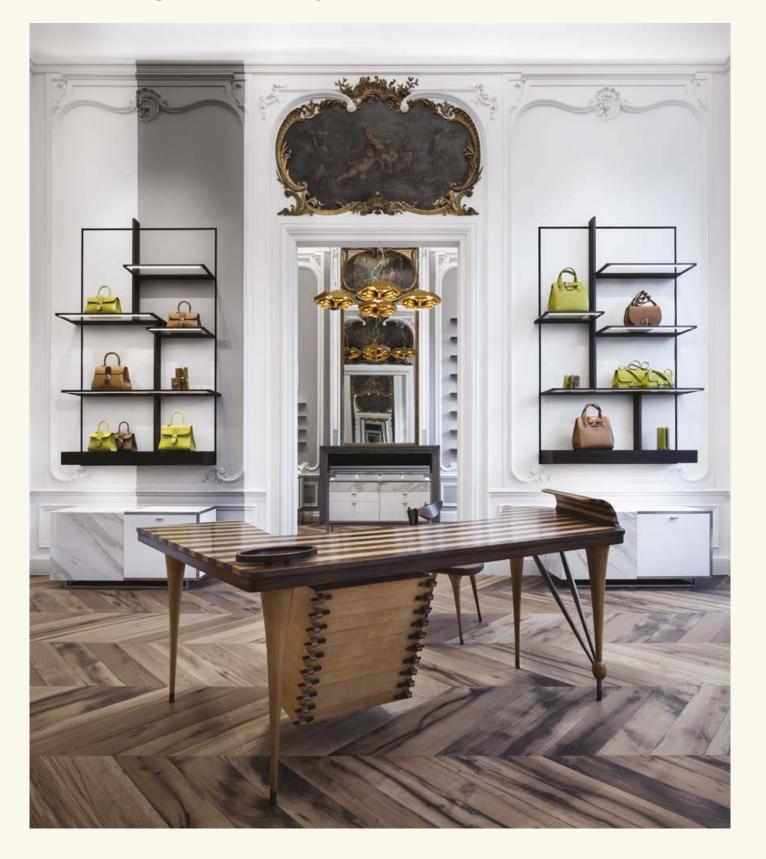
Heritage in Motion

The secrets to Delvaux's reign as the world's oldest fine leather goods house? Its legacy as a pioneer, its trailblazing innovations, its craftsmanship, and a dash of Belgian wit.



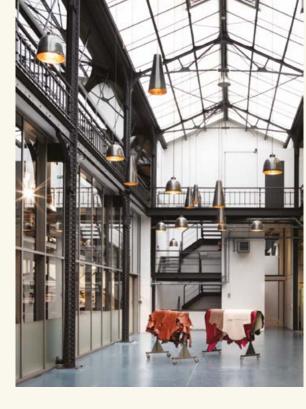
There are many things that we take for *Pin*, which embody the granted in today's fast-paced world. arts decoratifs principle Take the modern handbag. It may of "the beautiful in the not be an invention that immediately useful", trunks were its comes to mind, but fellow stylemakers first hit. Catering to know: it's a necessity that deserves way travellers who relied on more applause. The year was 1908. For horse-drawn carriages the first time, the daily life of women then trains, some of the began to go beyond the confines of the brand's founding designs humble abode. While prior decades featured functional were defined by intricately embroidered wax and curved iron minaudière, ladies were now on the edges to ensure one's lookout for a more practical and still belongings could desirable solution to suit their newfound withstand long journeys come rain or shine. freedom of movement. Enter Delvaux's le Princesse, the world's first patented In 1883, Delvaux was leather handbag. The original design appointed the official marked by a mod architectural shape, purveyor of the Royal ornamental flap, top-handle, and kiss-Court of Belgium. Fast lock closure - would not only facilitate forward half a century, female emancipation but be a forebear the brand subverted the industry of to what many would consider their most fine leather goods again by introducing prized possession today. This moment seasonal creations. Mirroring fashion of trailblazing innovation isn't a onecouturiers, new designs were released off for the Belgian brand. Founded in cohesive collections separated by spring-summer and fall-winter in 1829 by Charles Delvaux, it is also the world's oldest fine leather goods seasons. Pair this momentous history house, preceding even the Kingdom with uninterrupted activity since its of Belgium by a year. While Delvaux, inception, Delvaux also boasts one of the architect of leather, is best known the richest archives in the industry for the Brillant, the Tempête, and the

