

Liz Fodera and **Peter Themistocles**, co-founders of The Hērēs Guild, a brand management agency with a difference, tell Tableware International how they are partnering international brands with US retailers



Peter Themistocles



Liz Fodera

“Our aim is to facilitate access to the US market”

Can you explain the concept behind The Hērēs Guild and how you came to establish the business together?

The Hērēs Guild is a one-of-a-kind fractional brand management agency. Our innovative business model provides an alternative to the distributor and sales agency models. Our brand partners want to remain connected to the market, they want to feel a sense of control but recognise the complexities of the US market require US experience

and expertise to be successful. We deliver this and more. We are an extension of their central team, they can leverage our collective 30 years of expertise, have a NYC-based showroom and office, all without the complexities and prohibitive costs of US-based employees and lease holdings.

We work together with the brand to craft and execute strategies for long-term sustainable growth without ever sacrificing the traditions,

crafts, and human connections that define their brands.

We have a proven track record and our unique strategy for launching, nurturing, and scaling brands has earned us the

reputation as leaders in our field, garnering the respect of the international market that paved the way for The Hērēs Guild. The Hērēs Guild is fuelled by a blend

“We are proud to disrupt the market with an innovative business model”

Did you know?

Based out of 41 Madison, NYC, The Hērēs Guild has been co-founded by Liz Fodera and Peter Themistocles. Describing themselves as a “one-of-a-kind” fractional brand management agency, they boast of an innovative business model which provides as alternative option to distributor and sales agency models.

of passion and frustration with the challenges widely accepted in the industry. We are proud to disrupt the market with an innovative business model that makes the US market accessible to artisans and creators around the

How it works...

The Hērēs Guild leverages Peter and Liz’s merchandising and retail expertise to become an extension of their partners’ teams - crafting strategies for long-term sustainable growth.

world. We provide strategic planning and execution, account management, product development and assortment optimisation, as well as an exclusive supply chain solution to our brand partners. We often say, “If you hired your first US employee, what would you expect them to do? The answer is - a bit of everything!”

How would you sum-up the US retail scene currently?

We are seeing a split: we are overwhelmed with sale messaging to the point of

not be underestimated. The impact of US tourism on global markets is substantial, with consumers traveling, spending generously abroad, and bringing back their discoveries. Both American-made and foreign brands can co-exist and thrive in the US market, but entering it is no small feat! We’re here to strategically support and guide international brands on this journey.

The US housewares market is vast – but is there room for more brands?

durability. For some, it even includes integrity - where and how a product was produced. There is also a rapidly growing appreciation for the discovery of uniquely special brands and products.

Are US retailers open to working with brands from outside their home sales territory?

Certainly, American retailers are consistently seeking brands or products to distinguish their offerings. However, the process of introducing international brands to the US market presents challenges, particularly for smaller retailers lacking dedicated import or supply chain teams to navigate logistics. Our initiative aims to bridge this gap by rendering these international brands accessible to US retailers, streamlining the process, and alleviating the hurdles, especially for smaller businesses.

How do you connect US retailers with notable, heritage brands?

With over three decades of retail expertise, we boast a vast network of retailers and industry professionals to facilitate meaningful connections. What sets us apart isn’t just how we connect but our distinctive approach. We prioritise storytelling, showcasing the

and targeted approach for each customer base. This is where we excel. As former merchants, we understand the intricacies and complexities of the US retail market, enabling us to assist foreign brands in navigating it without compromising the traditions, crafts, and human connections that define their brands.

Where do you source your housewares brands from?

Inspiration and discovery can be found in every place. But the commonality is our passion for connection with others. We have discovered incredible brands in local shops and upon the recommendations of locals on where to eat and drink! Like all housewares professionals, we turn over a plate or hold a glass up to the candle before we even open a menu! From there, we do our research, and of course, the introductions from our friends in the industry are invaluable!

“American retailers are consistently seeking brands or products to distinguish their offerings”

dilution – it’s not enough to scream sale to acquire and convert. In fact, it’s a losing game for your top and bottom line. Consumers are more demanding – they expect value, but they want differentiated products and are craving connections. The retailers that are experiencing strong seasons are delivering an experience to their customers; continuing to surprise and delight their customers with unique finds, captivating imagery, and engaging content – be it digital or analogue.

Is it penetrable for foreign brands or skewed towards US-only?

American consumers are placing a growing emphasis on diverse sets of values when deciding on purchases. “Made in America” is a value that holds significant appeal, especially when it’s locally sourced. However, the attraction of international products should

As vast as the market may be, there will always be room for new brands. History has proven that retail exemplifies survival of the fittest; brands of every size and age will come and go every year. Success relies on providing distinct value propositions, comprehending consumer needs, and strategic positioning. We see tremendous opportunity for brands with soul, brands focused on craft, brands that possess compelling stories.

“We see tremendous opportunity for brands with soul”

How would you describe the typical US customer and what are they looking for?

Providing exceptional value is table stakes, but value encompasses more than price - it also must factor quality and

artistry and the individuals driving that craft.

What sort of opportunity exists for brands in the US housewares market?

Achieving substantial growth requires a deep understanding

Finally, how can potential new clients reach out to you? Will you be attending Ambiente for example?

We will be at Maison Objet and at Ambiente, connecting with current partners and seeking to expand our portfolio with new brands. Our aim is to facilitate access to the US market for international brands and vice versa, making them available to retailers of all sizes. While prioritising international brands, we remain open to evolution and collaboration with US brands, emphasising the importance of heritage for all the brands we engage with.

We are always reachable through info@theheresguild.com and welcome visitors in our permanent showroom at 41 Madison in Manhattan, New York City. And of course, we’d be delighted to visit brands at their booth at Maison and Ambiente to meet in person.