

**JUDY FRATER**

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# A hand-crafted slow revolution: Co-designing a new genre in the luxury world

## **ABSTRACT**

*There exists an emerging genre of luxury that speaks to consumers' desire for products that put a holistic view of sustainability at the forefront. Today, there are consumers who seek products that are not only unique and of high quality but also come with a story of the artisan and the community from which it originates. We argue that a new genre of luxury is formed as traditional craftsmen are exposed to the global marketplace and have the opportunity to interact with consumers who seek high-end or bespoke products. For this to be truly sustainable, artisans must develop commensurate capabilities. Thus, the new genre requires 'co-design'. We use the case of the International Folk Art Market (IFAM) in Santa Fe, New Mexico, United States, as an example of creating a new luxury craft market, and the example of an innovative education programme for traditional artisans in India to show how artisans from remote parts of the world can increase their capacity to avail such new markets in a way that sustains them economically and culturally.*

## **KEYWORDS**

sustainable luxury  
craftsmanship  
consumption  
traditional crafts  
artisans  
global marketplace

## INTRODUCTION

There was a time, not too long ago, when well-made clothes were standard and available in catalogues, malls and chain stores. Even clothing for the masses featured design details such as French seaming, matched plaids, tailored suiting, curved French darts, double-welt pockets and perfect fit. But in recent years we have witnessed the demise of quality in mid-range clothing. The lack of quality in today's marketplace has led to an increased trend in vintage clothing shopping. The details of vintage clothing from the Mad-Man era, even that designed for the mid-range market such as Sears or JC Penney, required more fabric, construction time, skilled labour and creativity.

About the time that product quality changed, so did consumer expectations for lower prices. For nearly twenty years, between 1990 and 2010, prices for clothing continued to plunge as companies implemented off-shore production to meet the ever-increasing pace of new fashions offered to consumers. The drop of prices was largely the result of the globalization of the fashion industry and the movement of garment manufacturing from unionized facilities in the United States and other developed countries to low-wage factories with few environmental regulations, most of them in Asia. Even a high price tag does not necessarily promise quality. A result of the lower prices and shoddy goods is that true quality is often reserved to the luxury product. Today, fashion that employs interesting design details, not merely surface embellishment, is almost entirely the domain of high-end labels.

In the luxury market, quality has never gone out of style, nor is price a limiting factor. Luxury production requires an investment in *time*. This applies to both the time spent making the object and also the time required to learn the complex techniques of precision, attention to detail and extraordinary finishes. Such quality is achieved by challenging and broadening established standards of craftsmanship and accepted categories of design. The resulting work combines high levels of innovation with a respect for craft traditions. Today, in reaction to lower prices and shoddy goods, a growing number of consumers besides those committed luxury customers also long for clothing and accessories that are high quality, unique, imbued with a story or embodied with soul (Darling 2015). This article presents an emerging alternative genre of luxury that speaks to those consumers' desire for products that put a holistic view of sustainability and traditional craftsmanship at the forefront.

## WHAT IS LUXURY?

For centuries, humans have satisfied themselves with the possession of beautiful things. Traditionally, luxury goods have been defined as 'goods for which the mere use or display of a particular branded product brings prestige to the owner' (Husic and Cicic 2007). Dubois (Dubois and Laurent 1994) defined luxury as a specific tier of offer in almost any product or service category. Okonkwo (2007) notes that luxury products are not just over-priced goods, but rather offer a complete package of benefits to the consumer that appeal to their social and psychological well-being. Kapferer (2010) described luxury as goods that provide extra pleasure derived from sensory satisfaction. Webster's New World (2013) defined it as the use and enjoyment of the best and the most costly things that offer the most physical comfort and satisfaction.

In the eyes of the beholder, luxury is more about the consumer's experience or the personal dimensions of the luxury – it is about aspiration and connection. It comprises elements of material value, price, quality, symbolic

value and scarcity (Sinha and Som 2016). At its fundamental level luxury consists of craftsmanship, exclusivity, skill and time (Singh 2015). But we must also point out that luxury is a thriving industry with global influence. While descriptors such as prestige, premium and rarity are all hallmarks of luxury, we believe that luxury is a socially oriented behaviour of consumption and can be satisfied by objects that require an extraordinary investment and skill in craftsmanship.

