

# This Belt Is \$18,000

THE ANNALS OF EXCESS

SOMETIMES LUXURY SCREAMS (diamond encrusted, gold embossed). Sometimes it whispers (the logo for the Hermès Birkin bag is printed on the interior). And sometimes, as with the black leather Kale Miles belt pictured here, it's inaudible. Kale Miles (212-870-0090 or kalemiles.com) is a small men's-accessories company whose belts usually run \$240 to \$380. This one is \$18,000. We asked Kale Miles designer Kristina Pitaniello and co-founder Bill Miles what makes it cost more than a car, or 400 percent more than the \$45 version from Banana Republic seen below.

AJA MANGUM

The bulk of the price comes from the buckle: It's **platinum**, about seven-to-eight ounces' worth. At press time, an ounce of platinum was \$1,600. If the price goes up or down in a day, that will change the cost of the belt.

It takes about **three weeks** for Pitaniello to make the buckle in a Boston workshop. Of course, no two are alike.

Assembly is relatively simple: measurements are given over the phone or online. Customers are asked to add two inches to their normal size. If it's too big, it can be cut down, but too small and they have to start all over again. The cutting and assembly are done **by hand** in Maine. That part takes about one week.

For what the company says are "competitive reasons," it won't release the name of the

English tannery that supplies the leather, although it is supposedly the oldest in the world, founded during the Roman Empire. The leather is cut from a specific spot on a particular breed of cow. Typical cowhides cost a few hundred dollars; Kale Miles pays "**in the thousands**" for theirs.

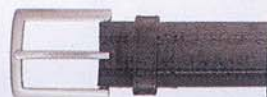
Often belts are several strips of leather and synthetic filler stitched or glued together; this is **one single layer** of thick, supple skin, which will supposedly hold its shape for decades.

The organic vegetable dyes used by the unnamed English tannery take longer to adhere to the leather than the standard chemical dyes. The leathers are tanned for **over a year**, which Kale Miles says results in "a longer lasting leather with

a beautiful finish." Standard tanning using chemicals takes days.

The average weight of each belt (minus the buckle) is around **nine ounces**. Typical belts are half that.

## FOR THE REST OF US



### Leather Belt

\$45 at Banana Republic,  
205 Bleecker St., nr. Sixth  
Ave.; 212-473-9573

## SALES & BARGAINS January 16-29

Prices on ritzy **D. Porthault** table linens, bedding, and robes are marked down by 30 to 50 percent. 470 Park Ave., nr. 57th St. (212-688-1660); A.E., M.C., V.; 1/21-1/26 (10-6).

Clothes and accessories from Marc by Marc Jacobs, Hanii Y, and Milly are \$50 to \$200 at **Diane T**; that's 30 to 60 percent off. 174 Court St., nr. Bergen St., Cobble Hill (718-923-5777); A.E., M.C., V.; 1/20-2/20 (Tues.-Fri. 11-7:30; Sat. 11-6:30; Sun. 1-5:30).

After you're done at Diane T, swing around the corner to **Bird** for deals on Earnest Sewn straight-leg jeans (now \$49), 3.1 Phillip Lim double-breasted cardigans (now \$119), and tall Isabel Marant boots (now \$179). 220 Smith St., at Butler St., Cobble Hill (718-797-3774), and 430 Seventh Ave., nr. 14th St., Park Slope (718-768-4940); A.E.,

M.C., V.; 1/25-2/10 (Mon.-Sat. noon-8; Sun. noon-7).

**Key and Poppy** are teaming up for a joint sale and unloading lace-trimmed tops from Mint, cropped hoodies from Mike & Chris, and godet skirts from Lauren Moffatt; from \$10 for vintage. 41 Grand St., nr. W. Broadway (212-334-5707); cash only; 1/17-1/21 (noon-7).

**Krizia** is marking down its womenswear and menswear, with ties from \$25 (normally \$100) and beaded gowns from \$1,490 (normally \$4,260). 317 W. 33rd St., nr. Eighth Ave. (718-747-1656); A.E., M.C., V.; 1/20-1/22 (9-6:30).

**Judith Ripka** baubles are 50 to 70 percent off. The Carlton Hotel, 88 Madison Ave., nr. 28th St., Seville Room (212-244-1230, ext. 292); A.E., M.C., V.; 1/23 (10-6); 1/24 (10-8); 1/25 (10-4); 1/26 (10-3).

COMPILED BY A.M.

## OPENINGS

**FOR DESIGNER** Stephanie Hirsch and partner Stacy Josloff, bikinis and cover-ups aren't just for summer—they're year-round essentials. Their **inca** store (976 Lexington Ave., nr. 70th St.; 212-327-3007) provides one-stop shopping for winter despairers looking to ditch New York for Miami or Tulum. (Conveniently, the



700-square-foot boutique is about two blocks away from fellow resortwear shop Heidi Klein.) If your style is more glamorous sexpot than Nantucket conservative, swing by for plush, embroidered beach towels (\$100), bohemian-chic throw pillows (\$150), and gorgeous, club-ready silk caftans (\$185 to \$390). If you're not finding a good fit for one of the triangle tops, or the bikini waist ties are too long, the made-to-measure program will customize any piece (from \$250; up to four weeks for delivery).

A branch of Zonehampton, the East Hampton spinning studio, opens on January 17 (201 E. 67th St., at Third Ave.; 212-327-2170).

A.M.