



# The Reviews

## Hermès

The free-spirited woman illustrated in Hermès' fall 2025 collection in Paris has evolved into a fearless urban creature in the second chapter of the collection, which was unveiled against the dazzling waterfront of Shanghai's futuristic North Bund Bay.

For Nadège Vanhée, artistic director of Hermès womenswear, modularity and function are key for the adventurous woman she had in mind.

Even though Vanhée did not get to visit Shanghai for a research trip, she had a clear image of the Chinese woman and is aware of her quirks.

"We are very close with the Chinese market, and the Chinese market was the first supporter of fashion; it is also one that has the most openness to technology and modernity," said Vanhée, who also acknowledged the viral Labubu on Birkin phenomenon, the former a fluffy figurine owned by the Chinese start-up Popmart.

The teaser film for chapter two, released on WeChat a week ahead of the show, saw Chinese model He Cong and gang traipsing down Shanghai's iconic steel bridges linking two sides of the Bund, which speaks to the idea of a woman who lives fast and demands fashion that moves just as swiftly.

"I decided to push more of this 'outdoor meets urban' concept, because I feel like Shanghai is all about this bustling energy where you have this ultra urbanism mixed with nature," said Vanhée.

Instead of a heavy emphasis on leather artistry, utilitarian outerwear became the focal point for chapter two. Key pieces included reversible quilted or shearling jackets; puffer jackets with leather collar braiding – a house signature inspired by equestrian plaits – and generous, enveloping coats in double-faced cashmere, which can be zipped halfway to reveal the waistline or unzipped fully to unveil a cropped jacket and a skirt. ►

Reflecting on the future of fashion, Vanhée continued to describe the latest coat designs in a way that an Apple executive would describe the tech brand's latest device – user experience is key.

"The idea of timelessness, for me, is very connected with flexibility, modularity," Vanhée said. That flexibility not only transcends style and geography but also age groups. "It has the idea of

being with you all along," she observed.

"The modularity is also a way to express your creativity," Vanhée continued. "You have so many different interface with the look, given the context, you can definitely wear it as four or five different looks. You want to look cool in a goth party, you got it; you need to go to the golf club, you got it, this is like the four-by-four coat," Vanhée said, wrapping the bottom half of the coat around her head and then neck. Empathic fashion is what Vanhée is getting at.

Textural elements, conveyed through sensuous knits in autumnal shades of warm reds, fiery orange, clay white, and inky blues, were enhanced by a layered composition. On top of knit shorts, models often had two cashmere sweaters wrapped around their waists, creating the effect of a handkerchief hem skirt. Layering outerwear, whether short or long, toughened up the sleek silhouette.

Silk scarves, also rendered in the iconic Dressage Tressage graphic motifs, were styled as ear warmers over baseball caps, secured with earrings, or looped around the neck. Layered as tube tops over silk button-downs, they evoked a Miu Miu-esque appeal. The looks were often finished off with mini Kelly bags – often slung across the chest – and paired with laced-up brogue boots or glittery riding boots, capturing playful aspirations of the Hermès customer.

"Globally, we are in a culture of wearing high [fashion] with sporty things, there is a certain lightheartedness or the lightness of the house," Vanhée said. "She is ready to gallop."

The elevated runway stage, an orange superstructure that unfolded along the 3,200-foot waterfront, seated around 800 guests, including global press, celebrities, influencers and VIP customers.

The runway show, Vanhée's first in China, came amid an ongoing economic downturn. Despite slower traffic, Hermès remains a top choice among Chinese luxury shoppers.

In the first quarter, Hermès experienced a "very good" Chinese New Year holiday sales period and said sales were up 1 percent in the region. In Japan, sales soured 17.2 percent, some of those driven by Chinese tourism.

In recent months, the company has been training the spotlight on its craftsmanship. In May, the brand organized the traveling exhibition "Hermès in the Making" in



Shenzhen, which brought the curious public and its loyal customers face-to-face with the unsung heroes behind it.

Further exploring its ties with Chinese craftsmanship and culture, Hermès worked with a Chinese ink and wash artist Zeng Jianyong, who recreated a Chinese garden-themed dreamscape on the third floor of the Hermès Maison Shanghai.

Friday's Shanghai showcase also included an eclectic mix of stars and personalities. They included "The White Lotus" cast member Leslie Bibb; legendary

actor Tony Leung and wife Carina Lau; Chinese actors such as Zhang Ruonan, Qiu Tian and Tong Yao; tennis legend Li Na; Olympics gymnastics champion Wu Minxia; well-known reporters Chen Luyu and Zhou Yijun; news anchor Zhou Tao; ballet star Tan Yuanyuan, and more.

After the show, the stage was swiftly transformed into a party venue featuring a surprise musical performance by St. Vincent. — *Denni Hu*







