it was a way of saying that I didn't like any of the boxes or paths that were offered to me. In this freedom to be conquered, there was this desire to be my own boss and to situate myself, immediately, in the face of my failures but also in the face of the intoxicating possibility of success. At any given moment, there are always a thousand turns in life where that little voice is calling you towards comfort, towards renunciation, towards money for freedom. I'm not a revolutionary, and I'm caricaturing a bit, but I've met a lot of very talented artists who have done nothing with their talent or their lives. From my point of view, they are not artists because an artist is someone who has never

given up, and in particular never given up on that freedom.

Another metaphor you use in *Watch Over Her* is that of flight. 'Those that are victorious and those that crash to the ground. In your case, what enabled you to take flight?'

J-B.A.: I think it's writing every day, all the time. In fact, all my life I've felt like I was flying away. When I wake up in the morning, I realise how lucky I've been to have been able to live from my pen since 1996. As a translator, first of all, because when I managed to make my first films, it took me ten years to earn my first penny from the cinema. I lived on my translations. After that, literature took over and, even in those difficult years, I used to get up in the morning and tell myself that, come rain or shine, I'd still make it. It's a self-perpetuating virtuous circle. I didn't need any exogenous factors or to go looking for this energy elsewhere. In other words, the joy I get from writing is something I want to experience again and again, and that's how I wrote every day for twenty years, for the cinema. In the end, it's not the same in literature. If I feel like it, I can write day and night and then I need to stop. In those moments, I have ideas, I take notes and one day I say to myself "that's it, I've got my novel!" Then I start writing and I never leave the house!

Speaking of taking off, what will Jean-Baptiste Andrea's next leap be? A fifth novel, a new film, another artistic career?

J-B.A.: In fact, I don't know. It's unlikely that I'll go into film, because I'm no longer interested in the temporality of cinema. Putting energy into a project for five years is too long. Another career, why not? I have no desire at all to leave literature, but of course I'd like to explore other fields in parallel, which would be linked to writing, of course, such as theatre, opera or musical comedy. But fundamentally, I have a relationship with books that I would never have with any other form of literature.

Within the ESCP community, many alumni write novels, short stories, comics... What advice would you give

to those trying to get into literature, after or alongside a career in business?

J-B.A.: I'd say I have three pieces of advice from personal experience. The first may seem silly, but in fact it's not: write. I meet a lot of people who tell me they'd like to write. Lots of people who tell themselves all their lives that they'd like to write, but in fact they never do. So my first piece of advice would be: "if you want to write, write. Start and, above all, finish a project, whatever it may be".

The second step is to build, to know where you're going. The writer's enemy is to go off on a tangent and expect the characters to lead you somewhere.

The third piece of advice is to have something great, something universal to tell. If you have something to write about, go ahead and write it, because then you know where you're going and you have a destination, an end. You can't fantasise about this job, you can't say to yourself "I'm just going to write with style and get published". The end is not to be a writer, it's the message. Most of the writers who have been published are telling a powerful, great, universal story. Don't write about your state of mind, don't write about your personal problems. It's of no interest to anyone but you. That goes for me, for everyone and for the alumni of ESCP. The first job is to find a way to universalise the story. Of course, writers draw on their own experiences, and there's 100% of me in each of my novels, but it's not biographical. Whatever we tell, whatever we write, we have to strive for universality. |



By Arthur JEANNE (MS 13)

I'm an Afro-optimist

Head of the multinational Axian, the Franco-Malagasy entrepreneur **Hassanein HIRIDJEE (ESCP 97)** is also passionate about contemporary art. Through his group and his foundation, this native of the Big Island fights to promote a Madagascar that wins and is committed to the inclusion of Africans.



Hassanein HIRIDJEE (ESCP 97)
CEO of Axian Group

Hello Hassanein, you are now at the head of Axian, Madagascar's largest conglomerate. How did you get there, can you tell us more about your career?

