



Sustainability and Luxury: The Ecological Intelligence in the Aspirational Dimension of Luxury

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Description

Since time immemorial Luxury has revealed itself as a step beyond in the necessity of clothing. We can verify the interrelation between Human Being and Nature in clothing as well as in accessories. Luxury is distinguished by incorporating hard to find raw materials (in this case, a valued metal like it is gold), laboured with high quality craftsmanship that add value to the objects. Today there is a process of change in the aspirational values intrinsic to luxury in Fashion. It is a challenge to know the possibilities of production from new raw materials with the latest technology that, without attacking the natural space, allow demonstrating that natural luxury is possible. Luxury incorporates the element of distinction of certain members of society (religious and political power) that makes them stand out from the rest of the group, who meanwhile desired that high social status. In this way, the aspirational element of Luxury arose.

The ancient concept of Luxury is evolving due to three main factors as the Global Environmental, the Global Economic Crisis or the Technological Advancement. These factors have contributed to the development of the concept of ecological intelligence. It means that consumers are more and more informed, and there is an increasing worry about the impact on the environment due to clothing production. Now people are beginning to worry about the uncontrolled toxic waste that destroy the ecosystems and about who make their clothes, where are they made and in what working conditions. They are worrying also about the effects on health of the toxic substances extensively used in the clothing production. This new consumer is no longer content with the practice of the producers of carrying away the waste and the labour exploitation to distant countries, because this consumer has developed an ecological intelligence. This consumer assumes that we all live in the same planet, that we are interconnected, and that there is a boomerang effect. Problems are global; thus, solutions must be global too. The new consumer looks for a slow consumer model that includes among its principles high quality production, use of organic raw materials and natural dyes, local production, upcycling, respect for local diversity, certifications, fair working conditions, corporate social responsibility, among others. From this perspective, we can't assume that something has value without respecting the environment, human beings and other species. Thus, the concept of s Fashion arises. A step beyond in this process of development of the ecological intelligence leads to the concept of Vegan Fashion that resigns the use of animal raw materials (leather, feathers, wool, silk, bone) due to ethic reasons. So, the Vegan Fashion respects the sensitive nature of animals and rejects their objectification as mere commodities. Going back to the use of raw materials in Sustainable Fashion, thanks to the technological

advancement new possibilities are arising. So, the Spanish firm ECOALF uses recycled plastic bottles and fishing nets that they get by cleaning the seabed, instead of leather, to make their handbags. Nowadays celebrities, besides traditional groups like politicians, are one of the main groups of consumers of Luxury. Also, celebrities have a major impact on public opinion by means of what they do and what they wear. In This way, Emma Watson has a commitment with environmental values and uses her public image to promote a sustainable luxury. She recently attended the MET Gala, at New York, wearing an evening dress made of a blend of organic cotton and polyester from recycled plastic bottles. A dress by Calvin Klein and Eco Age composed of various pieces: trousers, skirt and top that can be used together or separately, boosting its possibilities. In the professional sector of luxury, we have figures like Livia Firth, Eco Age, a consulting firm dedicated to advising classic luxury firms to adopt sustainability criteria in their production.

Craftsmen and designers sign a pact for the sustainability. Beyond the splendour of the red carpets, we find interesting proposals that deserve to be highlighted because of its authenticity, like that of Carmela Rodríguez. She is an haute couture vegan designer who puts the accent on the value of arts and crafts. She was relegated a time ago because of the strong industrialization of the clothing production processes, but she has returned with force at the current scene. She embodies the humanization of fashion and its enrichment with cultural values, of closeness and customization that elaborate the shape of Luxury as experience. The designer uses as raw materials in her designs organic crafted textiles (organic cotton, linen, hemp), naturally dyed (with onion, curcuma, etc.), with forms that respect the female nature enhance its beauty and she says that the coherence is health and it is what defines and determines a real process. "The Luxury has to be found in the balance between the creative and the business and it has to give answer to the social needs in each moment", says Rodríguez. She tells us through her long professional experience of more than thirty years, her point view as a vegan designer about Luxury which involves a dilution of its aspirational dimension. She holds that the values of her production (craftsmanship, organic textiles, and natural dyes) must be given back to the people, and not only to elite, to satisfy another kind of Luxury, of Fashion and an alternative model of consumption. In short, she supports a model of consumption which is clearly not based upon the abuse and waste that to the contrary respects the environmental and social values. The main reflexion indicates that these are the Sustainable Fashion Associations and other institutions that are currently working for the Sustainable Fashion. It very important the cooperation of all the agents involved in these institutions to surpass an obsolete model, and to boost another one which respects the social and environmental values.