In Professor Montgomery's essay on 'Craft the new luxury' (2016) he outlines four indicators that predict that craft and luxury will converge. When the luxury market became increasingly more democratized, it began to lose its exclusivity, an essential aspect of luxury. Crafts, those items made by human hands, are: unique, authentic to the maker, sustainable to the maker and community and tactile, thus providing intimacy of touch. Exceptional craftsmanship for the luxury consumer is a compilation of time, skill, passion and ideas. Luxury consumers want to distinguish themselves as people of taste and style and can accomplish this with craft products that are instilled with the human traits of personality, knowledge, traditions and memory.

We argue that luxury always requires a context. Attitudes towards luxury are shaped by cultural concerns and personal dreams. Recent concern over the exploitation of human and material resources in the conventional luxury market comes at a time when the very notion of *human connection* is a luxury. Gardetti and Torres (2015) argued that 'sustainability is the new luxury' and has edited a significant series of collected works on the topic of sustainable luxury (see Gardetti and Torres 2013; Gardetti and Giron 2014; Gardetti and Subramanian 2015; Gardetti and Torres 2015). He argues that sustainable luxury requires organizations to address the social and environmental issues and elevate 'real excellence throughout the value chain' (Gardetti 2015). Important to our argument, Gardetti maintains that local 'contents' (2015: 1) of production should not be absent and if sustainability is implemented across the supply chain, a stronger connection between the producer and the consumer will result.

## THE HUMAN ELEMENT OF LUXURY

Bespoke is a key aspect of the luxury market that invokes the human element.

*Bespoke luxury* invokes ideas of patience, one-of-a-kind or custom made, in other words, making products that the consumer wants – not what the company wants to sell. The term stems from creating something truly unique for an individual, something that will not be duplicated. Bespoke is about the consumer, but it is also about the maker. It takes highly skilled craftsmen using traditional methods and tools to create a bespoke product. The result is that the products can command high prices that are out of reach for many consumers. Over time, as the number of master artisans has become scarce, the products have become even more rare, and the prices have grown ever higher.

Evidence shows that there is a craft revival occurring in the luxury market whereby apprentices learn skills from the masters that result in a growing production of luxury-level craft (Shih and Agrafiotis 2016). Almond (2011) notes that Vivienne Westwood and Alexander McQueen encouraged the use of traditional crafts that allowed bespoke luxury to be elevated to the forefront of their luxury collections. This 'in turn provoked a resurgence of interest in [...] craft' (Almond 2011: 3). Quoddy, a company based in Maine, USA, makes

one-of-a-kind shoes ad takes pride in crafting handmade shoes that are customized throughout. London Connoisseur is a company that bridges the gap between superb craftsmanship and customers who seek extraordinary products.

## **HERMÈS AS A CASE IN POINT**

To make our point, we focus on one highly successful luxury company that we believe exemplifies the importance of the human element of luxury – Hermès. In Anaya's interview, Pierre-Alexis Dumas, artistic director at Hermès, stated:

I think Hermès objects are desirable because they reconnect people to their humanity [...] Our customer feels the presence of the person who crafted the object, while at the same time the object brings him back to his own sensitivity, because it gives him pleasure through his senses.

(2014)

Lemaire, former Hermès designer, added 'The quality, the product, and the creativity always come first, before any marketing' (Anaya 2014).

Established in 1837, Hermès has always had a steadfast commitment to craftsmanship and excellence, but to stay current, the company is committed to reinvention and change. Specifically, it is the way in which Hermès has *applied* their values that has driven them to the pinnacle of today's global luxury market. 'Craft can only survive if it finds a natural application and if it finds a market. What a craft produces has to be relevant to the world we live in today', Dumas says. 'If craft does not reinvent itself, it dies. If we were still making harnesses, Hermès would not exist anymore' (Anaya 2014). In the western world, where craftsmanship is increasingly rare, Hermès has succeeded in making craftsmanship, people and, importantly, respect for the craftsman sacrosanct.

