

IN-STORE

Hermès to explain luxury history, craftsmanship through London exhibit

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By KAYLA HUTZLER

French fashion empire Hermès is further emphasizing the hand craftsmanship and strong history behind the brand through a new exhibit to open in London.

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Luxury Daily

The Hermès Leather Forever exhibit will open May 8 at the galleries at 6 Burlington Gardens in London. Indeed, Hermès has recently been putting a lot of effort into emphasizing its high-quality craftsmanship likely to convince affluent consumers that the price points are fair for the products.

"The exhibition is a poetic and playful celebration of the very special relationship between Hermès and leather, said Thierry Outin, London-based managing director of Hermès Britain.

"Hermès was founded as a harness and saddle-maker Paris, 175 years ago this year and ever since, our craftspeople have worked to tame leather into many different extraordinary and beautiful objects," he said.

Not horsing around

The Leather Forever exhibit aims to explain the story of Hermès founder Thierry Hermès.

Hermès was founded in Paris in 1837 as a harness-maker and saddlery.

Indeed, Hermès evolved from leather saddles to leather goods and beyond, but the founding values have remained the same and recognizable in modern products.

For example, many of the products still feature saddle buckles and prints that contain references to the equestrian world.



A horse-print scarf from the current

collection

Hermès is looking to take the visitor on a journey that explores the founder's love of fine materials, according to the brand.

Leather Forever will feature items from Hermès history such as products commissioned by the Duke of Windsor for his wife as well as some of the brand's latest creations.

Additionally, current Hermès artisans will be present at the exhibit to showcase their passion and skills.

In fact, the artisans will be creating items on site to give visitors the chance to see exactly how much detail is put into each product.

"We would like as many people as possible in [Britain] to discover the story of Hermès craftsmanship and its passion for leather," Mr. Outin said.

"To see and be inspired by the wonders that we have created," he said.



However, Hermès is not stopping with educating the affluent consumer.

The brand has also created four limited-edition bags that celebrate Britain to be sold at the exhibit.

Proceeds from the bags will be donated to the Royal Academy of Arts.

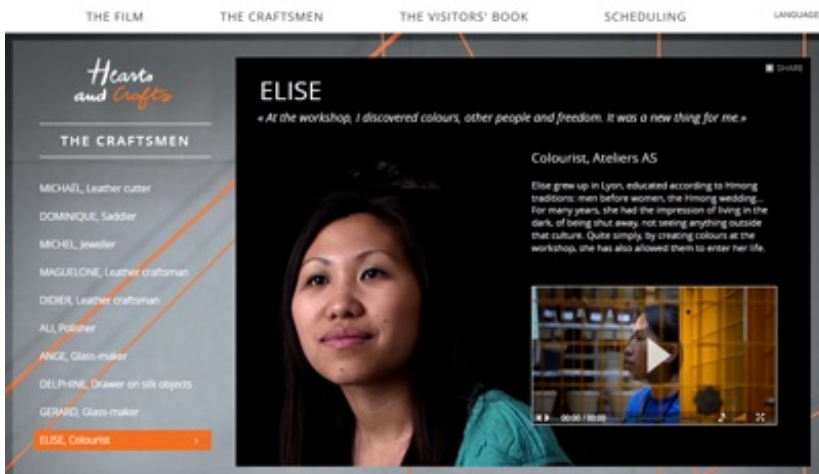
“Affluent consumers will be intrigued because it’s luxury as art,” said Chris Ramey, president of Affluent Insights, Miami.

“Passion elevates product to a higher level, so for Hermès [this exhibit] is a natural,” he said.

Heartfelt effort

Hermès has been placing an emphasis on its hand craftsmanship and the people behind responsible for it.

For example, it has created a microsite called Hearts and Crafts that showcases the detailed craftsmanship and quality of its products through inside glimpses into the making of its branded products.



Hermès' Hearts and Crafts site features videos and interviews with the designers and employees behind the brand, from leather-cutters to silk-drawers.

The Web site also features a full-length movie that was first shown in select movie theaters and museums this past fall (see story).

Hermès is likely looking to explain to consumers why its prices are so high because of the current economy and faltering consumer confidence.

Even affluent consumers who may not be directly affected by the economic instability are beginning to question the quality behind some of the prices they pay.

Additionally, luxury customers often feel guilty about spending high amounts on products, especially with an unstable economy.

Therefore, the charitable action will likely help justify the purchase in their minds.

Plus, the limited-edition quality of the bag will likely make it extremely desirable amongst Hermès customers.

"Rarity is an integral element of luxury," Mr. Ramey said. "Special edition bags contribute to the art and experience of the event.

"[Additionally], authenticity is one of the platforms for luxury," he said. "Hermès will continue to emphasize their craftsmanship, history and quality because it's part of their DNA."

Final Take

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