

Business

Accessories Brand Stòffa Puts Process First on 100-Year-Old Looms

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All scarves are jacquard woven, so the patterns are in the yarn, not printed on top. Source: Stòffa

Ask almost any designer where their products start and you'll wind up staring at pages in a sketchbook. But ask Agyesh Madan, founder of accessories brand [Stòffa](#), and you'll be regaled not with scribbles of scarves and hats but with stories of century-old looms and the behaviors of different types of dye. Madan is all about the process of making and with Stòffa has found a way to turn what could easily become esoteric shop-talk into incredible accessories that tell the stories of how they are made.

Process First

We'll start with Stòffa's scarves. First came the looms instead of the usual designer process of creating some esoteric "color story." These looms are no, pardon the pun, run-of-the-mill standards; they happen to be jacquard shuttle looms that reside in Biella, Italy, and date to the early 20th century. They are engineered to produce edge-finished scarves, meaning there is no trimming and waste on the sides. Given the extensive, hands-on R&D required to work with these 100-year-old machines, Madan invested in the equipment instead of renting time, garnering him a timeshare of sorts in which to really get his hands dirty experimenting with what they can do.

"Working with the old jacquard looms is certainly an outstanding experience," said Madan over espresso in his Williamsburg, Brooklyn headquarters. "It's been over two years now and some days are a still complete surprise as we discover new ways to use these old machines." That means weaving techniques that produce intricate double-sided patterns like pin dots, candy stripes, and mirrored geometric shapes. Each run of scarves requires loading 2,100 warp threads by hand -- an entire day's project -- and punch card-like paper patterns to "program" the machine. No more than 16 scarves are made in any pattern (some are as limited as three).

Thoughtfulness

Sure, it's a good story, but luxury brands are nothing if not adept at spinning a yarn. (Sorry, it had to be done.) Is there any actual advantage to making things this way? Absolutely. Picking up a Stòffa scarf, you'll immediately notice how springy the 70% cashmere, 30% silk weave feels. The fibers take on an almost honeycomb structure that isn't achieved by modern industrial looms. Because the edges do not need to be cut, there is literally zero waste in the production process, making it efficient and environmentally friendly. Instead, two indigo selvedge stripes along each edge stand out as inspiration for Stòffa's logo, with a natural fringe from clipping the scarf to the right length.

In addition to the scarves, Stòffa's inaugural collection includes pocket squares, ties, and hats. Each collection has its own construction story, but the themes of modern geometric patterns, softly rich colors, and low-waste production carry through. The hats, available in beaver or rabbit felt, have undergone a two-year testing phase on the heads of Madan and his friends, a much more rigorous process than even most luxury brands are willing to invest in -- he didn't see much sense in selling a product he couldn't count on himself. They can be rolled up for travel, removing the need for bulky hat boxes (which don't, for the record, fit very well into that overhead bin).

"One of our core product values is thoughtfulness," said Madan. "Not only in terms of design aesthetics, function, and production, but also in continuously asking oneself whether this product deserves to exist in the world today -- whether it will truly add value and happiness in someone's life and continue to do so for a long time."

"La Stòffa"

In Italian, "stòffa" literally means the stuff things are made of; it's also used in an expression that roughly translates to "he's got the right stuff." Madan feels that this branding is more than enough. So even though he's exerted exact control in hand-kerning his modern Helvetica logo, you won't find it on the product -- the striations of natural linen in the ties and the double selvedge lines on hat ribbons works just fine. Likewise, material composition labels (legally required for import) are removed before the products are shipped to the customer. There are no tags, no logos, no branding at all. The product is the product. When Madan talks about being all about "la stòffa," he means it.

Stòffa accessories are available exclusively through [Stoffa.co](#) and can be shipped around the world. Scarves are \$250, pocket squares \$60, ties start at \$95, and hats start at \$200.