In the developing world, craftsmanship is still relatively plentiful. Unfortunately, that very fact has led to its exploitation and devaluation. To engage the resource of international craft, and counter the ills of fast fashion, the question is, how to develop a genre of sustainable luxury that combines the elements of Hermès' success: quality of craftsmanship, human touch and design innovation while at the same time providing benefits to the artisans in a meaningful way?

## **CASE STUDY: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW GENRE, LUXURY CRAFT**

### ***Method***

Data for this study were collected from 2008 to 2016 and included qualitative methods of interviews with artisans, participant observation, photo documentation of design and production processes and finished projects, and participation as volunteers at the International Folk Art Market (IFAM) in Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA, primarily during the Mentor-to-Market training sessions. Data were analysed between the two researchers by discussion, constant comparison and resolution of themes, issues and challenges emerging from the data. One author is an American citizen who has lived and worked among artisans in the Kutch region of India for over four decades. She came to Kutch

as a student in 1970, and did research there for twenty years, resulting in a BA and two MA degrees. From 1990 she has lived in India, working with artisan cooperatives and directing programmes in education for artisans. The other author has worked with the artisans who have been juried into the IFAM and has visited on numerous occasions the areas of India where the artisan workshops are located.

## **Findings**

### *The IFAM: Creating a luxury craft market*

The IFAM in Santa Fe, New Mexico, presents an exciting possibility of a mutually beneficial, sustainable luxury market. It leverages the element of humanity and craftsmanship, and includes the increasingly important element of experience to develop a new luxury craft market. IFAM provides a direct connection between artisan and consumer that suggests a bespoke and rarefied 'new luxury'.

The IFAM was established in 2004 as a way to share and celebrate traditional crafts of the world. Today, it has expanded to the International Folk Art Alliance (IFAA). Sponsors and partners include, among others, UNESCO, the Museum of New Mexico Foundation and the State of New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs. A primary goal of IFAA is to provide opportunities for folk artists to have access to the world marketplace and at the same time address the economic and social needs of their communities. IFAA 'envision[s] a world that values the dignity and humanity of the handmade, honors timeless cultural traditions, and supports the work of artists serving as entrepreneurs and catalysts for positive social change' (<https://www.folkartalliance.org/about/who-we-are/>).

In 2015, the IFAM was named the best art festival in the United States (<http://www.10best.com/awards/travel/best-art-festival/>). In its thirteenth year, IFAM has had an economic impact in both the local Santa Fe economy and in the lives of traditional artisans from around the globe.

Artists come from more than 57 countries including Bangladesh, China, India, Uzbekistan and Niger. In 2015, over 18,000 visitors attended the market, with sales of over \$2.9M. With more than 600 applicants, approximately 170 finalists represent master crafters and artisans who are selected based on the quality of their work by a careful jury process that focuses on quality, authenticity and variety. Because of this strict jury process, the market serves as a gatekeeper to some of the finest crafts from developing countries.

When the market first started, the intent was to preserve tradition, make impact and support social change. But since its inception, the market has bolstered its selection process so that only carefully juried products reach buyers. While some of the artists are time-honoured traditional masters, others are young creators reinterpreting the traditional crafts. The result is traditional folk art that ranges from the 'highly affordable to museum-quality masterworks' (Hertel 2016). Today's market has slowly evolved into a conscious consideration of craft for the luxury consumer while at the same time preserving tradition and making social impact in the lives and communities of the artists (Schrandt 2015).

The artist selection committee evaluates global applications based on quality, traditionalism, aesthetic, production process, artistic knowledge and the role or use of the art form in the artist's community. Each year, special attention is paid to applications from new artists. The craft must be an

expression of traditional cultures, rooted in tradition and produced by individuals whose creative skills convey cultural identity. Each year the number of applications increases while at the same time the jury process becomes more selective. This increasingly rigorous process assures that the entries can meet the expectations that the marketplace demands and ultimately so that the artisans are truly on their pathway to the luxury market.

