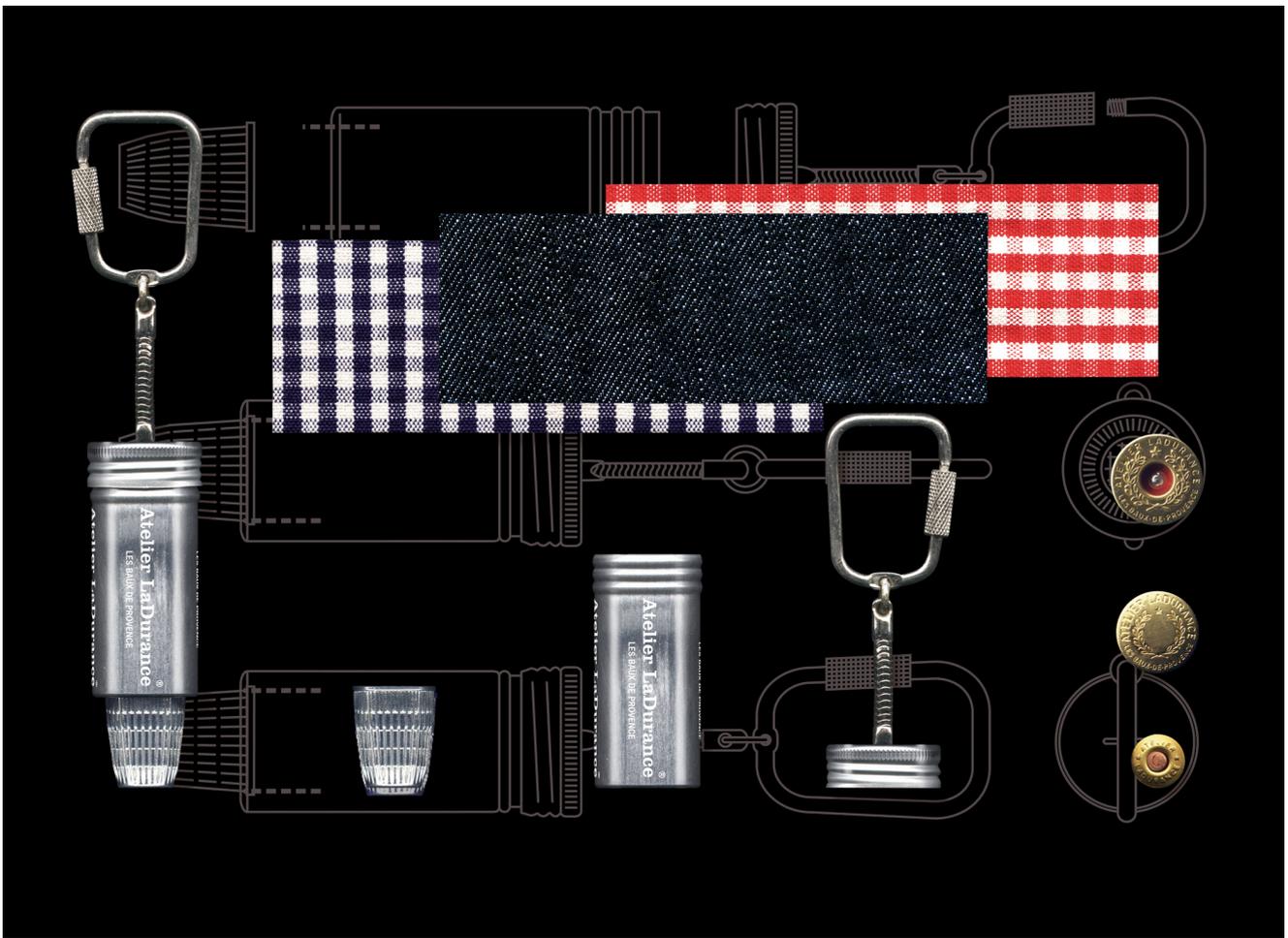




日本のデニム

JAPANESE DENIM

Atelier La Durance®
LES BAUX DE PROVENCE



'CA MARCHE,... VOILA!'

Atelier LaDurance started out as the hobby project of vintage denim collector Gerard Backx who used to live in the Provence in the south of France. Fascinated by the idea of designing a small denim collection for his shops in Holland and some international exclusive stores, he ordered some rolls of high level Japanese denim.

The Provence, once very alive with many small manufacturing factories, producing retro style denim products for French labels like Chipie, Liberto, Beكارoo and many more, had now

grown extremely quiet since the early nineties.

Generally as a result of upcoming eastern markets that could produce much cheaper. Or more expensive, like Japan who became specialized in the production of selvedge denim. Made on shuttle looms, age old machines that disappeared from the US in response to a demand for more denim. As the American denim manufacturers replaced their shuttle looms with modern projectile looms to make denim quicker and cheaper. Many of the shuttle looms were purchased by the Japanese, who have kept the old American denim making tradition still alive.

In 2002, Gerard Backx found one of the remaining manufacturing factories in the Provence, meeting his requirements on expertise for his Atelier LaDurance project. And approached graphic designer Boy Bastiaens for the development of the denim's brand identity.