Text/ MADELEINE MAK Photos/ <u>Delvaux</u>





the brand subverted the industry of fine leather goods again by introducing seasonal creations. Mirroring fashion couturiers, new designs were released in cohesive collections separated by spring-summer and fall-winter seasons. Pair this momentous history with uninterrupted activity since its inception, Delvaux also boasts one of the richest archives in the industry – more than 3,000 of its unique designs the brand subverted the industry of are chronicled as sketches in the *Livre* d'Or, or more colloquially referred to as the *Golden Book*. To this day, this catalogue, with the help of an inhouse historian, is updated and used as a reference to ensure that Delvaux's discreet yet timeless aesthetic continues to evolve. Consider the emblematic *Pin* bag. First introduced in 1972, the simple and expressive design features clear lines that give it a sense of





movement. The D-shaped front pocket and perforated base took inspiration from the sack that a donkey feeds from. More than 50 years later, Delvaux reinterpreted this icon with the Pin Swing that re-imagines the original with an exaggerated curved silhouette and a multi-functional double strap. This blend of the past and future into one, or what the fine leather goods house terms as "heritage always in motion", is further echoed by its designs that are a whimsical nod to Belgian culture. Since the 1980s, famed Belgian fashion designers from Martin Margiela to Veronique Branquinho, have been invited to put their unique spin on Delvaux's archival creations. Last year, the brand also celebrated the 125th anniversary of another local legend: surrealist artist René Magritte. Paying tribute to his iconic paintings, Delvaux dropped a series of witty special edition The Magritte capsule collections such as L'Humor, that reimagines The Treachery of Images on the Brillant and the Pin bags, and La Pomme, that depicts Magritte's emblematic green apple motif. L'Arsenal, Delvaux's headquarters, is another testament to the fine leather goods house's onus on craftsmanship, innovation, and heritage. Located in a reclaimed military barrack, one has to walk past a pristine showroom and carefully stored archival creations to reach the place where all the magic happens: the atelier. Backdropped by industrial steel beams, exposed brick walls, and window-filled ceilings that allow natural light to fill the space, to experience the Delvaux universe



skilled artisans handcraft icons like the Brillant as well as special orders. The process starts with specialists who carefully inspect and cut leather, followed by detailed stitching and finishing. Restorations also take place here, further demonstrating Delvaux's belief that its offerings are both sustainable in its making and usage. Take the elevator upstairs for another surprise. Lo and behold, the L'Arsenal also hosts an in-house museum that is a detailed walk-through of Delvaux's rich history. Apart from getting a closeup look at the brand's cherished Livre d'Or, ultra-rare designs are showcased such as the original Brillant introduced in 1958 and Mon Grand Bonheur that was created to celebrate the marriage of Belgian King Albert II and Queen Paola Ruffo di Calabria in 1959. One doesn't have to enter the L'Arsenal

first hand. Each of its physical stores, about 60 around the world, is an immersion all in itself. Consider Le 27, its flagship location on Boulevard de Waterloo in Brussels. Once a private home, the reclaimed two-storey space is marked by a spiralling staircase, iron fixtures, and a carefully thought out juxtaposition of old and new. Delvaux's latest collections contrast a wall of minaudière, whereas kitschy postneo-Flemish portraits by emerging Argentine artist Romina Ressia oppose 17th century Flemish-inspired furniture re-interpreted with a light touch. Odes to hometown heroes further reflect www.delvaux.com in the choices of other 20th century furniture, notably, a Renaat Braem desk, a fine specimen of marquetry work with wood in light and dark shades. And if history is any indication of what's to come, another industryshifting innovation is on the horizon. Enter Helios, a groundbreaking colourchanging take on the Pin and the dainty top-handle the Caprice. Debuting at its

spring-summer 2025 presentation in Paris, the four limited edition offerings are created in partnership with E Ink. Displaying the fruits of two years of research and development, coded paper is masterfully interwoven with Delvaux's supple leathers. The neverbefore-seen technology is seamlessly triggered by the simple click of a wellconcealed button located in the bag's interior. While we will have to wait until 2025 to see Helios in real time, one thing is for certain: Delvaux's legacy of innovation, grounded in humility, lives on.