

Limited edition “Polygrades” to mark Lothar von Faber’s 200th birthday

The company A.W. Faber can thank the “Polygrades” pencil for beginning their global renown. It was launched in Paris in 1837. On the 200th birthday of Lothar von Faber, Faber-Castell offers a limited edition of the classic.

Conquer the world market – that was the young Lothar Faber’s mission. But the pencils from his parents’ business A.W. Faber in Stein were very unknown and products from England and France were far more popular. So what can one do in the face of such stiff competition? Lothar knew the answer: „The best solution is always the brand quality of course“.

As a 20-year-old, he got to know the latest production methods in Paris, saw the most elegant packaging and acquired a taste for the Frenchstyle „chic“. And so he had a high-end pencil range produced, which he marketed from Paris: the “Polygrades” pencils with leads in different hardness grades. The new, high quality was to be reflected in the elaborate appearance: „I gave the finest pencils, the “Polygrades”, the prettiest outer attire so as to match their inner value. I had the pencils polished in black and decorated in gold.“ He was proud of his idea to present several grades in one encasing: „no other producer has ever sold several grades in one encasing before“. The tops of the boxes were decorated with sketches of the medals won at various international exhibitions, which was certainly effective advertising. And the elegant appearance definitely had the „desired effect on the buyers, who had never before seen pencils in such attractive packaging“. The unrivalled top-notch „Polygrades“, were sold by A.W. Faber for many decades until they were replaced by the green Castell pencil range.

“Polygrades” anniversary edition

The edition shown is as close as possible to the historic original: The silky, shiny pencils lie neatly in their packaging and the golden stamp with the company’s logo appears flush left. They are unsharpened because back then, they were cut to the correct shape by the user with a knife. The graphite leads were originally square-shaped but here they are round - a small compromise that had to be made for manufacturing reasons.



Explanation of degrees of hardness:

BBBBB, BBBB	extra soft and very black – for full, rich, deep shading
BBB	very black – for very deep shading
BB	soft and black – for deep shading
B	black – for ordinary shading
HB	hard and black – for free sketching
F	firm – for fine drawing
H	moderately hard – for light sketching
HH	hard – for fine outline drawing
HHH	very hard – for architectural drawing
HHHH, HHHHH	extremely hard – for drawing on wood