

Style

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# These Parisian brands whisper, not shout, about their centuries of history

A wave of French heritage labels such as Au Départ is showing there's life beyond the big names

Here is another story. In 1740 Jean Gabriel Augustin Chevallier's grandfather founded the first optician shop in Paris, located at 1 Quai de l'Horloge. Jean Gabriel Augustin himself was awarded the title of engineer by the Parisian Academy of Sciences for his contribution to opticals.



At the shop of custom eyewear maker L'Ingénieur Chevallier © Philippe Garcia

In addition to making eyewear for royalty, L'Ingénieur Chevallier supplied aristocratic opera-goers with portable telescopes and made binoculars for the French army. For centuries the business provided lenses for other opticians, including that of Maison Bonnet, the fashionable Parisian bespoke eyewear maker.

In 2021, the family decided to sell the business to Franck Bonnet, who relaunched it with a shop at 17 rue des Pyramides, close to the Louvre. “As a child, I sometimes accompanied my father on his delivery rounds,” recalls Bonnet. “He would drop off the frames at L'Ingénieur Chevallier, where all the optical work was handled. I remember very clearly one appointment dedicated to fitting new tortoise-shell frames for Monsieur Yves Saint Laurent. The place captivated me. The objects, the binoculars, the reading and precision instruments formed a world apart, almost magical.”



L'Ingénieur Chevallier offers tortoise-shell frames... © Charly Ho Photography



... and a wide selection of other glasses © Charly Ho Photography

L'Ingénieur Chevallier now operates as a custom eyewear maker; at its shop you can choose an existing frame style and in a couple of fittings it will be modified to fit your face.

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