

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Smythson lauds continued craftsmanship commitment for 130th anniversary

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Smythson of Bond Street's promotional image for the 3rd annual London Craft Week May 3-7

By JEN KING

British leather goods maker Smythson of Bond Street is celebrating 130 years of craftsmanship by retracing its history through products.

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To celebrate its 130 years in business, Smythson is placing emphasis on the craft involved in the creation of its leather goods and stationery products, as well as how they have been used by notable historical figures. In the luxury sector, savoir-faire drives interest and often justifies pricing as consumers trust the quality of an item.

"Celebration are emotional; every luxury brand wants to leverage the heart," said Chris Ramey, president of Affluent Insights, Miami.

"Demonstration drives fascination, while the artisans reinforce heritage," he said.

Mr. Ramey is not affiliated with Smythson, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. [Smythson of Bond Street](#) was reached for comment.

Craft's longevity

On social media and its Web site, Smythson has made mention of its 130th anniversary, but it was during London Craft Week that the brand kicked off its celebration by inviting consumers into its flagship on London's Bond Street for a first-hand interaction it called "Crafted for Life."

Now in its third year, London Craft Week continued its advocacy for traditional artisan skills such as tailoring, book binding and woodworking.

Held on May 3-7 the week-long showcase featured craftsmanship from around the world and a program of more than 200 events across London. Attendees were welcomed into hidden workshops of unknown makers along with famous studios, shops and luxury brands to learn of their inner workings and creative process ([see story](#)).



Smythson guests during London Craft Week could have items personalized via a calligraphy artist

At Smythson of Bond Street, guests were transported to the workshop of Frank Smythson, who founded the brand in 1887, to learn first-hand of its leather accessories, stationery and diaries.

The underlying mission of Smythson's participation at London Craft week was to demonstrate how traditional artisanship maintains its relevancy. Smythson teamed with the Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust (QUEST) on its London Craft Week effort.

As part of its 130th anniversary efforts, Smythson looked back at its archives to rediscover some of the most interesting pieces that make up its illustrious history. While looking through its archives, Smythson found an example of hand-engraved stationery from the 1890s that was used by Her Majesty Queen Victoria.

The white stationery with gold engraving was used by Her Majesty Queen Victoria to send correspondence between her royal residences of Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, Osborne House, Marlborough House and Balmoral.

As a testament to its craft, Smythson challenged itself to recreate the 1890s stationery using its original engraving and die stamping methods.



Smythson replicated Her Majesty Queen Victoria personal stationery from the 1890s for its anniversary

On its Web site, Smythson walks brand enthusiasts and history lovers through the recreation that started with recreating the artwork of the seal and etching that onto a copper die plate.

Next, George, a Smythson stamper responsible for replica stationery, created a makeready stamp to add color to the engravement prior to the paper being hand fed into the brand's printing press.

The finished product is then packed in box and tied with a Smythson ribbon.

In addition to the recreated stationery, Smythson has launched the Piccadilly Collection, which takes inspiration from the brand's connections to travel throughout its history.



Smythson's Piccadilly Collection features an archival lettering

Smythson's Piccadilly Collection features the words "Bon Voyage" in a font first seen on a Smythson postcard from 1914. Each piece in the Piccadilly Collection was designed with the modern-day traveler in mind.

One from the vault

Drawing from its extensive archives has been used to inaugurate Smythson store openings as well.

Last March, Smythson of Bond Street ushered in a new retail space with an archival exhibit featuring items owned by Sir Winston Churchill, Diana, Princess of Wales and others.

The exhibit welcomed Smythson to its new flagship boutique at 667 Madison Avenue and gave familiar and prospective consumers a glimpse at the brand's history. While a new store often results in passersby entering, giving consumers an additional reason for a visit by way of an exhibit can be beneficial.

Smythson's "The Curious World of Smythson" told of the brand's moments over the course of its history, some of which were quite curious in nature.

For instance, Smythson included pieces from the archives of Sir Winston Churchill, Diana, Princess of Wales, actress Vivien Leigh, psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud and others ([see story](#)).

"Young and old affluents are increasingly searching for meaning with luxury," Affluent Insights' Mr. Ramey said.

"HUMANIZING products and the need to match values is increasingly important," he said.

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