

DECOR TRICKS

Wall treatments that make rooms look huge!

BEST OF THE BEST

Biggest trends of Singapore Design Week

MODERN MATERIALS

FRESH FINDS AND NEW WAYS TO USE THE CLASSICS

  
KNOCKOUT ONLINE SELECTIONS!

Real homes with online buys + local indie sites we love

HOTBROWSE



BRINGING THE PAST into the future

A new brand with a long history, Bynd Artisan is revitalising the local bookmaking business with workshops and stylish offerings

TEXT: Yuan Yi Yong PHOTOGRAPHY: Massimo Hauser, commissioned by SLamy, and Edwin Tan of Lumina



A lot has changed since 1945, when homegrown Granddue began as a bookbinding business. It started with hand-stitched notebooks, but its inventory now includes colourful stationery and corporate gifts under its burgeoning stable of brands. Taking a decidedly upmarket route, Bynd Artisan is the group's latest venture, spearheaded by James Guan and his wife, Winnie Chan, whose grandfather created Granddue. Its aim: to shine the spotlight on the company's craftsmanship and pander to Singaporeans' growing love for all things artisanal.

Specialising in quality handmade paper stationery and small leather goods, the brand also offers several additional services geared towards getting a generation of tech-addicted youngsters interested in tactile products again.

Once a week, customers can go for workshops in notebook or leather cardholder making. These are conducted by Bynd Artisan's craftsmen, some of whom have been with the company for more than 40 years. Consumers can also choose to create one-of-a-kind notebooks on the spot, customised with monograms and an assortment of hues and closures. The quarterly designer collections with local talents is yet another thing to look forward to. Larry Peh of SLamy, who was recently lauded Designer of the Year at the 2014 President's Design Award, came up with the first collaboration. He is also the brand and design consultant for Bynd Artisan.

Tasked with designing the label's flagship store, which is housed within the existing Granddue premises at Boon Lay, Larry roped in Chien Tan of interior design firm LAANK to collaborate on the architectural space planning, decor and materialisation of the atelier. The owners had initially wanted something raw and industrial, similar to hipster cafes, but the design duo convinced them to try a new riff on the theme.



They pitched the idea of "the new framing the old", where parts of the old workshop would be encapsulated within the new space, letting visitors experience the company's heritage while appreciating its new spirit.

The designers kept the factory's original brick walls and wing beams, juxtaposing old furniture and a letterpress machine against rose gold shelving and piping to add a sense of luxury and modernity to the place.

One of the biggest challenges for Chien and Larry was demarcating the different areas within the 1,000-square-foot open-concept space. Inspired by scaffolding, they decided to use copper poles to carve out pockets for the reception, info counter, gift-wrapping station, event and retail zones. They also enclosed a massive Heidelberg printing machine in glass, using it as a centrepiece to further strengthen the link between the main spaces.

From the outside, the shop looks sharp and gloriously modern with its black and sleek exterior and abundance of glass. Set against the rows of grungy no-frills workshops, Bynd Artisan certainly stands out like "an oasis amidst the factories", as James calls it. Then again, this dynamic new business was never meant to blend in.



"It's quite surreal having that Heidelberg showcase in the shop. It feels like time has stood still within its glass frame while we evolve around it."

James Guan, co-founder of Bynd Artisan



INSIDE STORY

- Since launching their flagship store, Bynd Artisan has opened another branch at Tangs Orchard level four.
- According to James, the craftsmen were initially shy about working in a retail space with customers watching them, but they've since overcome their inhibitions and have fearlessly ventured into the brand's outposts in the city.
- After the collaboration with Larry Peh, the label worked with sketch artist and educator Erwin Lian to launch The Perfect Sketchbook. Up next are capsule collections by photographer John Chang and singer/songwriter Gentle Bones.

1. Bynd Artisan products are so well crafted they look like high-end goods.

2. The dark exterior contrasts starkly against the bright decor inside.

3. Everything is nicely spread out so you can appreciate each piece properly.

4. Materials are carefully inspected for quality.

5. The skilled artisans can put together customised notebooks in minutes.

Located at
 2 Chin Bee Avenue
 tel: 6267 5066
 www.byndartisan.com