



Local Heroes

The attraction of a modern city is not only determined by its rich history, splendid cultural venues and abundant culinary offerings, but also by the people who live and work there. Gain interesting insight into Amsterdam through the personal stories of some of the most fascinating Amsterdammers: renowned figures in their own city for their contribution to art, culture and business.



Henriette Wuite

FOUNDER AND OWNER OF L'ETOILE DE SAINT HONORÉ

"I love finding quirky, unique bags that you won't see anywhere else."

Meet Henriette Wuite, the luxury vintage queen of Amsterdam, who owns three stores, a passport full of stamps and quite possibly the vastest collection of designer handbags in town.

When you walk past L'Étoile de Saint Honoré's Reestraat location, you are almost instantly lured inside by a stack of large, vintage Louis Vuitton trunks that are on display in the window. Once inside, you'll find a jaw-dropping array of exquisite designer bags and accessories. It's a sunny Tuesday morning and Wuite is doing three things at the same time: instructing a new employee, holding a meeting and simultaneously making changes to the styling of one of the glass display cabinets filled with colourful Chanel and Hermès bags. She does all this seemingly with ease. How did Wuite create this little slice of designer vintage paradise?

"Chanel bags from the 80s and 90s are a lot of fun."

Gamble

Wuite: "Ten years ago I was running a tiny jewellery store by the Nieuwekerk when designer vintage was slowly becoming a thing. My partner and I were travelling a lot and, as an experiment, I brought back some vintage bags that I found on one of our travels to sell at the store. We really didn't have any extra space, but whenever I put a couple of bags on display they were gone before I knew it. After a little while, it was only natural to try it out for real with a separate store. That's when we opened L'Étoile de Saint Honoré on Oude Spiegelstraat. Back then I thought:

'Wow, this space is gigantic.' Now, it's our smallest location! A few years later we really jumped into the deep end when we leased a space on notoriously expensive Helligeweg. It was a wild idea because most of the stores on that street are big chain retailers, not little boutiques, but we thought: 'Let's go crazy and just try it!' Turns out, it was a gamble worth taking. A few years later we opened our third location on Reestraat."

Quirky

Wuite travels all across the globe, searching for new inventory. "I travel a lot. I love to go on the hunt for those rare, special pieces. I love finding quirky, unique bags that you won't see anywhere else. We carry a lot of items that are not available in the designers' own stores anymore and we always have a couple of rare items, such as that Chanel bag." She points to a rectangle-shaped quilted clutch made from red patent leather. "To me, bags like that are the most special: Chanel bags from the 80s and 90s are a lot of fun. We also do consignment, so people from all over the Netherlands come to the stores to sell their pieces through us. Locals like to have designer bags but don't love to pay full price. A lot of people also like the look of a vintage bag that doesn't look brand spanking new," when she's not off on one of her travels, she loves to spend time in her stores. "I like staying in touch with my customers and getting a sense of what is going on trend-wise and what people are enthusiastic about."

Iconic

L'Étoile de Saint Honoré carries just about every iconic designer bag that was ever made: from Louis Vuitton's Speedy to Prada's Baguette and Hermès' Birkin bag. But, with so much to choose from, which bag is Wuite's

personal favourite? The answer might surprise you. "My favourite bag is my Louis Vuitton Montsouris backpack: that's the one I use every day. When it comes to iconic designer bags, the Birkin is definitely still one of the most sought-after bags." A Birkin bag at L'Étoile de Saint Honoré will roughly set you back about 12,500 euros. "Buying a vintage Birkin bag is the easiest way to get your hands on one because you can't just walk into a Hermès store and buy one. You have to be put on a waitlist, and it can take a couple of years before your bag is ready."

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Fanny Pack

With summer fast approaching, what are some of the items that designer lovers should keep their eye on? "Hermès scarves are very popular right now. People don't just wear them as a scarf, but also as a top, around the wrist or wrap them around the handle of their bag. Fanny packs are also another big thing, for sure! Those are making a huge comeback! The funny thing is that the brands are also going back in time with their new designs. People started buying and using vintage fanny packs and now fashion houses are taking them into production again. It's one of those full circle fashion moments. As they say, eventually, everything comes back in style."

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