

A Shop With a ‘Made in France’ Theme

The designer Junhee Kim has created a kind of artisans’ cooperative at her store in Paris.

By Tina Isaac-Goizé

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In Paris, a new kind of boutique is putting a spin on slow luxury.

Rendez-Vous des Designers sells only items that were made by hand in France, including scarves, jewelry, sweaters, leather accessories, ceramics and decorative objects. Yet it has no sales employees and no online shop.

And while the store’s point of view is stylish, fashion is not the point. Neither, for that matter, is turning a profit.

“It’s about showing who I like and who I believe in,” said its creator, the designer Junhee Kim. “They’re all here for a reason.”

In February, Ms. Kim started the store as a nonprofit association, drawing artisans into a kind of cooperative. In June, she signed a lease for a bright, pocket-size showroom on the Rue de l’Echaudé in the Sixth Arrondissement. There, she displays pieces by a dozen or so member makers, who receive the full proceeds of every sale.

As of early this month, the association had 10 permanent members, who pay 825 euros to 1,500 euros (\$880 to \$1,600) per quarter in dues, and five guest members, who pay €600 to €800 per quarter — money that helps to defray the cost of the shop’s rent and operations. Some of the permanent members also help Ms. Kim run the shop.



Rendez-Vous des Designers displays pieces by a dozen or so member makers. It has no sales employees and no online shop. Jerry Yang

The designer behind Mont Kiji, a brand of silk scarves and accessories made in France, Ms. Kim spent 25 years working for fashion houses including Louis Vuitton, Marc Jacobs and Chanel. But after five solitary years building her own business, she said, she found herself craving community. So she began looking for like-minded makers who, like her, lacked a suitable physical showcase.

Referring to her career arc, Ms. Kim said, “This is my second gig, and as I age I don’t want to do ‘me, myself and I’ anymore.

“Instead, I want to promote ‘Made in France’ as part of a team, in a way that makes sense, in a space where people can actually meet the artisans and get to know them.”

By chance and word of mouth, she connected with makers including Léa Costet, a jeweler from the Sprague collective in Paris; Marie Veyron, whose brand, Nilau, specializes in accessories made from ostrich leather, from birds raised on her family’s farm in the Auvergne region of central France; and Jinjin Sun, the porcelain ceramist behind Atelier Murmur in the Paris suburb of Montreuil.

Friends introduced Ms. Kim to Nami Okubo of Bordeaux, the founder of the leather accessories brand Chérietta.O, whose creations use only folding techniques and rivets. And when Ms. Kim came across Sophie Ochera, a knitwear designer in Normandy whose work reimagines the traditional Fair Isle pattern, the two women realized that they had met 20 years earlier at Nitya, an Indian fashion brand in Paris.



Silk scarves from Mont Kiji, Ms. Kim’s brand. Jerry Yang

Earlier this fall, all the products displayed in the shop had been made by women, but that was a coincidence, Ms. Kim said, adding that she plans to bring two or three new brands into the mix every month or two.

What all members do have in common: Rendez-Vous des Designers is, for now, their sole point of sale in France. And, Ms. Kim said, the made-to-order sweaters by Ms. Ochera, which start at €430 and take three weeks to produce, are the store’s best sellers.

“Though we all come from different horizons, our choice to produce in France makes us a community,” she said, likening her current role within the group to that of a benevolent dictator or perhaps a den mother. “The challenges we face are different from those who produce elsewhere.”

As for her role in the shop, “I like the luxury of chatting and telling people why I love things, and making friends along the way,” said Ms. Kim, who speaks French, English, Italian and Korean. She said the neighbors had taken to dropping by for coffee, and that visitors who stop by the shop had been staying in touch once they were back home. And though Ms. Kim can’t recall the last time she took a vacation, she said she didn’t mind because now the world finds its way to her.

“Every morning I wake up excited about who I’m going to meet,” she said.

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