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"A Man's World" in Miami: Hermès Collaborates with Leandro Erlich

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An installation view of "Dream Climbers" at Hermès and Leandro Erlich's "A Man's World" in Miami.

by Nicholas Remsen

Published: June 3, 2013

Since the mid-to-late aughts, Miami's once under-the-radar **Design District** has roared onto the fashion forefront. At one point sleepy and tropically listless (known mostly for its tile shops and fabric peddlers), the neighborhood's main artery, NE 40th Street, is now home to a block party of luxury powerhouses, among them **Louis Vuitton**, **Céline**, **Cartier**, and **Hermès**. And this past weekend, the latter threw a wonderfully unique soiree in the District's historic Moore Building titled "A Man's World," celebrating the intersections of the house's men's and lifestyle lines, architecture, and art. Hermès's menswear director **Véronique Nichanian** and Argentine artist **Leandro Erlich** collaborated on and built the endeavor.

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Levity and universality are Hermès's jump-offs in "A Man's World," which the company has hosted twice prior, in Beijing and Paris. The idea is to parlay much more than just clothing. For example, guests in Miami were invited to tip-toe down mirrored walkways, where they were asked to look down in order to see the artwork above — an atrium of models in the label's spring '13's lime-green bombers and cobalt pants, balance-barring across the rafters overhead. Dubbed "Dream Climbers," the piece was heady indeed, as Erlich's immersive work is known for both torquing perception and furrowing illusion.

Another room — a vaulted chamber housing a permanent, sinewy (yet unrelated to the event) installation by **Zaha Hadid** dubbed "Elastika" — saw magic-trick elevator doors opening and closing on repeat, each time revealing a different vista of gentlemanly Hermès living, from motorcycles to chessboards, with models outfitted in three-piece suits to swim trunks.



The arcade-style install spiraled upward through the building's airy core — one room boasting "infinity suiting" — with parallel mirrors positioned to give the effect of a never-ending bespoke train (it was this author's favorite chamber — the suits followed a very subtle gradient pattern, from black to wet-sidewalk gray). There was a locker room, through which the aforementioned swimsuit-donning boys strutted their seriously cut stuff, and where patrons could write on digitally steamed-up windows. There were archival silk shirts, an elliptical boxing ring, again mirrored, where one could ostensibly fight oneself, and plenty more.

As Nichanian says, "a man's clothing accompanies his ongoing history, like an ally." This sentiment, true as ever to traditional and trend-less Hermès codes, holds perhaps a bit more gravitas than it lets on. It seems to suggest that in addition to the near everlasting construct and anti-obsolescence of an Hermès product, there's also an inevitable, enviable peculiarity — as illustrated on Friday night with Erlich's conceptual funhouse — showcasing that nothing is perfect, and that human nature is full of both humor and wonder. This was Hermès, classic Hermès, with a whole new layer of innovation — and it was very, very exciting to witness.

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