

Tarah Burke
Ryerson University

Who made it? Acknowledging the collaborative nature of making to increase consumer value perception.

Who made it? Acknowledging the collaborative nature of making to increase consumer value perception

In the April 2015 issue on craft, *The Business of Fashion* asked if traditional craft could survive in a modern world? The article likened artisanal craftsmen to endangered species and highlighted the importance of value. In particular, the importance of valuing instead of devaluing the production process (Par.1).

When one looks at a painting or photograph, the artistry and skill employed are traditionally less likely to be devalued or viewed as manual labour. While the perception of textiles and apparel is more commonly regarded as objects of labor and less as products of artistry. The purchasing audience acquires textile items more as commodities and less as collectables. While fashion may never be fully appreciated as art, the continual devaluation of it being less of a craft and more of a labour is concerning. Jeromy McFarren proposes, "the production of goods by corporate manufacturing, through modern machinery and technology, has displaced the labor force, separated the mind from the production process, depersonalized and devalued the act of manual skill (pg28). As the fashion industry has grown to high levels of mass production and consumption, the manner in which these objects are produced is further removed from the consumer decreasing the ability to find value in the production process.

In his book *A Theory of Craft*, Howard Risatti defines the difference between craft and art. "Fine art entails the making of symbols while craft entails the making of things" (89). He acknowledges that despite utilizing many of the same materials and processes, the viewer often does not attribute the same value or importance to objects of craft as they do to objects of art. The common reason for this is the craft object possesses a function while the art object is recognized as an aesthetic object. (67-69). When applying this to crafted objects like apparel, clothing clearly identifies with the attributes of both aesthetic and functional objects. They contain trend, colour, shape and line to clearly identify with artistic creation, while also providing the functional attributes of protection, modesty and the communication of identity. Yet consumers continue to see clothing as disposable objects and the value attached to clothing continues to diminish.

Collaborations and the creation of connections between the product, the consumer and the maker is key to the accountable preservation of traditional forms of craftsmanship (Tewari, Par.8). This paper compares the use of collaborative practices in both art and craft and examines if consumer value perception of crafted goods can increase by acknowledging and naming those involved in the creation of crafted objects?

Work cited

"Can Traditional Craftsmanship Survive in a Modern World." *The Business of Fashion*. April 22, 2015.

McFarren, Jeromy. *Craft Revisited: Moving Toward a Consumer Revolution*. *Voices*; Schenectady 41.1/2 (Spring/Summer 2015): 28-37.

Risatti, Howard. *A Theory of Craft: Function and Aesthetic Expression*. University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Tewari, Bandana. "Luxury Brands Must Credit Craftspeople." *The Business of Fashion*. April 22, 2015.