Friday night of the market is limited to special ticket holders or VIP guests. This event was developed to instigate connoisseurship where VIP guests have an exclusive preview of products in a party-like atmosphere that includes wine, food and music. These consumers have first access to the best of the market and often purchase showcase pieces. Local, national and international celebrities are among the shoppers, but there are also many shoppers who simply seek some of the best master crafts in the world. Observing the Friday night consumers affirms McIntyre's (2010) description of the craft consumer: primarily female, educated, culturally active, curious, have a general knowledge of the objects and believe that arts and culture improve quality of life for all. It could be argued that these consumers are collectors of high-end objects who, by purchasing the showcase pieces, provide a pathway for traditional artisans to the luxury market.

IFAM has taken on the role of an emerging luxury brand, in its shaping of tastes of consumers, influencing their aspirations and behaviour by controlling the products available through the strong jurying process. In building its popular appeal, IFAM has also consciously emphasized the human, experiential element of the event, thus tapping into the desires of new, sustainable luxury clients. Its website, advertising campaign and banners during the vent feature the faces of artisans, not their products. Visitors who come from all over the United States and even abroad can surely purchase craft closer to home.

The direct contact of IFAM further opens the possibility of sustainability of this new luxury craft market in terms of insuring continual, evolving production. When artisans meet customers, they can effectively create for them, and when they themselves are creating, their traditions remain vital.

### ***Sustainable luxury craft: An emerging genre***

As new luxury markets such as IFAM move consciously towards developing a luxury craft market, traditional artisans from around the world can learn to define and make inroads into this important niche market. Essential to transforming traditional craft into a luxury product that is sustainable in terms of ethical, environmentally sound practices, and in terms of preserving cultural heritage is developing the capacity of artisans to participate on a more collaborative level.

While craft is the second largest income in the developing world (Snell 2015), most artisans lack sophisticated business skills to interact in a global marketplace. IFAM has developed *Mentor-to-Market*, a workshop held immediately before the two-and-a-half day Market to help artisans develop business and marketing skills. The workshop initiates understanding of global markets and prepares artisans to maximize their experience of IFAM. Artists learn how to price their products, merchandise their selling space and improve selling techniques. They are encouraged to 'tell their story' to customers. These extraordinary stories help build the connection between artisans and customers.

### ***Traditional artisans in Kutch: Changing times, changing markets***

In the desert region of Kutch, in western India, artisans for generations created exquisitely woven, printed, resist-dyed and embroidered textiles for family members and intimately known clients. The bespoke element was an essential part of their creativity. Alimohamed Isha, a bandhani artist from Bhuj, Kutch, explains the connection:

We give life to fabric, using a gift of God. The maker has to understand the people for whom s/he is making. Traditionally there was a relationship between maker and user. What is made in such a relationship will be excellent because of that relationship. The sensibility was, 'I'll make you something that no one else can make.' Traditional work was for earning love.

Another artist who was interviewed, Vishramji Valji, a master weaver from Bhujodi, Kutch, agreed, 'Traditionally, the feeling was that we knew that as the blanket we wove slowly wore away, the user would remember us' (2008). In 2016, his son, Shyamji Vishramji, echoed, 'Then, we knew who would wear what we wove, and the wearer knew the weaver'.

From the early 1960s, with inflation and the influx of cheaper industrially produced products, traditional clients of rural India began to prefer plastics, synthetics and mill-made fabrics to hand craft. At the same time, the concept of design as an entity came to India. There is no word in Indian languages for design as separate from the creating process. In the 1950s, as India began nation building, balancing traditions with modern technology and ideas, Pupul Jayakar, a noted writer on Indian craft traditions and the founder of the Indian Handlooms and Handicrafts Export Council (HHEC), and others prompted the Indian Government to establish an institute of design (Cook 1995).

Designers came to the fore, and within the decade they and buyers began to approach artisans and give them designs to produce for commercial markets. Artisans did not know the new commercial markets and they welcomed direction and the cash income. Having worked in barter economies, they did not know how to value their work, and usually equated it with other forms of manual labour, such as agricultural labour or construction.

