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Graphic Content | Water by Any Other Bottle

By [Steven Heller](#)



Aquadeco, left, resembles a perfume flacon.

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I was intrigued when Fiji introduced a rectangular water bottle, and Fred Natural Spring Water was packaged in what resembled a whiskey flask. I was seduced by Voss, which comes in a pristine cylindrical container akin to an ultramodern vase — and is priced two times higher than the average bottled water. At least when I finished the Voss, I had a vessel for my long-stemmed roses. Indeed, why shouldn't water bottles be designed with panache (and multiple uses) for an upscale consumer's tabletop? These are examples of conspicuous pretension, yet what's the harm if someone's willing to pay for it — and if the bottles look good in the bargain?

Then I came across the [Aquadeco](#) bottle. At first charmed, I quickly asked myself how much design should be a driving force in a product as fundamental as water. The name says it all: Aquadeco is spring water in an Art Deco-style container that looks like a vintage 1930s perfume. The 750-ml glass bottle (about \$12) comes with an optional illuminated base to provide a romantic candlelight aura, and a decorative sack to suggest an opulent gift. Now, I understand design fetishism. What's more, I am a bona fide Deco fan — I have written books on Art Deco graphic design (and published a card set of Art Deco fans) — but Aquadeco and its “matched Art Deco-inspired accessories,” as they are described on the company's Web site, are taking premium design to a ridiculous extreme.

Although I just discovered it in my local food boutique, Aquadeco was founded in 2004 by Arnold Gumowitz who, the Web site states, is a “successful real estate executive who combined his love for art and building in the design of our award-winning bottle.” He launched an “exhaustive worldwide search” for a glassmaker who could produce the design. He discovered a company in Slovenia that has made “fine and clear glass for over 600 years.” I admire the passion invested in this entrepreneurial product. And I read with interest how he searched for just the perfect spring: “we kicked off an 18-month search for a high-quality and unique spring water. Traveling the world, with an engineer and hydrogeologist in tow, we wound our way through Europe, Armenia and Nepal, finally selecting a perfect high-quality, awesome-tasting, award-winning natural Canadian spring water.”

Granted, the water is tasty, but the so-called “complex” package is not as elegant as promised. Compared with Fiji, Fred, and especially Voss, the design of the bottle and typography is ham-fisted. The bottle is less Chanel than Woolworths (in the 1930s, Art Deco package design was quite common in the five-and-dimes), and the logo's white, customized serif typeface, with a silver outline, gives the impression of a knockoff rather than an original. The difficulty with using pastiche or retro styling for a contemporary product is making sure it doesn't look preciously passé. This does. What's more, does anyone really want to drink something that looks like a novelty perfume?