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Luxe bag brand Parabellum opens a flagship store on Melrose Avenue

By Adam Tschorn

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Luxe L.A. bag and accessories brand Parabellum has opened its first permanent brick-and-mortar space — a flagship store on Melrose Avenue just west of Paul Smith's pink pied-a-terre.

The roughly 1,100 square feet of retail space boasts unfinished wood floors, white-painted brick walls and spare metal and glass fixtures that reference the Parabellum aesthetic — table and shelf legs shaped like arrows (which fans of the brand will recognize as a recurring motif in its wares), gold-colored arrowheads as feet, and metal versions of feathered fletchings at the glass table tops (which, you may notice have corners cut to 45-degree angles, another flourish found in the construction of their military-grade bison leather bags and wallets).

The shop, which officially opened Aug. 23, has a western interior wall dominated by a 12-foot-by-9-foot three-panel charcoal drawing of an American bison created by artist Rick Shaefer opposite a custom-made, 8-foot-long, black bison leather Chesterfield sofa with claw feet. Other wall art includes mirror and metal pieces by L.A. brand Blackman Cruz.

In addition to telegraphing Parabellum's traditional-meets-modern aesthetic via fixtures and furniture, the company's first stand-alone retail space will, for the first time, showcase the label's full complement of bags, wallets belts (some 65 different style and color options) and offer custom services previously available only on a limited basis.

"One of the things we're going to offer here is the creation of these crests," said Parabellum partner Mike Feldman, holding aloft a clutch the size of an iPad mini embossed with an intricate heraldic design. "People will be able to come here and make an appointment with [creative director] Jason [Jones], he'll come up with something that visually represents you, what you stand for, then we'll have the metal plates made downtown — a big one and a small one — and it'll be your kit." Customers can then have their bespoke crests stamped into pieces for purchase, he said.

Feldman explained that while they've offered the service for years via phone and Internet (they've created custom crests for both Arnold Schwarzenegger and Colette in Paris, among others), the new space will allow them to expand their reach. "Now people can come in and have this really personal experience — kind of like a tattoo appointment."

As the brand's recognition grows (it was one of the 2013 CFDA/Vogue Fashion Fund finalists) Feldman sees the first dedicated, permanent physical location as a key part of the label's evolution. "This is it. This is the whole thing, this is going to be epic," he said enthusiastically during a tour of the space. "People used to find us — [and] make the pilgrimage to our [atelier] space in Hollywood but being here on this corner is going to be great for us. It's such a perfect spot."

As if to highlight the fact, Feldman gestures toward the front entryway of the space at the corner of Melrose and Harper avenues and notes that the doorway has been positioned at a 45-degree angle.

"We didn't even do that," he said. "It was like that."