The majority of businesses and agencies working with artisans aimed for the middle-class market, and used production goals of scaling up: making products faster, cheaper and more standard, ironically emulating the industries that had displaced hand craft. Inexpensive craft became widely available. Artisans became labourers. As a result, many good artisans left their traditional livelihood simply because it could not provide an equitable, sustainable income. After the massive earthquake in Kutch in 2001, industry was aggressively encouraged in the region as a means of development. Artisans of ordinary economic means found that industry paid equal or better wages than craft could. In Bhujodi, a village that enjoys an exceptionally robust market as a weaving centre, hand looms have declined from 250 before 2001 to 70 today. In villages that do not have developed markets, such as Rampar Vekra, hand looms have dwindled from 30 to five.

### ***Somaiya Kala Vidya: Education for artisans***

The fact that artisans were no longer in touch with their new markets was a key factor in their dilemma. Having worked with textile artisans of Kutch since 1970, Judy Frater, an American anthropologist, sought to reactivate the



creative potential of artisans, with the hope of increasing the value of hand craft and sustaining traditions more genuinely and holistically. In 2003 Judy received an Ashoka Fellowship to develop a curriculum of design education for traditional artisans. The curriculum focuses on acquiring knowledge and skills that will enable artisans to *use* design and business effectively in their work to successfully reach appropriate new markets while at the same time strengthening traditional identity. It aims to develop a new approach to education based on existing traditions. The core concept is that tradition is more than technique; it comprises concept and knowledge as well. The method of the course is to work within traditions by understanding and drawing from their salient features. Frater's design education programme was initiated as Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya in 2005. Currently it operates as Somaiya Kala Vidya, in Adipur, Kutch.

The year-long course is open to working traditional artisans of Kutch, the premise being that the participants have prerequisite knowledge and skills and can learn design in a year. Its strength has rested in great part on sustained input over a year and local orientation: teaching in the vernacular language and drawing from local cultural concepts. To further effectively reaching appropriate new markets, a post-graduate course in business and management for artisans was launched at Somaiya Kala Vidya in 2014. Both courses employ professional educators as visiting faculty, and use practical methodology, ensuring that artisan students apply theory and principles in hands-on activities including the crafts themselves. Between intensive residential modules, artisans return to their homes to implement what they learned in their craft work. Local faculty make home visits to further guide execution of homework.

An important objective of both design and business education is strengthening traditional identity. The vision of the institute is based on an understanding that tradition is evolving, rather than static, and a belief that the unique aspects of traditions have the potential to create an edge in the contemporary market. Somaiya Kala Vidya is advised by a board of master artisans. Courses begin by teaching artisans to understand and value their traditions, and then innovate within those traditions. Each artisan is encouraged to find his or her unique individual response to the contemporary world. This approach is intended to diversify creativity and production so that a larger number of artisans can earn more equitable income.

A decade of design education has clearly demonstrated success in connecting graduate artisans to new markets and increasing their incomes. About 75% of male graduates say that they have increased their income 10–300%. Women increased their income from 10% to six times. All graduates say that they have increased their creative capacity. Graduates have travelled to the United States, Europe, Indonesia and China, taught workshops and courses, and spoken in conferences. They have become a new genre: Artisan Designers, and their work has helped to expand the market for craft. Recently, the work of three Artisan Designers was exhibited alongside well-known Indian luxury designers such as Sabyasachi Mukherjee in the *The Fabric of India* exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

As hoped, education has increased diversity. In a decade, there has been almost no duplication in collections developed by the artisans. Distinctive stylistic interpretations have in fact led to increased income for even more artisans. As one small-scale artisan noted, 'My income has increased ten times, while the long-time major producer's income has not suffered at all. It is a win-win situation!'. Artisan Designers have formed lasting networks of communication



and support. Children of traditional artisans who once wanted to do anything but craft are now motivated to become artisan designers. Importantly, the number of looms in Bhujodi is reported to be increasing again as of 2015.

The impact of education is evident in the thinking and products of graduates. As artisan designers report:

I have woven all my life. What I have done with my weaving is what is important.

(Pachan Premji Siju, weaver, 2015)

I have confidence that I can do something new.

