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J.Myers: Handcrafted Fine Leather Goods Right Here in Singapore

BY **NORMAN.TAN** / 2 MAY 2012



If you're looking for some shiny and over-embellished (and not to mention over-priced) leather bag or accessory, then stop reading now. Go ahead, click away and change screens.

But, if on the other hand, you're that rare breed of discerning gent who actually cares about honest provenance and handsomely crafted leather goods, then let me introduce you to a local secret: **J.Myers**

Founded and designed by Jeremiah Ang, **J.Myers** offers leather pieces with a masculine and utilitarian aesthetic. Devoid of distracting brand names and logos, his products are handmade locally and are designed to develop a rustic patina over time; gaining character through wear and tear. Minimalist in design but big in heart, it's for guys looking for something other than homogenous (read: common and sterile) leather goods.

*The **J.Myers** workshop is located at 5 Banda Street, #03-90B Singapore.*

How did you start working with leather?

I have always been interested in bags and accessories, to the point that when I hold a bag in my hands, the first thing I do is dissect it in my mind. I spent a large part of my childhood in my mother's tailoring shop and my father's art studio; so I've always appreciated the beauty of making something with your hands. One day, when I was looking for a slim belt, I couldn't find one that I liked locally and to ship something over from the States cost almost \$300. So I decided to make the belt I wanted myself and invested the money I would have spent on buying a belt from the US on tools and leather.

What is the spirit and ethos behind J.Myers and how is it different from other leather makers?

We value the honesty of the craft and the integrity of our designs. When you put heart into crafting a piece from start to finish, the final product has a hand that just feels better.

What do you love about working with leather?

Leather is a material that has a lot depth, in terms of both tactile feel and finish. It is a material that lasts and holds its value over time. When a canvas bag begins to come apart, chances are you throw it away. But when you've got a great leather bag and the seams burst, subconsciously your first thought is to find someone to fix it.

What inspires your creations?

Our designs are inspired by traditional techniques and the concept of creating something timeless. I don't want to create the next "IT" bag or a trendy statement piece. Rather, I want my pieces to stand the test of time so that 20 years down the road you still look at it and say, "that's beautiful!". Sometimes my creations are inspired by the leather itself. When I hold a piece of leather in hand, my mind races with design possibilities and concepts and I start imagining what I can create from that piece of leather.

You also provide a custom service. Tell us about this service and what are the most common pieces requested by men?

Currently we offer a full bespoke service for watch straps and men's belts (which also happens to be our best sellers). Some of my customers are watch enthusiasts who get a custom strap made for their new watch so that they can keep the original strap to preserve the watch's resale value. The customers start by choosing the leather and stitch colour. I then take their measurements and finish each piece by embossing their initials on the leather.

Who are your design idols?

Charles and Ray Eames. Their philosophy is that design is the appropriation of materials to solve problems. And only to use what is needed. It's exactly what I feel about leather craft design. If a leather patch is only there as part of a design element and has no functional use, then it probably doesn't need to be there.

Ideally, where would you like to be in 5 years time?

I would love to have people think of J.Myers whenever they think of leather.

All your products are handmade. Will you ever mechanise the process?

We are currently working on a ready-made line that will employ some use of sewing machines coupled with hand-stitching. There is nothing wrong with machine stitching, but I believe in honesty of the craft. And that means openly educating the customer about the process behind each of my pieces. Certain luxury brands want their customers to believe that their items are fully hand-stitched when more than half of the construction is done by machine. I think that's misleading.

What should people look out for when they are buying a leather product?

The leather should be supple and solid. Although patent leather has a lustrous sheen and can be trendy, it's best to avoid it if you are looking for a piece that will age beautifully over time.

Photography by Simon Sim

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