

Masters of their craft – A study of artisanal fashion

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Abstract

Today, fashion is being produced and consumed faster than ever. Current production environment offers global sourcing and manufacturing, delivering trendy garments at inexpensive prices to the masses. At the opposite end of the fashion spectrum some designers deliberately choose – whether through the ethos of sustainability or other personal philosophy – to work on a small and local scale, celebrating craftsmanship.

This paper introduces a study in process that looks at such fashion design, in which both skills, design and craftsmanship, are fundamental. The term used here is “artisanal fashion.” The study aims to identify the distinctive features of artisanal fashion. It also discusses the role and meaning of artisanal production in the age of mass-manufacture of the current fashion industry. The study is based on a qualitative analysis of case studies and interviews with various designers.

Artisanal approach to fashion highlights designer’s mastery of his craft in both design and production. It involves making garments in small quantities and employing traditional and handcraft methods. The role of the designer is holistic; he is strongly involved throughout the design and production processes and works closely with his workers, suppliers, and often customers. This type of fashion creation can also be included in “slow fashion”, which stands in opposition to what “fast fashion” represents.

Within the contexts of artisanal and slow fashion, the study highlights more considerate ways of garment production. It also touches on aesthetics and quality, as being central to product attachment and satisfaction, which thus play a role in developing longer lifespans of garments. Thereby the study aims to contribute towards more environmental and ethical practices in fashion.

Keywords: fashion design, clothing, artisanal production, slow fashion

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