

FABtalks

by ABURY

FASHION, ARTS AND BUSINESS

Sustainable Fashion and Reemergence of Craft *The New Luxury of Fashion*

The idea behind the FABtalks is to host fresh fashion talks in an inspiring environment and connect them with business-networking in a new innovative way. The aim is to trigger interesting discussions about the topic of fashion and let experts respond to open questions. Ultimately, we want to build an interdisciplinary network and establish and implement projects together in the long run.

On the 19th of February the FABtalks left Germany for the very first time and were introduced in the UK. Together with curator Attollo Art, this time's panel discussion took place in the inspiring setting of the Exhibitionist Hotel in London. Together with the event's host Vestalia Chilton, the discussion was led by three speakers who explored different aspects of sustainable fashion.



Summary of the Presentations:

1. ANDREA BURY, ABURY

After introducing the audience to the topic of sustainable fashion with [a video of the ABURY Design Experience](#), Andrea Bury started the session. With a background of economics, Andrea had not had anything to do with fashion or craft, but her interest in fashion was only woken when she moved to Marrakech to renovate an old riad and got in touch with the local culture. She developed a fascination for old crafts, but soon realised the people that work with these crafts cannot make a living due to increased competition and cheap imports from China. Andrea realised crafts are dying out and so the idea of a sustainable business model evolved, to help the local people long-term.



During the development Andrea identified three major problems: The quality of handmade products is extremely difficult to manage, the designs used by the artisans are very much influenced by their culture and religion and do not conform with the demands of the Western market, and the existing target audience - locals and tourists - is very limited and not willing to spend money on high-quality products.

The solution seemed obvious: The artisans would need a young and international designer who would guide them. When pitching this idea at a design school in Berlin, Andrea realised that emerging designers are also struggling to develop a first collection, and understood there was a WIN WIN opportunity for both parties: The idea of the ABURY Design Experience was born and since 2015, Andrea's company ABURY is hosting an annual international designer competition with the winner getting a grant for production, transport and living expenses for a 6 week project in a crafts community to develop the new collection for ABURY.

2. DARIA DERGUNOVA, U DIG Project

Daria Dergunova is the founder of the U Dig Project and a newly transformed fashion warrior. Until recently she did not have anything to do with fashion but was solely focused on banking and finances. Her interest in fashion and crafts emerged during travelling (for work and privately) to places such as Uzbekistan or Cambodia. She became fascinated about textiles and developed a vision of incorporating ethnic and handmade aspects of fashion into business wear. With U DIG Daria is following three main goals:

Firstly, the aim is to add uniqueness into the business dress code. So far business wear has mainly been held in black and grey and less original, while handmade textiles can make fashion more unique and a real piece of art.



Furthermore, Daria pointed out the necessity of cherishing traditions and cultures. When she actioned a project with a crafts community in Ukraine and met the local people on site, she was shocked by the touching stories of the Ukrainians who would refer to their situation as artisans as “war situation”. It is a shame their craft is not more visible to our markets. In fact, Daria sees huge potential in that: One of her events in London, where she showcased some of the handmade items, awoke great enthusiasm.

Daria’s last message was to underline the importance of a new definition of luxury. Luxury in fashion should be associated with products that are handmade and unique rather than their monetary value.



3. EMMA HART, PUSH PR

Emma Hart's career started in journalism when she worked as a beauty and fashion writer for a print magazine. Based on her experience in that job and on feedback from her art and design network, she quickly realised the lack of story- and craft-based businesses as well as the need for awareness of small fashion brands and decided to move into PR.

In 2002 she founded PUSH PR, an agency working with sustainable brands. As a PR consultant, Emma has more of a bird's eye view onto the industry, knowing what brands know and want as well as what consumers know and want. The vision of the agency is to listen to the consumer and find ways how people and businesses can and should do good.



Motivated by the Rana Plaza disaster in 2013, Emma is convinced that quality should not be compromised just to be sustainable or ethical and the journey for the consumer should not be compromised either - they should all go hand in hand. The most important steps to make sustainable fashion grow further are education in schools as well as reconsidering the use of the term *sustainability*. The word has so many connotations and definitions that it has almost turned into a “bad word”. The communication strategy within the sustainable fashion industry should be rethought.

This edition of the FABtalks did not only give interesting insights from experts into the reemergence of crafts - it was also located in an extravagant atmosphere at the Exhibitionist Hotel surrounded by the art of Charlotte Cory. Charlotte, a print maker, who makes art works based on Victorian photography, also has a special connection to fashion. She values the idea of recycling and re-using in fashion, which is why she mainly owns second-hand clothes. She ended her talk by telling the audience about an incident when a large fashion company exploited her by using her intellectual property in their product design - fast fashion exploitation in a different way...



We thank our partner Attollo Art and the amazing location Exhibitionist Hotel for the fantastic event!

SEE YOU NEXT TIME!