Hassanein Hiridjee: I'm Franco-Malagasy. I was born in Madagascar in 1975 and spent all my youth between Paris and Madagascar. I then studied at ESCP and after graduating, I started my career as a trader with Cargill. In 1997, my father died and my mother wanted me to return to Madagascar to join the family group. So I joined what was then a large, well-established SME in a number of sectors, including textiles, car distribution and construction materials. I carried out a kind of audit, meeting the company's main managers. This gave me a better understanding of the country's needs and an in-depth look at the business ecosystem. After discussions with my partners and family shareholders, the group expanded into new activities and became Axian. Today we are present in the telecoms, energy, real estate and financial services sectors and we have expanded beyond Madagascar, notably in Tanzania, Togo and Senegal in



© Fondation H

partnership with Xavier Niel on the launch of Free Senegal. We have rewritten the history of the family SME, which today is a pan-African group with a strong presence in infrastructure and services. Axian has around 7,000 employees, ten countries, four major clusters and 36 companies.

It's also Fondation H that you set up in 2017 which aims to promote African artists internationally and put your passion for contemporary

art at the service of Madagascar, can you tell us more?

H.H.: Absolutely, I've always had a penchant for art, I've always been passionate about it. In the early 2010s, I started collecting works by contemporary African artists, particularly in Madagascar. I discovered the local art scene with my gallery-owner friend Éric Deremaux, met a number of artists and came to the realisation that there is a huge amount of talent in Madagascar, but that the artistic ecosystem is virtually

non-existent. The artists can't sell and can't make a decent living. They don't even have enough to be exhibited. So I made a commitment to help and develop this talent. In 2017, Éric and I set up a contemporary art prize called the Prix Paritana, which gives young artists a grant and a three-month residency at the Cité Internationale in Paris. This also enables our young artists to be exposed to the international scene. That same year, we also decided to set up the foundation's first space in the Axian



© Fondation H

business park in Tana to exhibit artists (the nickname of Antananarivo, the Malagasy capital). We used to get 15,000 visitors a year in a small space. So we decided to create a bigger space.

“
I’m Franco-
Malagasy,
but beyond
Madagascar,
what’s important
to me is that the
world’s view of
Africa changes.
I’ve had enough
of this Afro-
pessimism.”

What does Fondation H’s headquarters look like today?

H.H.: It’s a new 2200 square metre space right in the centre of Tana, occupying the old historic building of the Direction Centrale des Postes et Télégraphes. The building has been completely remodelled and restored to create a museum space. The inaugural exhibition in April 2023 was dedicated to Madame Zo (an icon of the Malagasy art scene who died in 2020), to whom I was very close and who had an extraordinary talent. The exhibition was an extraordinary success and received an enormous amount of positive feedback, not just in Madagascar, but in Africa, Paris and elsewhere in the world. In addition to this space, the Fondation H is a whole ecosystem, with training programmes for young people and artists. We have a space in the Marais district of Paris, located on 24 Rue Geoffroy l’Asnier, where



© Fondation H



© Fondation H

our young artists can exhibit their work and build bridges.

Is the underlying idea to get people talking about Madagascar? To showcase the island and its talents?

H.H.: I'm Franco-Malagasy, but beyond Madagascar, what's important to me is that the world's view of Africa changes. I'm a bit fed up with this Afro-pessimism. As soon as you talk about Africa, it's all about epidemics, coups d'état and corruption. But that's all about to change. Every country in the world has gone through dark times in Europe, and that's part of the process of building a country. The continent's narrative is changing completely. I'm a convinced Afro-optimist and I want to help change the way we look at the continent, because it has an extremely talented, very young population, lots of business opportunities and a lot of things to do in terms of infrastructure, services and development. I believe that if we support these infinite resources a little and share a real vision together, the continent will develop and go even faster than we think. Let me give you a very simple example: are you amazed by N26 and Revolut here in Europe? Well, in Africa we've been doing mobile banking for 10 years!

Have you noticed that things are changing fast on the continent?

H.H.: I can tell you that Africa is not missing out on the digital revolution. There is a huge amount of talent in tech and in the telecoms operator businesses working on new products and services. Today, there are a lot of accelerators and incubators on the continent, and tech companies that are being set up and which are enabling us to make generational leaps and leave old technologies behind us. We're speeding up now and the continent is changing at breakneck speed. A city like Abidjan is not at all the same as it was 10 years ago. Everything is changing and we can feel it, even if there are still some major issues and challenges to be resolved if things are to move even faster. We need to speed up the financing of African economies.

Was it to help bring about this change that you launched the ESCP Chair in Responsible Innovation in Africa in November 2022 and set up a branch of Ecole 42 in Madagascar?

