

Hermès in grace.

A big 'Salut' to a stylistic French revolution in the retail heart of Sydney.

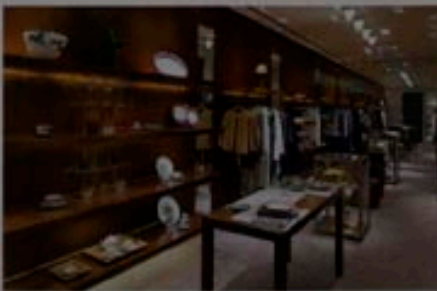
The French fleet may have arrived two days after Cook's mob, but any Gallic input into the Australian cultural milieu — bar edible gastropods and rioting — is *très bienvenue* by us: especially when it packs a stylistic punch like Hermès new Sydney store, which opened in September.

The company has come a long way — figuratively and literally — since starting up as a saddlery in early 19th-Century Paris. These days, 14 product groups fall within its remit, including the finest leather, scarves, ties, perfume and watches. But whatever your wares, you can't occupy a site here — on the corner of Elizabeth and Market Streets, facing Hyde Park — without doing justice to the

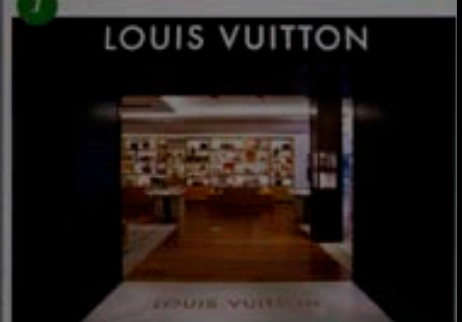
pecunious surroundings; luckily RDLA, the Paris agency behind the design of Hermès stores worldwide, have taken the task in their stride.

Take the 3.3m metal canopy, that embraces both the Victorian building's historical credentials and today's the architectural zeitgeist; the hidden luminous tubes that bring a sunny glow to dusk-time shopping; or the vertical strips of frosted glass that follow the incline of the street.

Inside, a symmetrical space is divided into four design schemes made subtly different by their playful perspectives and attention to detail. **GO** 135 Elizabeth Street, Sydney (02 9287 3200; www.hermes.com)



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1 VIVALE CAIRNS.

Decked out with Anagrie timber shelves, limestone floors and plush carpets, the new Louis Vuitton store in Cairns is stunning — the façade echoes such iconic Vuitton buildings as the Champs Elysees, no less. Inside is a peerless range of items, including classic Damier canvas, luxurious Nomade leather, must-have travel accessories and the recently launched sunglasses range. And you can shop 'til you drop, as the store is open seven days a week, from 8.30am to 10pm. **Cnr Spence and Abbott Streets, Cairns (07 4041 8500; www.louisvuitton.com)**

2 GLASS ACT

It's not often you find an optician with the fastidious approach of a grade-A tailor, but buyers at Optiko in Brisbane's CBD make regular overseas trips to gather materials and technology for a flawless range of glasses hallmarked by quality and innovative design. It's men's-club-meets-marble-vault interior, which won a DIA interior award, upholds the class flagged on the shelves with brands such as Cartier, Mont Blanc, Tag Heuer, Zegna and also offerings from Alexander McQueen, Tom Ford and Cutler&Gross. The men's range even includes cufflinks uniquely designed to complement your specs; it's all in the detail. **Tattersalls Arcade, 215 Queen St, Brisbane (07 3012 8883)**



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