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In praise of the write stuff

Renowned designers maintain a love affair with stationery and handwritten thank you notes



Stationery from Louis Vuitton's Cabinet d'Ecriture

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David Hayes DECEMBER 28 2012

Presents all opened, cooed over and safely packed away? Thank you notes sent and already popped in the post? Yes, you read correctly – thank you notes: remember them?

Even in the age of the quick-fire email, tweet, text and status update, handwritten missives haven’t lost all their appeal. In fact, note-writing seems to have gained a fashionable following of late. This month Louis Vuitton opened the doors of its first store dedicated wholly to the art of letter-writing in the heart of Paris’s Saint-Germain-des-Près, while ultra-cool US outlet Opening Ceremony teamed up with social gad-about Derek Blasberg to launch a handy line of stationery with something for almost every occasion – thank you notes included.

“I love handwritten notes and treasure the ones I receive,” says fashion designer Antonio Berardi. “The thought of someone taking the time out to sit and write a note or letter is priceless.” When Berardi puts pen to paper himself, it has to be on letter paper from Ditta Raimondi di Pettinaroli in Milan and with a Montblanc fountain pen.

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Italian designer Alberta Ferretti is another fan of di Pettinaroli. “I have personalised stationery,” says Ferretti. “I have letter paper, cards of different weights and dimensions for different occasions. I write with a 1920s antique Montegrappa silver pen and always at the same desk at home overlooking the park.”

Anya Hindmarch says she is “obsessed” with stationery. “I will never forget the thrill of opening my first ever box of business cards from Pineider in Piazza Signoria in Florence,” the British designer says. “It was a big moment for me, aged 18. I now have all my cards engraved with London-based engravers Baddeley Brothers.”

Angela Missoni, meanwhile, loves Smythson. “It’s so refined, with the pale blue paper and gilt edges. I’ve also created my own personal stationery with an artisan Milanese specialist. I always send thank you notes and special messages to my friends and family. And I treasure the personal notes I get back – especially from my children.”

New York designer Elie Tahari also favours Smythson, but prefers a ballpoint pen. “I send notes all the time, I think it’s a lovely way to express your gratitude to someone,” he says.

Explaining the inspiration behind his line of stationery for Opening Ceremony, Blasberg, an American style writer and fashion party fixture, says: “I come from the Midwest and manners were a big deal in our house. My mom wouldn’t let me use any of my birthday or Christmas presents till I had written, sealed, stamped and sent my thank you notes. I still feel guilty now if I don’t get my thank you notes out within 24 hours.”

And the rules for writing a good note? “To be honest, the only ‘To Do’ when it comes to letter-writing is just to do it,” says Blasberg. “It doesn’t matter if it’s in a ballpoint pen on the stationery you find in the desk at a hotel.”

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London interior designer and society host Nicky Haslam (who opts for Smythson “in town” and Wren Press in the country) agrees: “To be honest it’s wonderful just to get anything at all these days. I believe enormously in sending thank you notes – and emails too. It’s lovely to get something immediate the next day and then follow up with something in the post.”

And who are his favourite thank you notes from? “I gave a huge party a few years ago for 800 people and, surprisingly, lots of people sent thank you notes. But the two I treasured most were both handmade gifts with a thank you note that arrived the very next day – from Tracey Emin and Paris Hilton.”

www.louisvuitton.com

www.openingceremony.us

www.pettinaroli.it

www.montegrappa.com

www.pineider.com

www.baddeleybrothers.com

www.smythson.com

www.wrenpress.co.uk

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