

French bespoke leather bag maker in Hong Kong taps Asia's love of fine craftsmanship

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Olivier Dauchez believes his luxury boutique and workshop D'Auchel, where customers can watch their bags being made, offer a service few others anywhere can match.

Starting a new brand in a competitive market such as Hong Kong is challenging. With no shortage of European heritage brands, consumers quickly become jaded.



However, it hasn't put designers off, and the latest name to get attention is D'Auchel, which is based in a high-rise commercial building in Central.

The French brand launched quietly in 2015. History is not its selling point, nor does it boast a celebrity clientele. Instead D'Auchel is tapping into Asia's love for French craftsmanship to offer an experience you'd struggle to find anywhere else.

At the back of the boutique is a small atelier where its products are made by hand, from start to finish, by two experienced and skilled artisans from the prestigious Compagnons du Tour de France organisation.

Instead of fancy machinery, they use dozens of tools to complete each item.



“The French have a long tradition of making bags. No one else has the same techniques and we pass them down from generation to generation.

Despite this, it’s very rare to see ateliers like this in Paris or anywhere else in the world. I decided to open in Hong Kong to showcase this know-how and tradition overseas,” says founder Olivier Dauchez, who has more than 20 years’ experience in the leather goods industry.

“Here the craftsmen can mix different techniques and [add their own touches] while interacting with the customer. It’s not about marketing luxury, but truly showing luxury through quality and uniqueness.”

Unlike a regular boutique where customers can buy products off the shelves, every piece at D'Auchel is bespoke. Because the atelier can only make around four bags a month, customers choose from a limited collection of around 19 models for women's bags, plus some men's bags and small leather goods.



Options include the Thais, a slouchy bucket bag whose straps can transform its shape, while the Lena is a reversible tote that was named after Dauchez's daughter.

Once the model is selected, customers are responsible for every single detail, from the type of leather to the colour of the thread, hardware and lining. The only shared detail is the brand's name, which is discreetly stamped on the inside.



Dauchez is looking at new initiatives to keep customers coming back. The latest, which will launch in November, is a collaboration with French artist Gael Davrinche, who has customised a series of leather clutches with his unique artwork.

Customers who purchase the bags will be given a matching piece of artwork to keep in their homes. Only eight pieces will be made in total. "It's really a partnership between artists and artisan. I wanted them to work together to make a one-of-a-kind piece of art," says D'Auchez.

He plans to open similar workshops in other cities, including Tokyo and perhaps cities in China. Dauchez is adamant that he will keep D'Auchel small. "We can be everywhere but we can be small everywhere. We are not industrialising the production. No matter how many shops I open, with this concept we can never make a huge number of bags. We will always have a niche market," he says.