(Pravin Premji Siju, weaver, 2015)

Tradition was a livelihood for me. But I realized it is more important. It is our heritage.

(Aslam Abdulkarim Khatri, ajrakh printer, 2015)

Frater's work with artisans in Kutch provides strong evidence that education helps invigorate and sustain traditions. But artisan designers must find markets commensurate to their work.

Somaiya Kala Vidya consciously introduces artisans to higher end domestic markets that they would not otherwise directly experience. Students visit higher end shops and the homes of connoisseurs in Ahmedabad. Homework after the exposure trip is to create products for individuals they met. This exercise has consistently resulted in excellent creative work, verifying that the personal orientation of craft and the role of personal connection in inspiration are still vital, and effective in design. Given access to a range of markets, most artisan designers would prefer the smaller, higher-end segment. As Dahyalal Atmaram Kudecha, weaver and SKV faculty, reports, 'don't believe in large scale for craft. It is then not craft. The way for us is clear. We have the tools. We must vary design constantly and work for niche markets, always evolving' (Kudecha 2015). Artisan designers are also clear that creativity is important to their work. In a survey on aspirations, they ranked recognition as equal to increased income. They stated that a chance to speak and explain their work is important, and that they are more interested in customers who appreciate their craft than in fashion per se.

Traditional crafts have the potential to capitalize the bespoke element and bring exclusivity in a new form. Considering their inherent capabilities along with their values and orientation, artisan designers are well placed to target small, personalized high-end production. However, while artisan designers may aspire to high-end markets, direct access to them is very limited. In the last ten years, the IFAM in Santa Fe, New Mexico, United States, has become well known in Kutch as the apex of accessible high-quality craft markets. In terms of the economies of artisans of developing countries, the stakes are enormous. The average booth sales are equivalent to more than two years' sales for a small-scale producer. Acceptance into the IFAM is competitive and coveted. The encouragement of excellent and unique work through design education gives artisan designers an edge. To date, eight artisan design graduates have had the honour and privilege to be juried into the IFAM.

Direct contact with a new market is the major benefit for artisans who attend IFAM. They experience the potential for excellent work aimed at the luxury taste that the IFAM consciously promotes. More importantly, they meet individual representatives of that niche. Artisans understand how to innovate

for clients as an essential aspect of their traditional crafts. Design education prepares them to recognize and use this original unique strength of traditional craft: personal connection. With exposure and opportunity, artisan designers can absorb as much as possible from an IFAM experience and tap this potential effectively. After his first experience at IFAM in 2014, Dahyalal Kudecha noted,

I learned about customers of the USA. I learned what people like, what is marketable- colors, finishing, and the importance of tradition. I realized in a real way that we need to retain our identity. We need to present our culture.

With his earnings, Dahyalal sourced new, better quality materials and tried experiments that he was confident would sell. During his first IFAM in 2015, Abdulaziz Khatri used new technology, WhatsApp, to send real-time messages back to his brother Suleman in India. Suleman is also a design graduate. By implementing real-time virtual communication between the United States and India the brothers developed next year's designs before the 2015 Market (IFAM) was over. All three artisans were juried into the 2016 IFAM.

## CONCLUSION

### ***Towards a new genre of luxury***

Through special events, such as the IFAM, consumers are able to interact with the maker and the relationship is strengthened. Much like Wherry (2008) described, potential buyers at IFAM become mesmerized by the artisans, the quality of their work and the stories that they share. In other words, consumers and the maker build special bonds that are imbued with knowledge, memory and personality. Through its Mentor-to-Market workshops, but more importantly through its direct experience, IFAM educates artisans about the contemporary high-end market. Familiarity brings appreciation, making creating for the market more conceivable and more organic to those artisans who have developed their capability to analyse and apply design and business skills. Dahyalal and Abdulaziz, Artisan Designers who have attended IFAM, work with increasing sophistication, attending to drape, texture, wearability, subtlety and overall impact. They have honed the ability to narrate the stories of their work to clients. Abdulaziz has imaginatively named pieces 'Kutch Monsoon' and 'Galaxy'. This becomes possible because these Artisan Designers now prefer the quality materials, sophisticated colours and restrained patterns of luxury taste. Lachhuben Raja Rabari, embroidery graduate, after two IFAM experiences said, 'We learned to like these colors'. The artisans who Dahyalal and Abdulaziz employ will in turn absorb understanding of materials and aesthetics of a luxury market.

