

## ARCHITECT DESIGN INTERVIEW

Why does a Hermès boutique need partitions?

By Irma | version: 11:31 | reading time: 4 minutes

The French tradition house Hermès has a new home in the historic Münzarkaden in Munich. Parisian architect Denis Montel is one of the responsible for the design. A conversation about the unique style.

*The new Hermès store is integrated into the Münzarkaden*

*Source: Christian Kain/Hermès*

We meet architect Denis Montel for breakfast on the opening day of the new Hermès boutique in Munich. He is the CEO of Parisian architectural office RDAI and, together with Nicolas Karmochkine, responsible for the Hermès boutiques around the world. A dream job we wanted to find out more about it.

**Irma:** How do you approach the commission to build a new boutique for Hermès?

**Denis Montel:** First of all, we take a look at the building and the location as well as the surroundings of the new project before we begin on the concept for a new boutique. And then of course there are elements which must be present in all Hermès boutiques around the world, and we adapt these elements into the new building.

*Denis Montel, head of Parisian architectural practice RDAI and Hermès in-house architect*

*Source: Pierre Larose/Hermès*

**Irma:** What are those elements?

**Montel:** For example, the mosaic floor, the hallmark of every one of our boutiques into which the Hermès company emblem is always incorporated in the entranceway. As well as the glass door, each entranceway also has a wrought iron grille which always has the same structure. The ceiling lighting in the entrance and numerous cherrywood details can also be found in every boutique.

*Creating an atmosphere of privacy for the customers is one of the architects' main goals*

*Source: Christian Kain/Hermès*

**Irma:** Did you use a lot of materials from Germany for the new shop in Munich's Maximilianstrasse? Does Hermès try to work with local materials and suppliers?

**Montel:** We didn't work with local materials in this building project, but it is something that we very much want to do more of in future. At the moment we are still working with French manufacturers with whom we have built up a very good business relationship over many years.

*Mosaic floors and elements in cherrywood can be found in all Hermès stores around the world*

*Source: Christian Kain/Hermès*

**Irma:** In the new boutique I particularly like the basement and I wonder how you managed to achieve the impression that it is flooded with natural light?

**Montel:** The effect is due in particular to the high ceilings and the use of light sources. Light is the most important thing to me, particularly when you have large areas to deal with, as with this building. We divided the boutique into a range of different small areas using wooden panelling enabling the light to flow. Even the sliding doors on the first floor – which can be used to create a small closed off room in one corner so that customers can discover our objects in an atmosphere of privacy – are made from thin sheets of perforated metal which appears almost transparent. The added advantage of this construction is that as soon as you enter the boutique you can see everything at a glance – where will I find the perfumes, and where is the jewellery? Transparency is important today because customers do not have much time yet would still like a private space.

**Irma:** There is currently a trend for many luxury shops to dedicate a part of their shop floor to gastronomy in order to be able to offer their customers an additional indulgent shopping experience. For example in the Hermès boutique in Paris, in the former Lutetia swimming baths in the Rue de Sèvres, there is a small "salon de thé". Where else in the world can you find a gastronomic experience à la Hermès?

**Montel:** There are three other separate cafés which our office has built for Hermès – in Seoul, Shanghai and Ginza, Tokyo. These places present the world of Hermès without our products. The materials and structures are the same.

*Window displays at the new Hermès boutique, designed by illustrator Sarah Illenberger*

*Source: Christian Kain*

**Irma:** You must be very contented with your work. Axel Dumas, CEO of Hermès, is well-known for his artistic focus and for promoting creativity. Is he a good interlocutor to exchange ideas with-when it comes to new architectural designs?

Hermès architect Denis Montel on the new store in Munich – WELT

**Montel:** Oh, yes, he is. I am able to work with the best materials and craft workshops in the world. Each of Hermès' building projects is unique, and yet there are similarities. You can develop each project a little bit further, there is no stagnation, and that is very important.

*You will find the boutique at number Maximilianstrasse 8, 80539 Munich*

*Source: Hermès*