

The Power of Pink

Like Rouge before it, Rose Hermès is an homage to the luxury French fashion house. The strategy is simple: every part of the line relates back to Hermès' impressive heritage, first as a saddlery workshop in 1837, then as a purveyor of silk scarves and the ultimate 'it' bags.

As the moniker suggests, Silky Blush takes its inspiration from the 75,000-plus silk swatches Hermès has in its archives, complete with pigment formulas, some around a hundred years old. Indeed, the end product is the result of in-house silk colourists and make-up artists joining forces.

"Powder and silk are both delicate materials and we wanted to transport the same radiance and softness to the skin," Agnès explains, pointing out that even the surface of the powder is textured like the twill weave of Hermès scarves.

Mineral powder, spiked with antioxidant vitamin E, was chosen for this dreamy aesthetic, such is its ability to perk up a deflated-looking complexion when applied over cheekbones or confined to the apples. And on your skin? It feels like air.

Like the Goldilocks of pink blush, there's a marvellously moreish selection of shades – from delicate and fresh to electric pinks – that are not too cool, not too warm but magically spot on. Imparting a hazy pink halo, there are tones of warm pink sand (Rose Ombre), the watercolour-like effect of dewy petals (Rose Plume) and the kiss of summer sunshine that bestows a suggestive flush to the face (Rose Tan).

"Pink doesn't mean cute," Pierre is at pains to stress. "Pink is about sensuality. Rouge was like a signature that announces, 'Here I am!'. Rose is more intimate, more subtle, it's a beauty gesture just for yourself. The challenge was finding the right balance between an iconic feminine colour and a modern interpretation."

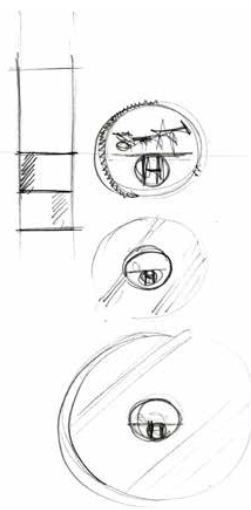
While silk influences the blush, the Rosy Lip Enhancers in the collection take their cue from leather. The lovechild of a matte lipstick and a tinted balm, they usher in white mulberry extract, raspberry and sesame seed oils to hydrate. But it's the waxy, buttery finish that evokes the feel of Butler calfskin and the beeswax used to coat linen threads prior to saddle stitching. In fact, you could apply it with your eyes closed, its texture melts in that effortlessly for a lip-bitten colour.



Silks from Hermès' storied archives



The Rose Hermès Pommette blush case: for true completists only. Top: Theatre des ombres carré



Pierre Hardy's design sketches for Rose Hermès



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Great Expectations

The formulas are glorious, but it's the packaging that makes the Hermès Beauty collection an instant icon. While the Rosy Lip Enhancers pick up the same theme as Rouge, it's the Silky Blush case that truly reflects how the Rose Hermès line is about polish, not statement.

"The logo links this modern object back to the house," explains Pierre, as he brushes his thumb over the gold-coloured indent at the top of the palette. It is engraved with the house's ornate ex-libris emblem chosen by Émile Hermès in 1923. "Using black inside showcases the colour of the blush and makes it more theatrical. The off-centre effect of the mirror introduces a hint of movement and femininity as the curves echo each other."

What both Rouge and Rose collections do have in common, however, is that they are designed to be environmentally friendly. Constructed largely from recyclable lacquered metal – the same hardware used on its bags, buckles and harnesses – the lipstick bullet or powder pan simply pops out of the case to be refilled in store.

"Hermès is a house of beautiful objects that are long-lasting, durable and made of noble materials," adds Agnès. "We didn't want something you throw away after a few months. We would rather be aligned with slow beauty and objects that bring pleasure and elegance to everyday life."

The thoughtful touches don't stop there. Instead of familiar violet powderiness, the Silky Blush is scented with distinctive, offbeat notes of arnica, sandalwood and green tea developed by Hermès' nose, Christine Nagel. "We tried to define what beauty and wellbeing should smell like," says Agnès. "Christine chose a natural botanical scent that is fresh but also holistic and calming. Ultimately, Rose Hermès should capture the emotion of pink." And it's a happy one at that. Or, as they say in France, 'La vie en rose'. ■