H.H.: Absolutely. As far as the Responsible Innovation Chair is concerned, it's a joint project of which I'm very proud and Nathalie Prime and Caroline Verzat

(Scientific Co-Directors of the Chair at ESCP) have done an absolutely fantastic job. This Chair is helping to support this changing narrative and to create an intercultural dialogue. We need to create this bridge between students on the African continent and European students so that they can see what is happening in Africa. It creates an emulation and a dynamic that is important. It's a great project. As far as École 42 is concerned, I realised from my friendship and close relationship with Xavier Niel that it was an absolutely fantastic new way of training and being supported in the digital professions through an 18- to 24-month course that enables you to get a job very easily. So we decided to launch the first campus in sub-Saharan Africa in October 2023. This really reflects my desire to make an impact through digital and financial inclusion. This is essential.

In an article in *Le Point*, you said that for Africa, inclusion couldn't wait.

H.H.: Is it conceivable that in 2024, there will be households without access to electricity? We ask ourselves questions about the migration problem in Europe, but the basic solution is that the continent should

be fully equipped in terms of infrastructure and services. The realities are very different from one country to another. Some have accelerated enormously, particularly in terms of their energy infrastructures. In others, it's more challenging: they have to go through the long democratic process that will establish the rule of law and reassure investors. But what has really changed, and what I think is essential, is that governments have understood that nothing can be done without the private sector. There has been a real shift, and in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire and Togo, public-private partnerships have enabled the creation of real projects that are structuring the economies of these countries.

What advice would you give to alumni looking to invest in Madagascar?

H.H.: It's a country where there's a huge amount to be done in terms of development. We've had steady economic growth over the last ten years, but we still have a shortage of infrastructure and services. If someone comes along with a real commitment, a serious project and a little bit of funding, there are some great things to be done. I see a huge number of opportunities. In Madagascar, there is a small community of around ten ESCP alumni who would be delighted to welcome newcomers.

And beyond the business aspect?

You absolutely have to come, it's a very endearing country that doesn't leave you indifferent. The way people look at you, the way they welcome you... It's a different human approach. And then there's the buzz, the energy. It's buzzing in every direction. Touristically speaking, it's a completely crazy country. 90% of our flora and fauna are endemic. The landscapes are a concentration of everything you can find in the world. You want a tropical forest? You've got it. You want picture-postcard beaches? You've got them. The Rocky Mountains and Death Valley? We've got them too. It's pretty incredible. It's a wonderful trip, but you need to take a bit of time. |

“

You absolutely must come to Madagascar, it's a very endearing country. It's vibrant in every sense of the word. Touristically speaking, it's a completely crazy country. 90% of our fauna and flora are endemic.”



© Fondation H



Cécile COUTENS (ESCP 95) CEO of Royal Canin

- ✓ **The virtue I value most.**
Integrity
- ✓ **My favourite quality in others.**
Optimism
- ✓ **My most revealing personality trait.**
Spontaneity
- ✓ **What I appreciate most about my friends.**
They are there, no matter what.
- ✓ **My main strength.**
My heart
- ✓ **My main weakness.**
My heart
- ✓ **My favourite thing to do.**
I've got loads of them!
- ✓ **My idea of happiness.**
Being with the people I love.
- ✓ **My idea of unhappiness.**
Loneliness and confinement (physical, moral and emotional)
- ✓ **Where would I like to live?**
I'm happy where I am.
- ✓ **My favourite colour.**
Red
- ✓ **My favourite flower.**
Primroses that come out spontaneously in my garden or the flowers given to me by my loving husband.
- ✓ **My favourite bird.**
The hummingbird
- ✓ **My favourite dish.**
A lovely fresh tomato salad with good basil and olive oil.
- ✓ **My favourite drink.**
Tea
- ✓ **My favourite sound.**
The sound of a river in the mountains.
- ✓ **My favourite word.**
Why not?
- ✓ **The word I hate the most.**
"Moron" It's a word tinged with a kind of contempt and outright violence.
- ✓ **My favourite first names (female/male).**
Louis, Juliette, Marie (my children)
- ✓ **My favourite heroes in fiction.**
Adamsberg (in the Fred Vargas books)
- ✓ **My favourite heroines in fiction.**
Nausicaä (in Hayao Miyazaki 's manga)
- ✓ **My favourite musicians/singers.**
Patti Smith
- ✓ **My real-life heroes (living or dead).**
Matthieu Ricard
- ✓ **My favourite real-life heroines (living or dead).**
Jacinda Ardern
- ✓ **The people I hate most in human history.**
Adolf Hitler. The Inquisitors.
- ✓ **What I hate most of all.**
Violence
- ✓ **The faults that inspire me most indulgence.**
Those committed out of love.
- ✓ **The gift of nature that I would like to have.**
Its intelligence
- ✓ **How I'd like to die.**
In my sleep.
- ✓ **What would I like to be reincarnated as?**
As a tree (in a forest that is loved, respected and protected)
- ✓ **My motto.**
To be happy, you must have simple joys
- ✓ **My current state of mind.**
"I refuse to believe that you cannot be both compassionate and strong" quote from Jacinda Arden.

