



ASSEMBLE 2010: AUDIO TRANSCRIPTS

Session: Consumer Trends

Speaker: Arantza Vilas, Director, Pinaki Studios and Trends Writer, El Observatorio de Tendencias del Habitat

Chair: Emily Campbell, Director of Design, RSA

EMILY CAMPBELL: Thank you Martin [Raymond, Future Laboratory], that was bracing. Anybody afraid? I'm afraid. No, but seriously, is it just me, or, in that grand sweep of geopolitical, technological, sociological, fast-paced change, crafts seem to be a small, private, local thing. And it's hard for me to find the place. I suppose, I think serendipity might be the answer, the craft's ability to nurture serendipity.

Our next speaker is Arantza Vilas, who is a textile maker and trends writer, and I'm very excited because she's going to talk about tailoring. [...]

ARANTZA VILAS: Thank you very much for inviting me to be here today, and I'd like to thank the Crafts Council and Karen [Yair] in particular. Yes, I am a maker, I make textiles, and I'm based at Cockpit Arts, which is a business incubator for designer-makers. And, my practice is portfolio-led. One of the activities that I work on is a collaboration with Observatorio de Tendencias del Habitat. That translates as the Observatory for the Trends of the Habitat. And, what I do with them is actually beautiful, it's very enjoyable - I write about the people around me. And I'm here as a collaborator, and, in a way, to present [to] an international audience the beautiful books that they publish. [The Observatory has] been working since 2006 in the observation analysis and study of the trends centred in the habitat, because they believe that to gain knowledge about how people live, their lifestyles, their needs and the environment, is essential to be able to design objects and services that respond effectively to consumer needs. The observatory is formed by three research

and technology institutes in textiles, ceramics and furniture, and it's supported by Generalitat Valenciana, that's the local government.

So they believe in an ample understanding of the trends, and studying in depth the reasons behind them, learning about the concepts behind each design and the reasons for them to exist, and the needs that they cover.

OTH, El Observatorio de Tendencias del Habitat, offers workshops, seminars and ad hoc consultancy and bi-annual journals. The first one was published in 2007, uncovered the trends for 2008 and 2009, and the new one has just come out. And every other year they publish a monographic, the first one was launched in 2009, and explored the changes in the concept of family and how this influences our living environment.

So I'm very pleased to present here the latest journal that reviews the seven trends identified and analyses the current situation scanning the market, always seeking for the new, and with a projection towards the future. The habitat has suffered modifications in the last few years which are a reflection of socio-cultural changes. These journals will be available in the Research Library at the Crafts Council, they are on their way.

Moderation and rationalisation when it comes to consuming are key to the current trends, and even if this may appear perhaps slightly negative, it has also set a new framework of opportunities and possibilities. Consumers have redefined their needs, preferences and desires, and the cycle has become more natural, slower, and reflective. The need for exclusivity and sophistication is still explored through routes such as crafts and limited editions.

These changes are understood in the design for the habitat through different values, such as longevity, transparency, that means values ought to be clear, coherent, believable; products and services which give autonomy to the user, that are practical products, and products that remain stable, that are a good investment. The distinctiveness of a product and its uniqueness has to be justifiable.

Out of the seven trends in the current journal, four of them relate in one way or another to craft, or have a craft element in them: New classics, Sublime by Hand, The Essentials and Basic and Raw. They all relate to the durability, honesty, the labour, and the wisdom associated with craft.

And there are three main aspects, and this is where the tailoring comes in, three main aspects that are common to all of these trends, the understanding of the craftsman and the maker as a tailor, is that there is a return to the made-to-measure work, and this is an example, and allow me to bring you backwards and forwards between the island and the continent. This is an example of Cerámica Artística San Ginés, that's in Talavera de la Reina, central Spain. This is the largest ceramic mural produced at the convention centre of Oran in Algeria.

And I'm going to bring you back to London, to south London. This is a piece by Based Upon. And the reason why I am showing their work here is because Based Upon is a company that uses Axolotl, the application, a technology, application, of liquid metal to create beautiful surfaces, furniture and art pieces. And their pieces are very often tailored to their clients, so they involve the customer in the production, from the design stage to the actual production of the piece. And they provide a certificate of provenance in their delivery.

Back to the Continent again. There's that element of time invested in the product, and the product is seen as an investment, and I'm showing here an example of a Swiss piece, produced by Swiss designers in collaboration with Swiss artisans [in homage to the Alps]. Silk and cotton lace is embedded in this piece of furniture, took 200 hours of labour, the silk and cotton, and it's covered with Plexiglas.

And back to London. And these are two fantastic pieces by two London-based makers that involved in one way or another audiences and clients or customers or however we want to call it. Soojin Kang, who's a recent graduate from Central Saint Martins, whose work very often leaves the knitting needles embedded in the piece, so that whoever uses the piece can continuously knit. So that's actually the title of her graduation work, *A Continuous Chain*, so it could be continuously knitted.

And Katherine May, who creates quilts and upholstery with patchwork. She was recently showing at Liberty's, in an exhibition parallel to the quilt exhibition at the Victoria & Albert, and she produced a quilt piece with textiles and garments provided by all the people that work in the department store.

These are examples that make me feel very excited about how craft can involve people. Just to finish, let me show you this other very beautiful example by a much bigger company, - I am taking you back to the Continent and elsewhere. This is a piece by Moroso in collaboration with a Senegalese architect and designer, who worked together with Senegalese craftsmen with plastic. These beautiful sofas and chairs were launched in Milan.

So, just let me reinforce my key point here - apart from the craftsman or the maker as a tailor - is that to me these are all examples of work that show how craft reinvigorates the relationship amongst individuals and communities as much as with the objects that we surround ourselves with. Thank you very much.

Further information about Arantza Vilas' work can be found at the Pinaki Studios website: www.pinakistudios.com.

