

A historic landmark with modern appeal

We celebrate Philippe D'Aoust of G. D'Aoust & Cie,
Canada's recipient of the 2019 Global Innovator Award

Established in 1900, G. D'Aoust & Cie is an innovative and visionary retail emporium, with a team always on the lookout for the latest trends. A Montreal landmark, the 20,000-square-foot, three-storey building offers giftware, kitchenware, gourmet products, decorative items, bedding, furniture and fashion.

Over the years, three major Hollywood productions have been shot inside the store, known for its remarkable architecture and ambiance. In fact, the store's trademark Lamson money conveyor system, installed in 1924, still functions to the delight of customers!

The history is fascinating, but it was the store's fresh, modern approach to



merchandising that continues to make it a standout, and a most deserving recipient of this year's Global Innovator Award for Canada.

Established in 1900 as a general store, G. D'Aoust & Cie has sailed through more than a century of innovation in grand style. After its founder Guisolphe D'Aoust passed away, his sons continued to manage the store for half a century until grandson Philippe took the helm. As a third generation retail innovator, he revamped the historic department store to create the ultimate shopping experience in a trend-setting city.

Today, while so many bricks and mortar retailers are struggling to compete with online sellers, G. D'Aoust & Cie excels by consistently offering customers a fresh, exciting shopping experience. "We appeal to a very large audience, and we offer a wide variety of



The front entrance is 15 feet wide and opens up to three floors of tantalizing displays.



products, so we can create fantastic stories through out displays by combining all the categories,” explains Philippe. “Our team is committed to deliver a WOW effect throughout the store. People love to browse, and we refresh our displays regularly so they always find something new when they return.”

He adds that as a single location department store he has a lot of flexibility when it comes to trends and is able to move quickly with hot new items. “We will be sold out of an item before a chain store even has it in stock.”

Making the customer experience a top priority has been a way of life at G. D’Aoust & Cie since the turn of the last century. The layout and size of the store gives the design team plenty to work with. A large, 15-foot wide entranceway lets customers admire three full display windows as they walk into the store.

At the main entrance, the customer will find the gift department, decorative items, vases, chandeliers, candles, body care products, a customer service counter and check-out counters.

Arousing the senses with visuals, sounds, tantalizing aromas, soft music and a vintage style, the store creates an inviting and inspiring ambiance. Customers are encouraged to spend time browsing and exploring.

Two sweeping wooden staircases lead to the kitchen and gourmet department featuring kitchenware, linens, tableware, cookware and pantryware. Everything is arranged to entice the customers’ culinary curiosity. Daily gourmet food tastings and product demos play a major role in customer sales and satisfaction.

It is on this floor that shoppers can also admire the original Lamson money conveyer system suspended from the ceiling. It was installed in 1924 and still operates to this day.

From the kitchen department, two more wide wooden staircases lead to the furniture and home decor department. Modernized lighting systems throughout the store all feature new LED components. They are placed to emphasize



Founded in the Edwardian era, the store is a perfect blend of past and present and uses its history to its advantage. The 3-story building even features a permanent museum exhibit with old photos and original store fixtures.





the visual merchandising displays and window displays. The visual presentation is designed to catch shoppers' attention so they react to each item.

Displays are arranged to highlight each object. An eclectic mix of products is used but each element fits comfortably with its surroundings. Customers can readily imagine the object in their own home. All elements used in the store's visuals, and window displays either belong to the store or are for sale in the store. Nothing is ever rented.

In 2015, the store underwent a complete rebranding, including a new logo, store sign, in-store visuals, gift wrapping, website, gift card, business cards and interior renovations.

The company also revamped its bilingual website and now offers online purchasing capabilities. There are currently 20,000 customers registered on the D'Aoust & Cie database and all clients receive a birthday card with an in-store promotion included. A privilege points card offers them rewards year-round. The store also has a presence on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. All are updated daily with occasional prize draws.

The D'Aoust & Cie museum, which was officially opened at the store's 115th anniversary celebration, is now a permanent exhibit offering visitors a fascinating display that includes several antique fixtures and old photographs.

Each year, the store hosts two VIP events for the best clients and suppliers. These unique evenings create lasting memories as the store takes portraits of all guests to take home as a keepsake.

Employees who work at D'Aoust tend to make a career of the store. Most have over 10 years experience and are well trained so they are knowledgeable about all product lines. Staff know most customers by name and offer personal-

Each of the three window displays have both front and back views. They are frequently moved or placed differently to reflect the season and can be seen from all angles as customers enter the store.

ized gift wrapping and special orders on a regular basis. They are always impeccably attired in order to properly reflect the store's image.

G. D'Aoust & Cie has used its history to its advantage and placed it at the forefront of the store's identity. The store has always kept its original floors, ceilings and part of its furniture in addition to housing a permanent museum exhibit. Founded in the Edwardian era, past and present come together at D'Aoust & Cie to create a store like few others in the world.

Philippe D'Aoust will travel to Chicago for the International Home + Housewares Show and, along with 29 other national winners, he will be honoured at a gala dinner on Saturday, March 2nd, where five top global retailers will be selected. All show attendees are encouraged to visit the *gia* display at the Lakeside Center entrance at McCormick Place in Chicago.

The above article was excerpted from the *gia* evaluation form prepared by Cristine Tessier of G. D'Aoust & Cie. For more details on the store, see the profile in the September 2017 issue of *Home Style* at www.homestylemag.ca



Creation of a house brand was a turning point for the company. The product developed is a natural and environmentally friendly body soap collection. The packaging design features the store's history printed inside, making it a great ambassador to promote D'Aoust & Cie outside of the Quebec market.