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OPEN HOUSE

Inside Hermès's new London home

PLUS AMA AMPADU TALKS TASTE, THE VIOLETTE EFFECT, SHOPMY'S MILLIONAIRES, HOW TO SPEND IT IN TOKYO

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Above: RH Paris, The Gallery on the Champs-Élysées. Right: stone Mycena table lamp, from £859

The 18th-century Palladian mansion at No 7 Burlington Gardens has been a noble home, a bank and an outlet of American clothing brand

Abercrombie & Fitch. On 27 June, the property and two adjoining Grade II-listed buildings will open as "RH London, The Gallery in Mayfair", the latest high-profile launch from the fast-expanding American home furnishings brand.

"It's the most exciting time of my life," says 68-year-old chairman and

CEO Gary Friedman from the RH headquarters in Corte Madera, California. Friedman has been building the RH brand since 2001, when he took over struggling home goods chain Restoration

Hardware and reinvented it as a purveyor of upscale furniture. It now has nearly 100 stores across the US, Canada and Europe, some 7,300 employees and recently listed a net revenue for the fiscal year 2025 of \$3.44bn (up 8.1 per cent on 2024).

Its European expansion began in 2023 with RH England, a takeover of the Sir John Soane-designed stately home Aynho Park on the Northamptonshire-Oxfordshire border. Madrid, Brussels, Düsseldorf and Munich were followed by two grand statements: RH Paris, on the Champs-Élysées, and Milan, in a palazzo on Corso Venezia. The latter was celebrated by what

STONE AND OAK DIAMOND DINING TABLE, FROM £5,310



INTERIORS

"LOVE US OR LEAVE US"

American furniture brand RH is opening a vast new outpost in Mayfair. Victoria Woodcock sizes it up

Vogue called "Milan Design Week's Glitziest Party". Margot Robbie made an appearance; Bar Basso mixed the cocktails.

The furniture skews big and beige. "People say, 'Oh, Gary Friedman doesn't like colour,'" acknowledges Friedman. Linen upholstery on the popular Cloud sofa runs from white and dove to charcoal and graphite. There's lighting (from marble table lamps to tiered cast-glass chandeliers) and outdoor furniture (like the Brera armchairs, in teak and rope, £1,800), while new product line RH Estate includes the Diamond Table, with cast-stone pedestals topped in oak (from £5,310) – a 1990s design by Michael Taylor, creator of the "California Look".

The aesthetic is "very safe, but still enough of a design statement that people will ask where you got your sofa from", says Simon Stewart, founder of London design gallery Charles Burnand, which is moving to Mayfair later this year. Meanwhile, designer Anouska Hempel, who has worked on the London store, sums up the RH universe as "global, genius, genuine". Friedman is aware that opinion around RH is polarised: "We say, 'Love us or leave us.'"

Friedman grew up in Sonoma, California. "My father died when I was five years old; my mom had bipolar schizophrenia," he recalls. "We lived in tiny little apartments." By the age of 16 he was head of the household. He



BRERA TEAK SWIVEL LOUNGE CHAIR, FROM £2,520



worked at The Gap, then at Williams Sonoma, including subsidiary brand Pottery Barn.

His vision for RH is unique, he says: "No one's ever built a home brand that's remotely like this." As well as the RH Galleries and RH Spaces (which consist of two private jets and a yacht), Friedman's vision encompasses an interior design service. Internally, "we don't use the word meetings, we say adventures", says Friedman. "We say it's not our company, it's our cause." Part of this "cause" is to inspire the best in people, he says, "and that's way more important than selling furniture".

As in the US, many of the new European outposts combine retail and hospitality. In Mayfair, among the "champagne-lacquered Roman columns" and a central glass elevator designed by Foster + Partners, there will be two restaurants, two bars and a tea salon. The Perch Restaurant and Perch Bar were designed by Hempel with "a profusion of umbrellas, diamond-patterned flooring and grand cupola birdcages", she says.

These "Galleries" are "generational investments in our global expansion", says Friedman. "I think they'll be there 100, 200 years from now. Transforming RH over the past 10 to 12 years, we've spent a couple of billion dollars building physical experiences in a digital world." They're investments "that can be understood by few people in Wall Street today", he says. (At the end of March, the publicly listed company reported that 2025 results and fiscal year 2026 outlook were weaker than expected; its shares instantly dropped 19 per cent in value, but have since rallied.)

Norman Foster points out that the London project "was not only about the transformation of the building itself, but also about creating a destination in the heart of Mayfair that will open the building up for everyone to experience and enjoy". If you're not in the market for an RH chandelier, in other words, you can always settle for the Chinese chicken salad. ■ HTS

KANSO VASE, FROM £170



Top right: glass Bubble chandelier by John Pomp, from £3,880. Below: the façade of 7 Burlington Gardens

