

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Delvaux blends culture, savoir-faire in ode to Belgium

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*Delvaux worked with filmmaker Jaco Van Dormael to visualize its Les Miniatures Belgitude collection. Image credit: Delvaux*

By JEN KING

Leather goods maker Delvaux is paying homage to the small but charming European kingdom it calls home with a collection of handbag charms expressing what the brand calls "Belgitude."

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The Belgian leather brand's Les Miniatures Belgitude collection is a celebration of the known and lesser known treasures of Belgium and its culture. Country of origin is an important code for luxury brands, as heritage offers an endless source of inspiration with many houses embracing local culture to explore their own roles in society.

"Belgitude is a combination of Belgium and attitude," said Christina Zeller, artistic director at **Delvaux**, Brussels. "Belgitude is everything that makes this small country so special. It's almost a philosophy, a way of living with a lot a particular sense of humor, lightness and the ability to never take themselves too seriously.

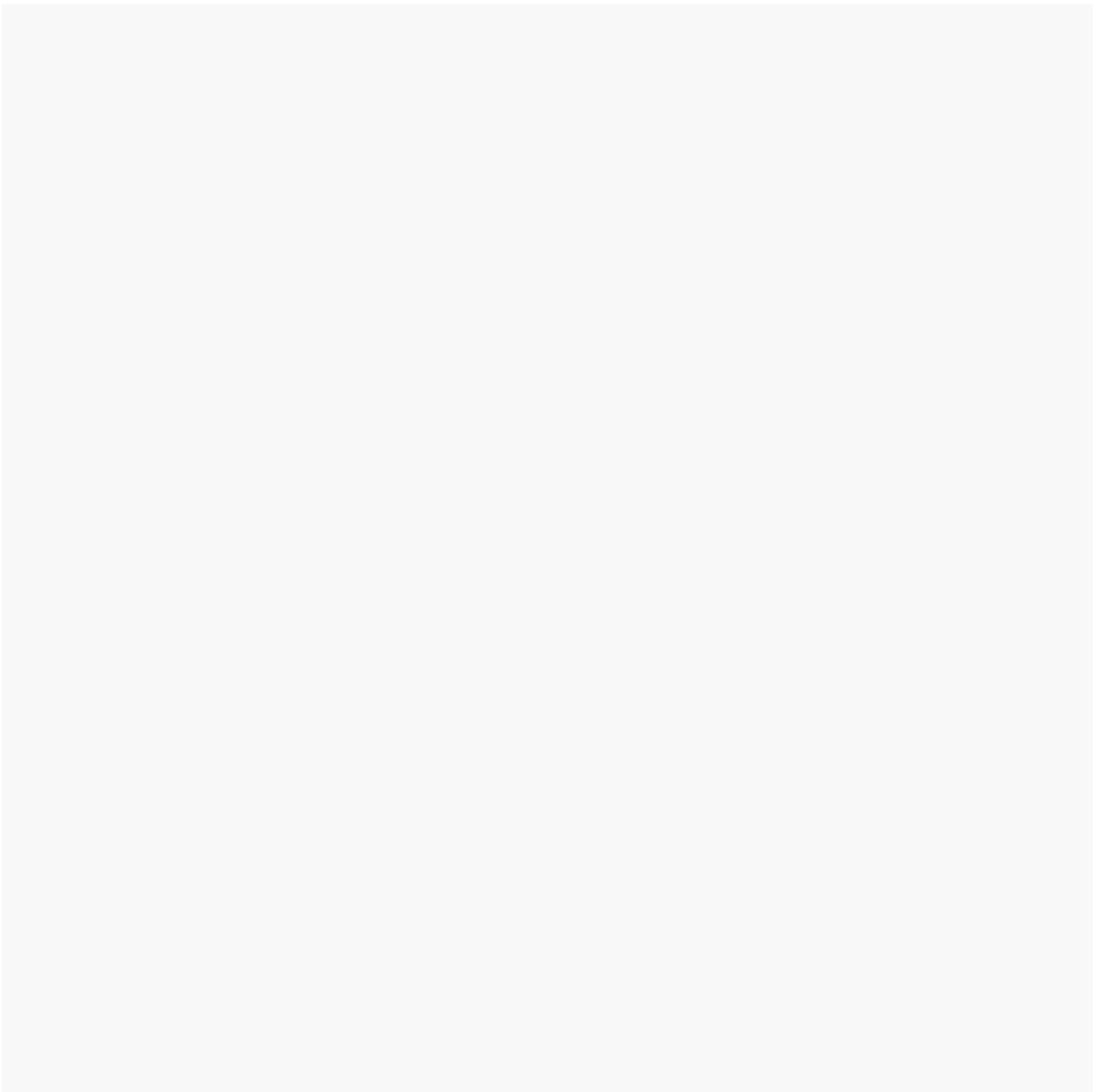
"Delvaux is quintessentially Belgian," she said. "Belgian people have a great sense of humor, witty spirit and are discreet and humble."