Dahyalal and Abdulaziz now sell to a range of clients, largely in the Indian domestic market. Dahyalal has expanded his capacity from two to eleven looms in three years. Abdulaziz has expanded to employ 250 women and ten men.

Concurrent developments such as shaping new luxury markets for craft and relevant education for artisans provide the prospect that *market* and *artisan* can together develop a new genre of luxury that speaks to consumers' desire for unique, exquisite objects, environmentally and socially equitable

practices, and human connection and also sustain the dignity and invaluable cultural heritage of artisans.

Our final argument is that we believe that the luxury market can be better able to meet the value system that we now know as sustainability if it embraces new genres of luxury that include the great resource of traditional artisans of developing worlds in ways that allow them a pathway to the consumer. Development of such new genres of luxury requires a collaborative co-design.

A new connoisseurship can be developed through exposure. Consumers of luxury products are considered connoisseurs with the discerning and educated eye to pass critical judgement of quality and uniqueness. Those items that are handcrafted, small-batch or artisanal are often celebrated among those who have enjoyed exposure to them as examples of connoisseurship. Just as wine connoisseurs pass judgement on tasting notes, depth of colour, provenance, aroma or varietal, connoisseurs of craft can recognize the nuances of handcrafted quality, the region from where it derives and its authenticity to the culture.

The co-designers to this new genre of luxury are the artisans themselves. If the faceless, highly skilled and undervalued artisans of the developing world are given the opportunity to use their skills for better quality products, and educated to tap their inherent ability to innovate, they can develop their capacity to reach these new connoisseurs. As artisans learn to innovate effectively in design and hone traditional skills, they can develop small-scale, bespoke ateliers, in the inspiration of great luxury brands such as Hermès, and like the increasingly popular micro breweries and artisanal wineries.

When connoisseurs craft and Artisan Designers meet, the experiential, human element of luxury is ignited. They can develop self-perpetuating and sustaining relationships, much like the relationship between a bespoke tailor and the client. The result is a changed landscape in the luxury market, moving the consumption of luxury goods away from the relationship between the *consumer* and the *brand* towards a relationship between the *consumer* and the *maker*. The authentication of the product becomes a primary indicator of the relationship. As this occurs, Artisan Designers will begin to establish their place in the luxury market and a new genre of luxury is born.

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## SUGGESTED CITATION

- Frater, J. and Hawley, J. M. (2018), 'A hand-crafted slow revolution: Co-designing a new genre in the luxury world', *Fashion, Style & Popular Culture*, 5:3, pp. 299–311, doi: [10.1386/fspc.5.3.299\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/fspc.5.3.299_1)

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## Planet Cosplay

Costume Play, Identity and Global Fandom

By Paul Mountfort, Anne Peirson-Smith and Adam Geczy

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ISBN 978-1-78320-956-9  
300 pp | £72, \$96  
Hardback | Fall 2018  
230 x 170 mm  
eBook available

This book examines cosplay from a set of ground-breaking disciplinary approaches, highlighting the latest and emerging discourses around this popular cultural practice. *Planet Cosplay* is authored by widely published scholars in this field, examining the central aspects of cosplay ranging from sources and sites to performance and play, from sex and gender to production and consumption. Topics discussed include the rise of cosplay as a cultural phenomenon and its role in personal, cultural and global identities. *Planet Cosplay* provides a unique, multifaceted examination of the practice from theoretical bases including popular cultural studies, performance studies, gender studies and transmedia studies. As the title suggests, the book's purview is global, encompassing some of the main centres of cosplay throughout the United States, Asia, Europe and Australasia. Each of the chapters offers not only a set of entry points into its subject matter, but also a narrative of the development of cosplay and scholarly approaches to it.

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