

Missibaba sets up shop at the Watershed

Handcrafted leather accessory label, Missibaba, has opened a new store at the Watershed in the V&A Waterfront.



Here, Cape Town-based designer Chloe Townsend provides insight into the design process behind her brand's luxury statement accessories, and shares her thoughts on the evolving relationship between physical and online retail.

Congratulations on the new space, what attracted you to the Watershed?

Townsend: Thank you, we're thrilled to be a part of this thriving collection of local talent. We felt drawn to the constant flow of feet in search of something authentic. Authenticity is really important to us as we've spent the past six months getting back to basics and distilling our true essence and offering. We also love that the space offers us access to a global market and connected world that enables you to travel without moving.

When you think about a physical retail space, what is the relationship between the decor and the product?

Our range is pretty extensive and with some of the pieces being heavily embellished we felt the need for a simple structure and clean lines to keep the focus on the product. We have, however, remained true to our love of colour and brought in a vivid palette to accentuate our bags and accessories.

How much of your design process is driven by commerce?

All of our pieces are made with love and intricate attention, from our bespoke pieces to our Core Classics. Through a process of trial and error we think we've found the sweet spot between the bold and experimental 'one of a kind' designs we've become known for and a core product line designed with our market in mind.



You've opened the new Watershed store and you're revamping your website, with added e-commerce functionality. How do you see the relationship between physical stores and e-commerce developing?

The physical store is a platform for exploration, inviting customers to get up close and personal with the product, the quality and the energy of the brand. The store will also always carry a far wider selection of one-off pieces and accessories. It's a space to experiment and play with design and one that gives us direct access to the customer for valued feedback. We believe that Missibaba's unique magic truly comes to life when you hold a piece in your hands.

An online presence is essential in today's marketplace and the soon-to-be-launched online store will focus on the popular Missibaba core range. We have introduced the option of bespoke leather and lining choices, making for an entirely unique online experience. Customers can always have a gander at our Instagram feed for an idea of what is possible within our full product offering.

Instagram is now a big part of a lot of companies' thinking. What role does it play in yours?

It allows the public to go behind the scenes and explore the inner workings of a brand. For us, the most powerful aspect is inviting our followers to view the extensive process involved in making Missibaba pieces, and also to meet the glorious women who make it all happen. We love sharing new ideas and creations, and relish getting instant feedback that enables us to craft with our customers' desires in mind.

What if people are looking for something a bit more personal in terms of the retail experience and product?

The Missibaba studio now is open on an appointment basis for customers looking for a more bespoke service with access to our full library of luxury leathers. Bookings can be made by contacting robyn@missibaba.com.