'A true challenge in terms of its very small scale. Trying to find impactful design solutions while working with limited resources and budgets. A good example is one of the first branding suggestions: the use of red and blue Vichy check pocket lining for the denims, indicating a male or a female fit' says Boy Bastiaens, who brings



with him 25 years of experience in branding. That goes back to an era of a close collaboration with fashion designer Pierre Morisset, working for labels like Liberto, Chipie, Fiorucci, Wrangler, Lee, G-Star and many more. 'I perceived the Atelier LaDurance project as an opportunity to break away from the standard way of working, adding a layer of authenticity by looking beyond the constraints of the brief'.

In retrospective the comprehensive Atelier LaDurance visual identity was designed from a very practical point and the kind of logical simplicity you'll find deeply rooted into the French aesthetic of every day.

The choice of material for the heavy dark brown grained leather patch with gold embossed logo, crafted by a Provençal artisan, underlines the tactile qualities of design. So does the leatherbelt packaging. Which is actually a sheet of white machine coated board, folded around the belt and attached with two brass splitpins (parisiens). Easy to open and easy to close. With just one single black print run for the logo & size chart (marked with ballpoint pen) the simple end result is nothing short of premium. And exemplary for the design approach of the entire packaging line.



The Atelier LaDurance denims came about from passion. A progressive client and his ambition to make a small range of only top crafted garments. Without rushing, branding was also given the time and opportunity for exploring, testing and fine tuning. Perceived from the commercial perspective a highly valuable asset, as the new product should distinguish itself from its competitors on the shop floor. Nevertheless not an easy task, as the jeans market is completely oversaturated and dominated by the big players with limitless advertising budgets.

The distinctive design that pushed Atelier LaDurance in the right direction is a piece of lo-tec handcraft. Which became the brand's major identifier as quick as lightning. Introduced as the 'repairkit', the item is an emergency capsule that has been put together to an autonomous design with only 'off-the-shelf metal components. Manually assembled, one by one. Containing a thimble, two buttons, a piece of lining and a piece of denim in the quality of the purchased garment. And attached to each Atelier LaDurance denim product with a keyring.

As the identity program extended across different disciplines, the determination of the brands' overall appearance also included point of sale design. Of all media this discipline is the first to be able to adopt new technology advances, but in fact it is one of the oldest tools of commercial communication. As a site specific medium it is used in the environment where the purchases are made.

The salesman's case is a wooden merchandising display. Featuring four transparent glass jars filled with cotton balls, indigo powder, plain and dyed cotton blends; the raw materials for denim fabrication. Being the first out of a series crafted wooden Atelier LaDurance shop decorations, that illustrate the brand's product expertise in a narrative way.

More specifics about the brand can be found on the Atelier LaDurance website. As the url was stamped in the inside of the garments, it firstly attended the people, who had seen the physical product and were curious, to find out more about the brand.





The Atelier LaDurance website design is based upon a lo-tec navigation structure. Providing structural information about the product and its precision tailoring. The ingenious use of a standard desktop scanner proved to be the best choice for recording the rich texturing of fabrics and execution of construction particulars.

The crystal clear forensic-like images gave the online medium a bespoke look and were also appropriate for press purposes.

As the project evolved, and the garment manufacturing slowly increased, it became clear that the new French label gained a lot of positive response from the international market.

Bought by a cross section of the young and old demographic who loved the product. Marvelled for its fit, silhouette, construction details and use of upper level Japanese Denim.

Upon request, Atelier LaDurance in 2004 developed a special 'Limited Edition' series of 25 pieces only, for the famous Parisian concept store Colette. Signed, numbered and packaged in a silver colored cardboard box printed with a king-size black and white image of the repair kit.

As kick-off for the 'Bread & Butter' show, the official SIFA Award Ceremony was held in Berlin's Olympic Stadium July 21, 2005. An event where some of the most successful brands got special attention by receiving a prestigious prize. Commended for their excellence in design, brand strength, vision and saleability. Atelier LaDurance was chosen by a jury of Sportswear International editors and retailers worldwide to be awarded for the category 'best mens denim collection'. A great honour, as the new label was founded by Gerard Backx only three years prior to this landmark achievement.

All SIFA winners were encouraged to prepare a short 'brand' trailer for the ceremony. Together with StormHand partner Albert Kiefer, Boy Bastiaens accomplished a sixty second 'spot' animation. Featuring components of the Atelier LaDurance brand image: jazzin' around and introducing 'le spirit' of the brand.

As a very young label Atelier LaDurance has succeeded in honestly delivering products that are true to the core values of her audience. Being recognized and celebrated for this, it can be perceived as a prosperous grow for something that started out as a hobby project.

The concept behind the comprehensive brand identity is not based on marketing techniques. That generally compromises and generates only bland results. Neither does it make use of aggressive advertising tools.

In fact, it clearly demonstrates the value of design as a strategic communication tool. Measured by the criteria of achieving the clients' objectives while getting the most out of it creatively, which has to result in a highly effective final outcome.