

INTERNET

## Herms feeds appetite for transparency with look inside Petit h workshop

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*Items created for Petit h*

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

French fashion house Herms is giving consumers a peek behind-the-scenes at the inner workings of its Petit h line with a new series of videos.

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The first video, entitled "Food for thought," brings viewers into the line's workshop, in which designers and executives including Petit h founder Pascale Mussard brainstorm, test and discuss various product ideas. Shining a light on the process behind the Petit h line showcases the brand's creativity and open-mindedness.

"This is a different kind of transparency," said [Thoma Serdari](#), Ph.D., founder of [PIQLuxury](#), Co-editor of [Luxury: History Culture Consumption](#) and adjunct professor of luxury marketing at [New York University](#), New York. "It is not about the heritage or artisanship of the brand (one takes these for granted) but rather about the creative process of designing new objects for Petit h, all of which are crafted with discarded materials from the parent brand, Herms.

"What we gain from this inside view into the conversations Ms. Mussard has with a select numbers of creatives/design groups is insights about what makes Petit h objects special," she said. "It is not just the idea of recycling Petit h is more than a sustainable brand. It is an open call to designers who don't work for the firm to submit their creative ideas and help move Petit h forward.

"This is how Ms. Mussard chooses to tap into contemporary culture and keep things fresh, exciting and very, very humorous all of which are the traits of a great luxury brand."

Ms. Serdari is not affiliated with Herms, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

**Herms** did not respond before press deadline.

Behind the scenes

The Petit h line repurposes materials discarded by the Herms brand into new products. Because the parent brand uses goods only of the highest quality, much of what is discarded will look fine to the naked eye and can be repurposed into designs of considerable merit.

The video shows how this design process comes to pass, depicting Ms. Mussard meeting with various designers who were invited to create original projects for the line.



### *Hermes Petit h*

In the first meeting, Laurence Dejust, sales and collections director for Petit h, tells designer Adrien Rovero that the team is reviewing design proposals. Mr. Rovero uses parts of bags and other goods to fasten what Ms. Mussard approvingly coins the "travel totem."

The next meeting is with Mathieu Basse, who has designed games that interest Ms. Mussard. Mr. Basse explains that one of the games is visual, requiring color pairs, while the other is tactile and involves the identification of a number of different materials, including "ostrich" and "lizard."

Although the ostrich remark is passed by fairly quickly, in a feat of ill-timing, Herms was recently targeted by PETA for unethical treatment of ostriches ([see story](#)). However, because consumers watching the video will likely already be aware of the allegation, the sustainable nature of the Petit h line implicitly advertised in the video may minimize the damage.



### *Petit h surprise box*

The third meeting is with studio ROOF designers Romy Boesveldt and Ilya Yashkin, who present plans for model animals. In the final, Constance Madaule and Clara Hardy explain what they have done with silk.

The pair presents bowls, plates and other traditional "glassware" made from silk, with which Ms. Mussard is particularly impressed.

Herms' video ends with "to be continued" note, encouraging viewers to keep checking back for closer looks at the Petit h workshop.

### *Herms petit h - Food for Thought*

"The video demonstrates how much effort goes into calling artists to participate, critiquing their work, culling the best ideas and finally making sure that the new objects reflect the DNA of Petit h," Ms. Serdari said. "It is very similar to what happens in design school."

"Of course, to be able to critique new design one needs to be genuinely immersed into its principles and history," she said. "This is how one can harvest the seeds of ideas that resonate with contemporary culture. Ms. Mussard possesses the level of expertise that allows her to both guide designers into new directions and hand-pick the objects that put a smile on the client's face."

In addition, the Petit h line is environmentally conscious by nature, making it an ideal line to promote today considering the importance of sustainability on the fashion industry and elsewhere. The brand's conception, however, was prior to the prominence of the sustainability debate.

Although Herms' clothing is only of the highest quality, other products may function as well with slight flaws. As such, the Petit h line can open up to a larger network of designers and establish Herms not just as a sustainable brand, but also a creative and playful one.

#### Food for thought

While this initiative aims to raise awareness and plays on a growing consumer desire for transparency, previous Petit h marketing tactics have found creative ways to create fans.

Last May, Herms increased exposure for its whimsical Petit h line through surprise gifts, available on a monthly basis.

The email included a subject line reading, "Lucky you, a lucky dip!" and within the body a rotating image shows Herms' signature orange boxes surrounding by question marks. In the beauty space monthly surprise boxes, often consisting of samples, have become very popular and are an ideal way to keep consumers' attention ([see story](#)).

Despite the recent PETA controversy, Herms has shown through other initiatives that the environment and animal safety is among its concerns.

The brand is currently showing the "fierce and fragile" side of big cats through a museum exhibition celebrating the art of Robert Dallet.

From Jan. 10 through March 13, visitors to the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, CT can view nearly 75 drawings, sketches, paintings and Herms scarves designed by the late Mr. Dallet. The exhibit, and the sale of Mr. Dallet-related merchandise, will benefit the big cat conservationist group Panthera, best known for its connection to Zimbabwe's Cecil the Lion ([see story](#)).

Although repurposing rejected materials for new products would be risky for most brands, the Herms image allows it to bring out qualities in its use in spite of material imperfections.

"A brand like Herms that only deals in the finest excludes from its inventory products with even the slightest technical flaws," Ms. Serdari said. "This does not take away the craftsmanship, care and passion the artisans have invested in making the original pieces. As part of the Petit h process, these items are totally repurposed and perhaps altered in a way that they exude the lively, energetic and delightful aura of the brand."