



THE CREATIVE LONDONERS

Words by **ZOEY GOTO**

Photography by **KENNETH LAM** Ph Assistant **NIRJA RAM**

— Swedish brothers
Niklas and Mattis
Oppermann initially
arrived in London
as students. After
graduation they decided
to settle in the city and
launch Oppermann;
a distinctive range
of minimal, high-quality
leather goods.

The brothers live in East London's Hackney and have a design studio in Clerkenwell that is part of Craft Central – an organization that supports designers and makers in the capital. CALEO magazine visited them at their studio to discuss starting up a luxury brand and London's hidden gems.

ZOEY *What drew you to London?*

NIKLAS We grew up in a small town just outside Stockholm and came to London in 2009 and 2010 to study. We decided to stay in London and start the business as we liked how international the city is. Our social circle reflects this and our friends are English, Swedish, German, French and our flatmate is Slovakian.

ZOEY *For a luxury accessory label, Oppermann is slightly unusual as you sell your products directly to the customer, rather than through shops. What is the thinking behind this?*

MATTIS We initially started out selling our products using the standard model of selling wholesale to the shops. We then changed our business model as we felt that as a young brand we really wanted contact with and feedback from the customer. We also wanted to avoid the large mark-ups that the shops add. By cutting out the middle-man we can sell our bags and wallets for twice the cost of production, instead of eight times the cost as you find with shops. We keep everything very high-end so all our materials are sourced from Italy and the bags are also Italian made, using two small family owned factories.

— “We keep everything very high-end so all our materials are sourced from Italy.”

ZOEY *You seem to be finding inventive ways to bridge the space between on and off-line.*

MATTIS The overarching idea is to try to find ways that people can still see and feel the product before buying. It's playing with the line between online and offline and how these things can be related. We've also used pop-up spaces and a while ago we tried an interesting concept in *Old Street* underground station. We rented a shop front and put our products in the window with QR codes that people could scan to find out more information on the bags. It was like an advertising billboard, but with a third dimension. We also had samples of the leather on the window, so you could touch the material.

ZOEY *What do you like about working in Clerkenwell area?*

NIKLAS It is slightly off the tourist map and has lots of great restaurants and beautiful old buildings. It has a good mixture of small craft companies and then a stone's throw away you have brands such as Ben Sherman and Alexander McQueen. There are also a lot of tech start-ups, architects, jewellery makers and

photographers around here - it's very interesting and creative. We looked at studios in Hackney Wick, near where we live, but it is mostly artists and painters there. We do spend time in Hackney on the weekend though - London Fields, Columbia Flower Market and Broadway Market are places we would recommend in the area.

ZOEY *What would you change about London?*

NIKLAS It would be a cliché to say the weather! I actually think that the weather in London is not as bad as everyone says.

ZOEY *Where else would you recommend visiting in London?*

MATTIS The Tate Modern gallery on the Southbank.
NIKLAS The auction houses in London are also really interesting to visit - Criterion Auction house on Essex Road is not too expensive and has a lot of very traditional English stuff. The high-end auction houses such as Christie's have exhibitions that are open to the public - it is not really something that tourists really think of doing, but it is really interesting.

ZOEY *Where is the best place for a casual meal in London?*

MATTIS *Granger & Co* in Clerkenwell is a restaurant just across the road from our studio that we use often. It's bright and not too loud. The coffee is great - but then again I think all coffee is great!

ZOEY *Where is the best hotspot for lunch?*

MATTIS *The Modern Pantry* is set in a beautiful cobbled square in Clerkenwell and is a good place to eat outside. They also have a hatch at the side of the restaurant where you can get a take-out lunch for a reasonable cost.

ZOEY *Where should coffee-lovers flock to in London?*

NIKLAS *Exmouth Market* in Clerkenwell is a really nice place to hang out and grab a coffee. *Briki* is a casual cafe on the corner of the street and they do super nice croissants. It's nice to have a whole street that is almost entirely made of independent businesses, especially as we independents ourselves.

