

Magnus & Novus

RREC10/LH/108

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When city planner Lucas Shen moved from London to Hong Kong seven years ago, he couldn't help but notice the thousands of craftspeople selling their handmade products on Chinese streets. "They were perched on stools showing off these beautiful wooden spoons, but they only wanted about £3 for them," Shen says today. "Fine art is undervalued here because there's so much supply. It's like there's a social stigma to it." Mass manufacturing may have turned the country into an economic powerhouse then, but it's also ironically eroding the raw talents that fuelled the boom. "I remember thinking, 'Something needs to be done.'"

Today, Shen runs Magnus & Novus, a bespoke tailor set up not just to show off the best of Chinese craftsmanship in 2017, but with the long-term goal of reinvesting profits into education and awareness to ensure those skills aren't lost in the future. Its light, airy workshop employs 12 workers (or "artisans" as Shen insists on calling them) who each focus on making one aspect of a garment, and the label source and, more importantly, collaborate, with the best fabric suppliers. "We have one individual, for instance, who purely hand sews the buttonholes with silk threading," he continues, "while our jacket's canvas can consist of 5000 stitches. We're also one of only two Asian suppliers to work with the prestigious swiss mill Alumo, who provide the cotton we use on our shirting."

After a short consultation about their lifestyle, customers pick not only from everyday suiting but also eveningwear, leisurewear, and business casual, and most clothes skew seasonal trends so they can be paired easily with other garments. But at the same time, its items have distinctive features that suit the modern workplace. It's 'one-piece' shirt, for example, is designed to be worn without a tie, so has a concealed button to ensure the collar doesn't collapse; its shorts have a built-in belt.

Or to put it more succinctly: Magnus & Novus does 'Made In China', as was always intended. "Most craftspeople are between 50-80 now so soon they will disappear," Shen concludes. "The goal for us is to one day create a fine-art school for underprivileged children so that we can give something back."

Why?

"Because fine craft reveals something mass production doesn't – human emotion. And that's a beautiful thing."

magnusandnovus.com