

Portrait fit for a prince

Guess what the artist used for this commission?

A young British artist, already famous for capturing celebrities, has unveiled his latest work, a portrait of Prince Albert II, in the renovated Barclays Wealth building in Monte Carlo.

When the bank asked 30-year-old Benjamin Shine to create the portrait for the foyer they knew they would get something a bit different.

Previously, Shine has depicted former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher using iron, painter Rembrandt with a single piece of tulle and mountaineer Edmund Hillary using steel and aluminum. At the beginning of this year, his portrait of Barack Obama, made out of a ripped up US flag, was exhibited in New York's Museum of Art and Design. *Changing States* went on to be adopted by bookstore chain Barnes and Noble and became world famous.

It's a material world

"I try to use materials that relate to the subject," the artist explains, "but with the Prince's portrait there wasn't anything as obvious as the *Stars and Stripes*." He researched the Principality's culture and industry, but didn't hit on anything distinctly Monegasque. Then he looked at the Prince. "His passion for the environment immediately struck me and I decided to use recycled products."

Wanting to show people what could be done, Shine was immediately excited about the challenge. He



HSH Prince Albert II (left) next to his portrait by Benjamin Shine (right)

enlisted the help of students at the Monaco International School, who collected over a 1,000 plastic bottles in ten days. These were compacted, granulated and manufactured into a board. With the background in place, the Prince's outline was next. For his features, shredded polythene bags from local Monegasque businesses were thread through metal loops.

Offshoots of a project

Working on the piece for over a 100 hours in his studio in Canberra, Australia (where he now lives), the artist had never met his subject before the inauguration of the Barclays Wealth building in October. "I was a little apprehensive at the unveiling," Shine confesses, "but fortunately the portrait got a good response. Prince Albert said he loved it and we talked about recycling initiatives and ecological issues."

Overall the project has been a great success. Not only does

the portrait have the Prince's approval but the importance of recycling has been highlighted and community and business have come together in the name of the enviro-



Shine's famous portrait of Obama

onment. "Seeing how much the children are into their recycling was brilliant," Shine smiles, "it's second nature for them." Looking at the bigger picture then, the kids are our hope for the future. HM