Business life

LUXURY

VEVER

Camille VEVER (MS 04) p. 54

TRANSPORT PROFESSIONS

DELTA AIR LINES

Béatrice DE ROTALIER p.56



Camille VEVER (MS 04)
CEO of Vever

An ongoing family and business adventure

In her last interview for the magazine **Camille VEVER (MS 04)** looked back at the relaunch of Maison Vever, founded in 1821. As the seventh generation of the founding family and now the Vever CEO, today she is continuing to develop the family business, which scooped the 2024 Jewellery Palme d'Or.

Ginkgo Ring Yellow Gold €5200



© Ugo Cesare

You decided to relaunch Maison Vever in 2019. What are your memories of that time?

The initiative started in 2019 and took shape in June 2021 with its official launch. I remember the stumbling blocks that we encountered: unavailable intellectual property, disputes with a fund specialising in the filing of dormant luxury trademarks, and a sector that was quite a “closed shop” to an outsider. The jewellery school, the Académie des Métiers d’Art, knew Vever well, and opened up its business incubator to me, enabling me to meet influential players in the jewellery world.

Vever is a 200-year-old startup. We restarted with a blank sheet of paper to reconceive the company’s artistic universe, design the collections, find the best manufacturing workshops in France, devise our economic model, and organise our distribution network, while incorporating our social and environmental undertakings. We had to rise to all of these challenges, while maintaining Vever’s track record of excellence.

What is going on today at Maison Vever?

Maison Vever relaunched through an e-commerce website and our showroom located at 9 rue de la Paix in 2021. Three years on, we have a

foothold in 10 countries and we have 15 sales outlets. We are continuing our international development.

Since November 2024, we have also opened our showroom to jewellery lovers, giving them an immersive experience of our archives and the Maison's creative universe. They can book the immersive experience on our website, www.vever.com, enabling them to discover our world, as well as the secrets behind our designs, such as the influential role played by our archives, artistic inspiration, and Maison Vever's jewellery know-how and DNA.

At the same time, we launched our Heritage Department, dedicated to Vever's archives and amazing history. In this respect, we are planning a big Vever exhibition and the publication of a book in 2026.

Which are your most popular and flagship collections?

All of our jewellery is made in France in the finest jewellery workshops. Vever has four main collections:

- The Fantasy Creatures collection opens the doors to a fantasy world with mesmerising vegetation, populated by mysterious nymphs, powerful goddesses, and enchanting creatures. Sandrine Tessier, a Meilleur Ouvrier de France (Best Craftsperson of the Year), does the plique-à-jour enamelling for this collection.
- The Ginkgo Collection draws inspiration from the Ginkgo Biloba leaf. Sandrine de Laage, the artistic director, designed an imaginary flower with three leaves. The satin gold is hand-brushed.
- The Elixir Collection calls to mind a delicate vine that wraps around the finger, the ear or the wrist.
- The Lily Collection is an ode to the white bells of Lily of the Valley. Akoya pearls swirl joyously with drop-bead diamonds, just like light and delicate drops of morning dew.



Ginkgo 3 Flowers Necklace Yellow Gold €7500

Our Ginkgo Collection is particularly popular, and was worn by Lily Collins in the last two seasons of *Emily in Paris*; it now accounts for over 60% of our turnover. Bolstered by this success, new Ginkgo designs in other materials will soon be launched.