Belgitude

Delvaux selected its iconic Brilliant handbag for the project, miniaturizing the style for Les Miniatures Belgitude, a limited-edition charm. Designed by architect Paule Goethals, the Brilliant was introduced in 1958 for the Brussels World's Fair.

The seven-piece bag charm collection is described as a "perfect blend of humor and savoir-faire," as all handbags are handmade and embrace Belgitude, meaning Belgian quirkiness and attitude.

Each charm takes the name of a Belgian city to further extend the association with Belgium. Delvaux's Ms. Zeller then identified a theme that would best illustrate the city selected.



Born in Brussels, the Brillant is wholly Belgian at heart. With its latest collection, it pairs the seven Miniatures Belgitude with seven great Belgian cities. What better way to pay homage to this small but charming kingdom? Only 4 more days until the reveal... #DelvauxMiniatures

A post shared by Delvaux (@delvaux) on Aug 24, 2017 at 6:11am PDT

For example, Namur is best-known for being the birthplace of the frite, commonly served in paper cones. Ms. Zeller took this concept and traded a paper cone for white box calf leather, overflowing with yellow frites and a red fork. The mussels of Ostende and waffles in Liege are also explored in miniature handbag form. Delvaux's collection also turned avant-garde fashion, surrealism, philosophy and architecture into miniature Brilliants.



*Delvaux's "Ceci n'est pas un Delvaux" handbag for the city of Gant, Belgium. Image credit: Delvaux*

"Each Miniatures is an example of Delvaux exceptional craftsmanship," Delvaux's Ms. Zeller said. "The first step was to identify for each city what would be the most representative illustration for each of them.

"Then we had to look for the most appropriate technique to get the best rendering, such as screen printing technique, thermoformage, laser cuts or specific moulds," she said. "The stitching requires high precision as it is very thin and small. Regarding the leather, we chose box calf, our most qualitative leather."

The collection of charms is limited to 2,500 pieces.

To further connect handbag charm to city, Delvaux has produced seven short films that introduce the locations, showing landmarks and sharing bits of history and claims to fame.

Delvaux also collaborated with Belgian film director Jaco Van Dormael on a campaign film. The film highlights Delvaux's collection by creating a surrealist world where mussels, waffles and even brussel sprouts come to life and interact with Les Miniature Belgitude.

*Delvaux's Les Miniatures Belgitude by Jaco Van Dormael*

The brand has planned events in the United States, Hong Kong, France and the United Kingdom to celebrate the launch of the charms.

For example, in the U.S. market, Barneys New York is the exclusive retail partner with the department store dedicating its windows to the collection for the week.

Smart in-store installations will also be present at Barneys' two New York locations, Madison Avenue and in the Chelsea neighborhood, as well as its San Francisco and Beverly Hills, CA stores.

"We're in an interesting time where the country of origin is extremely valuable since consumers emotionally connect with heritage brands," said Dalia Strum, professor at the [Fashion Institute of Technology](#) and founder of [Dalia Inc.](#), New York.

"These designs are extremely whimsical combining humor and fantasy, which also creates a valuable conversation piece especially for affluent consumers and their lifestyle," she said.

Encapsulated

Accessories capsules are a common blank canvas for brands looking to explore a particular theme.

For example, Italian leather goods maker Furla celebrated its 90th anniversary by recounting the fashion trends of

the past nine decades.

Over the last 90 years, Furla has designed leather goods that have evolved with women's tastes, whether that be the romance of Art Deco or the boldness of punk rock. Taking a look back at its history, Furla choose to create a series of nine handbags that retell past fashion trends in the form of its Metropolis silhouette ([see story](#)).

Also, in 2014, Louis Vuitton combined its past with present creative forces through a special project.

For Louis Vuitton's "The Icon and the Iconoclasts: A Celebration of Monogram," a group of six artistic minds were asked to design their take on the brand's iconic monogram. Louis Vuitton chose shoe designer Christian Louboutin, photographer Cindy Sherman, architect Frank Gehry, fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld, industrial designer Marc Newson and fashion designer of Comme des Garons, Rei Kawakubo.

Each artist was asked to create either a handbag or piece of luggage that incorporates personal inspiration and the brand's monogram ([see story](#)).

The capsule concept also has elements of collectibility, as consumers are more likely to want a full collection rather than a single piece.

"Similar to art, these could definitely be viewed as collectables," FIT and Dalia, Inc.'s Ms. Strum said. "As it becomes a conversation piece, it leads to the next part referencing others within their collection.

"This could be viewed as a form of luxury 'wearable' art and the positive sentiment their consumers will receive from wearing them will encourage future purchases," she said.

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