

HOME FURNISHINGS

Herms spotlights craftsmanship in timely furniture effort

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The Hippodrome D'Herms coffee table is a signature piece in the furniture collection. Image credit: Herms

By ELLEN KELLEHER

French lifestyle brand **Herms** is showcasing the elegant simplicity of its furniture collection as many affluents are looking to upgrade their spaces after spending months at home.

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Classic oak tables and chairs with simple finishing details, but chic, modernist design feature in a new craftsmanship video. The footage offers the chance to catch a glimpse of the creative process behind the brand and suggest that Herms is looking to capitalize on people's desire to spend more time at home amid the pandemic.

"Leveraging classic luxury strategies over traditional design strategy adds about 30 margin points," said Chris Ramey, president of **The Home Trust International**, Palm Beach, Florida. "It also adds a brand elasticity that transcends and elevates objects in other categories."

Footage in focus

The furniture on offer at Herms is exquisitely simple, but refined and the design process, as laid out in its video, is intricate. The artistic directors of Herms Maison, Charlotte Macaux Perelman and Alexis Fabry, narrate the film in French.

"By its nature, the importance of craftsmanship at Herms means that the pieces of furniture we produce will last," says Mr. Fabry.

The three-minute film consists mainly of an overview of the design process by Ms. Perelman and Mr. Fabry as well as interviews with designers for the brand.

The short offers a glimpse of the design process for the furniture collection.

Per Ms. Perelman and Mr. Fabry, Herms designers feel as if they have succeeded in developing a piece of furniture when a person feels a connection to it.

"The object somehow radiates an emotion," said Ms. Perelman.

At day's end, Herms designers say the furniture stresses the harmony of the relationship between form, material and

function. Indeed, practical elegance defines the entire suite of furniture products on offer at Herms which range from an Equilibre D' Herms armchair for \$8,350 to a Metiers desk, which retails for \$22,500.



Herms' style is one of simple elegance. Image credit: Herms

On view as well in the short is an exposé of the creative process as designers sand the pieces of wood and put the finishing touches on various pieces of the Herms furniture portfolio.

A few designers are profiled in the short film, including famed British designer Jasper Morrison whose "light and simple" oak table, chair and armchair cloak a complicated design process. Saddle-stitched leather seat pads enhance his chairs' comfort, for instance, as well as the sophistication of the craftsmanship.

"The atmospheric effect of the chairs and tables combined is a pleasing combination of dynamic structure and softened form," Mr. Morrison says in the video.

Also featured is the Hippodrome d' Herms coffee table, by the design team at Normal Studio. The large table relies on its slender wooden legs to increase the impression of its lightness.

Retailing for \$21,200, it comes with a rectangular tabletop in oiled oak featuring aircraft wing-style endings on top. A second shelf below, meanwhile, is at times covered in creased and burnished bridle leather.

"What is particularly satisfying for designers like us when we work with a company like Herms is their respect for their creatives," said Jean-François Dingjian and Eloi Chafa, designers at the Normal Studio. "We noticed that at each stage, everything was done in a way that respected the initial design."

Herms, which prides itself on leather work given its origins as a saddlery in 1837, still maintains most of its production in France via 43 production sites. It also boasts a network of 311 stores in 45 countries.

Success at Herms

Herms has been on a roll recently after returning to growth in the third quarter. This improvement came after the second quarter of 2020 was dominated by pandemic-related store closures and a free fall in travel.

Boosted by strong store sales and momentum in Asia, Herms saw sales in the third quarter grow by 7 percent at constant exchange rates. For the first nine months of 2020, the group's revenues were 4.288 billion euro, or \$5.02 billion at current exchange down 14 percent year-over-year ([see story](#)).

Herms is pushing its furniture business as the pandemic lingers, and other high-end brands are implementing similar strategies.

Ralph Lauren, for instance, is also looking to expand its home furnishings business, which is based more on licensing and less on original design.

Ralph Lauren's heyday in home was about 2004. Though the company does not report home revenues, it does report on licensing and that year marked its peak of \$268.8 million, when licensing accounted for 10 percent of corporate sales ([see story](#)).

Herms is particularly adept at distinguishing itself from the competition by focusing on artisanship and its luxury business model.

"Herms defines artisanship and separates itself from design brands by executing the luxury business model," Mr. Ramey said. "Herms will weather the pandemic or bumps in the economy far better than others who drop their standards."

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