Apart from your desire to blend tradition and innovation, you are keen to develop eco-friendly jewellery-making. What does this involve?

Maison Vever is the first luxury sector business to obtain mission-driven company status (*entreprise à mission*). This involves incorporating all of our environmental and social objectives into our value chain.

This status was created by the French government and is aimed at companies

wishing to work for the common good, by placing solving social and environmental challenges at the heart of their model. Vever's aim is to offer jewellery that is environmentally friendly and socially responsible, and is entirely made in France. It is based on three objectives enshrined in our statutes.

- Conserve the environment: we use recycled gold, lab-grown synthetic diamonds, and eco-designed bags and jewellery boxes.
- Preserve French know-how: all of our jewellery is made in France.
- Support women: Vever supports organisations such as *L dans la Ville* and the launch of the Blossom bracelet, with 20% of the price being donated to women's projects. This year, we are supporting the show *Dévorantes*, which raises awareness about coercive and controlling behaviour and domestic violence.

Maison Vever won the 2024 Jewellery Palme d'Or. Tell us more!

Founded during the French Fourth Republic, the Comité de France seeks to recognise and reward those who add to France's kudos, help protect and showcase the country's heritage, look after the environment, and champion the French-speaking world. The Palme d'Or is the committee's most prestigious award, and is given to outstanding products and organisations. Jacques Chaban-Delmas said it was the business world's *légion d'honneur*.

The Comité de France awarded Maison Vever the French 2024 Jewellery Palme d'Or, honouring a two-hundred-year-old family business, the luxury sector's first mission-driven business, whose distinct designs are exclusively made in France. This award is in keeping with the major prizes won by Vever at the Universal Exhibitions in the past, highlighting the firm's prestige, innovation and know-how.



Béatrice DE ROTALIER

Sales Manager France at Delta Air Lines

Delta Air Lines – continuing and confirmed growth

Béatrice DE ROTALIER, Sales Manager France at Delta Airlines, takes a look back at the airline’s growth, and its latest features and news.

Delta recorded increased turnover of 5.4% in Q2 compared with 2023. Tell us more about these figures and the company’s strong growth.

We increased our transatlantic capacity by 6% this summer, mainly across Southern Europe. We plan to continue this offer, with even greater diversity, in summer 2024. In the meantime, we are cutting flights this winter with 11 flights departing Paris CDG, but with more opportunities across Florida, shared between our partners: this means that there will be direct flights to Miami, Orlando and Tampa this winter from our European hubs. Our flights from Nice will resume next spring.

Another reason for our growth is our high standard of operational reliability and punctuality; these are our main differentiation strategies in the market. Over the past few years, we have renewed

our fleet with more energy-efficient and cutting-edge aircraft, including A350s and A330neos. We have replaced plastic on board with more eco-friendly products. The quality of our products and our financial solidity are also strong growth assets.

What new features and innovations is Delta planning for 2024?

We have modernised our terminals and several of our hubs, including Los Angeles, where we have connected the Tom Bradley International Terminal to the Delta Terminal. We are opening Delta One lounges, including one at JFK, with further openings planned for LAX, Boston and Seattle. All of our aircraft now offer onboard streaming-quality WIFI, which is free for our SkyMiles passengers on domestic flights in the US, and now for all passengers departing from France.

We have revamped our onboard dining and offer a new business class amenity kit designed by Missoni.

What is your strategy to maintain Delta’s growth?

Our mindset involves remaining responsive to passengers so that Delta offers them products, destinations and a multi-channel offer that meets their needs. Finally, we are obviously remaining actively focused on maintaining the quality and excellence of our service, which makes Delta Airlines one of the leading transatlantic carriers. Moreover, this recognition has led to us being designated the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics partner airline – this is a great source of pride for all of our staff!

What are Delta’s market development plans?

We are continuing our development in conjunction with our partners – Air France-KLM and Virgin – with whom we have set up a Joint Venture. This mechanism enables us to redistribute income, and offer more transatlantic destinations to our customers. Delta Airlines also supports a large number of social projects and projects to promote diversity, enabling the brand to raise its profile and promote its commitment in these areas. Examples this year include flying back D-Day veterans to Deauville for the commemorations, the Paris Olympics, and contributing to the purchase of a scanner for Necker Children’s Hospital in Paris.