ZOEY *Any other suggestions?*

MATTIS *The Library Members Club* in Covent Garden. We've actually started collaborating with them as the owner is an Oppermann customer who liked our brand and wanted us to work together. We met with him and explained that one of the challenges that we encounter as an online business is that customers cannot hold our bags in their hands and smell the leather. So we set up a collaboration where our customers can sign up for a complimentary day pass for *The Library* through our website. They then get to visit *The Library Members Club in London*, which is a very nice setting, and have our collection of bags brought out to them.

Palissy Cognac bag made from Italian Vachetta leather.

On the right - Mattis Oppermann "Our philosophy is simple: We combine great design with the best materials and craftsmanship and offer it directly to you."



With Niklas' experience in fashion retail, production, and finance, he's the business behind the brand.



Oppermann represents a synergy of Anglo-Swedish design: an aesthetic inspired by Swedish minimalism and the individuality of London style.



Café Pistou brings Provence's fresh, vibrant 'sunshine food' to Exmouth market, whatever the weather.



Dark chocolate pistachio fudge at Granger & Co.

Poached free range egg served on toasted muffins with hollandaise sauce and Bayonne ham at Café Pistou.



Botanique Workshop is an artisan store and flower shop based in Exmouth Market.

The Granger & Co.

Granger & Co. Clerkenwell, 50 Sekforde St, London

The best place to enjoy a nice and healthy brunch in Clerkenwell. What we like is the wide range of choice you have: nutritious breakfasts, tasty mains and colorful salads. Every Bill Granger restaurant reflects the spirit we like to think of as 'Australian': sunny, easy-going and generous. Bill opened his first restaurant in Sydney's Darlinghurst in 1993. It soon became loved for its legendary breakfasts, served at the famous central communal table, where locals and travellers, families and friends, continue to be welcomed. Twenty years later, Bill's relaxed, friendly and infectious joy in good, fresh food has become truly global, and is enjoyed at his restaurants in Sydney, Seoul, Tokyo, Honolulu and London.

Exmouth Market

Exmouth Market, London

Exmouth Market is 2 minutes walk from London's Sadler's Wells Theatre, this is a unique example of 'village London'. Located between Islington and the City, this is a burgeoning area of independent design shops, fashion and lifestyle boutiques, health and beauty specialists, unique gift and book shops, interior design and a wide range of exciting cafes, bars and restaurants. Right at the core of the Exmouth Market, Briki Café is the best choice to taste great traditional recipes and the highest-quality coffee blends. Instead, if you want to have a bite of delicate Provence's fresh and vibrant food, Café Pistou is where you need to go. Their Avocado toast with sundried tomatoes and the Provence's typical Pistou is one of the best choices for a refreshing summer brunch.

The Modern Pantry

47-48 St John's Square, London

The Modern Pantry has the best atmosphere to have a great traditional English meal with a modern twist. The restaurant is based in a picturesque Georgian townhouse in the lovely St. John's Square that represents the perfect combination of ancient and modern architecture. If you also want to taste a nice afternoon tea menu, they have the perfect English tea menu to satisfy even the most refined palate.

The LIBRARY Membership Club

112 St. Martin's Lane, London



— “Gorgeous atmosphere made of an eclectic and innovative design with a victorian flavour and have a look and touch in real life our bag collections...”

Founded by Ronald Ndoro in 2013, LIBRARY is a hub for creativity and innovation. LIBRARY has a particular emphasis and draws inspiration from literature, theatre, local community and sustainable design. Working with like-minded collaborators LIBRARY is built on up-cycling and recycling without compromise to design. Since Library is a Private Members Club, you will find a luxurious and quiet environment. Thanks to our collaboration with the Library, it is possible to subscribe and book a visit to the Library. There you will be able to enjoy a coffee in a gorgeous

atmosphere made of an eclectic and innovative design with a victorian flavour and have a look and touch in real life our bag collections while relaxing. LIBRARY Membership Club has a complete focus on tailoring and enhancing the member experience through the provision of a lifestyle service, fine dining and dancing completed by an exciting cultural events programme: From live music events, art exhibitions, film screenings to author led book clubs and special talks with private areas and rooms always available for members entertaining and to stay over.



In addition to books and a place of reference – LIBRARY is a hotel, restaurant, private members club and wellness hub located centrally – on St Martin's Lane – right in the heart of London's Covent Garden.

