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## Ultra-Luxe Leather Goods Label Parabellum Sets Up Shop on Melrose



Alexis Brunswick

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**B**orn out of the desire to craft the finest leather goods in the world, Parabellum has set out to carve its own well-constructed path since 2008. Working most heavily with the American bison, the inventive L.A.-based brand has created leather goods ranging from men's duffels and women's clutches to valets and key chains that are anything but precious. Using age-old techniques to give the leather an elegant but still natural feel, each creation is tough, textured, and luxurious—and all with an ode to the relentless spirit of the American West. Just days shy of opening their first stand-alone retail space this Friday on Melrose Avenue, creative director Jason Jones and president Mike Feldman spoke exclusively to Style.com about this important step for the brand, why bison is best, and what we can expect next from this leather pioneer.

—Alexis Brunswick

### Why open the store now?

Mike Feldman: Honestly, this has been our dream and our plan for more than five years. It took a while for us to find the right location, and it took a while for us to get our brand reach to the level where people needed to see the full collection in one location. We have 35 different items and we have 11 different leather colors and there are three different hardware options, so there is a tremendous library of goods that we're really proud of.

Jason Jones: And to be able to design the furniture and everything and show the brand as a whole, it's really exciting for us.

### **Will there be anything exclusive to the store offered?**

JJ: We've been planning on doing a lot of things that are specific to the store, like special projects and collaborations and more expensive things that might not be able to be carried by other stores.

MF: It allows us to really do a lot of things that we've thought about but we never necessarily had the reach to do through wholesale. We can try things like jewelry and clothing.

### **How would you classify your brand?**

JJ: It's really a new version of American luxury. It's something that we really haven't seen in the market, and that's why we came. We felt like there was a hole.

### **How do you think your design is different?**

JJ: We design everything to last—that's really a key element of what we do. A lot of the handles are removable and interchangeable, we really look at longevity and how things are going to wear, that's really important to us. We want things to get better with time, not worse, so that's a super-important chief goal for us—how it wears and how long it lasts.

MF: You can look at the material first off. Our materials are completely off the grid. The combination of bison and ceramic—certainly when we entered this business, nobody was using either, and we're using both and putting them together in a way that I think is a little different. Just that juxtaposition of old and new is something we're very proud of, and I think being a younger brand allows us to not have to repeat the greatest hits of before. We get to actually create with our eyes right now, in this world, with all the information that we have and all the interactions that we have. It allows us to be a little bit different without having to go back to the well of the past. This is our now and these are our glory days, so we can really get into it.

### **How is sustainability built into your design and production process?**

MF: Three ways. One is the fact that our goods are built to last forever. They're a little bit more expensive because they're built that way and there's a cost to that, but they last forever. The second way would be our production. All of our production is right here, it's 10 minutes from our new store, and we make everything here in L.A. And the third is the materials. The bison leather that makes up the majority of what we do is sourced from free-range animals from North America, and it's all North American-raised and free-range and not in factory conditions. And hides are shipped to domestic micro-tanneries where everything is tanned to EPA standards. A lot of leathers are done overseas, and there's a reason 99 percent of the tanneries that existed in this country in 1900 no longer exist here. It's not that people aren't using leather, it's that people are doing a lot of their tanning in other countries where the laws are a little less stringent about how you treat the environment, and we take the environment very seriously.

### **How has being in the CFDA/Vogue Fashion Fund changed your perspective?**

JJ: It's nice that it connected us to New York, and via the television show, it really connected us to the world, so we have a much wider audience now. It gave us more time and energy to explain the brand to the world, and that was the important thing for us.

MF: We're L.A. guys, so when we do business in New York, we show up and we leave. The CFDA process is in the middle of the storm, so we get to really see how it works. It inspired us to work harder, to work faster, and to work smarter to be on that level.

### **What's next?**

MF: We've got some really exciting new handbags that we're getting ready to launch in September at Barneys. We

started as a very small company and we're still very small and we just keep going.

*Parabellum, 8251 Melrose Avenue, Los Angeles, 90046. For more information, visit [parabellumcollection.com](http://parabellumcollection.com).*

Photo: Drew Schwartz

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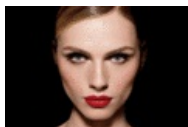
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
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