



IN PURSUIT OF LUXURY

University of
Hertfordshire





IN PURSUIT OF LUXURY

Royal Institute of British Architects
June 18 2010

www.inpursuitofluxury.com

Welcome to the first luxury conference from the School of Creative Arts, University of Hertfordshire

The aim of this conference is to explore the concept of luxury from a variety of academic and commercial perspectives. Delegates come from a global constituency and bring a correspondingly wide range of perspectives to the subject. The conference also provides an interdisciplinary forum to examine the subject of luxury and delegates come from the disciplines of history, cultural studies, business studies, communication studies, marketing and economics.

The idea of luxury has a secure place in modern western culture: the term is part of common parlance. But when and where did the concept of luxury emerge, what is its history, and how does luxury relate to social class? Is luxury necessarily the preserve of the few and, if so, what are the qualifications to consume luxurious objects? Do we need breeding to qualify or just money? How does an object or experience acquire luxury status? Is it through branding or high quality materials and craftsmanship? Indeed, is it possible to mass-produce luxury, and, if so, what are the ethical implications of this? In a global world of mass consumption, is luxurious consumption politically and ethically suspect? Similarly, as the world's resources diminish, might we expect the political implications of conspicuous consumption to take on greater resonance? And, not least, what is the future of luxury in a world beset with financial turmoil? All of these questions stack up to make for a subject of pressing concern and febrile debate.

The contributors to the University of Hertfordshire's In Pursuit of Luxury conference set out to explore these concepts and more. We very much hope that the conference will provide a platform for delegates to come together and begin to explore some of these issues in much greater detail. Not least, we hope that some of our conclusions will help inform the worlds of commerce and academia alike and that the topic will be informed by a radical interdisciplinary perspective.

We hope that you enjoy the conference and that our mutual interests in the subject of luxury will provide a springboard for further debate and research.

Keynote address

Christopher J. Berry
University of Glasgow
Luxury: a dialectic of desire?

The keynote lecture comprises 3 parts:

- I. Moralisation i.e. 'luxury' as a component of moralised normative vocabulary characteristic of 'classical' thought according to which 'poverty' is good and the desire for bodily satisfactions manifest in luxury is bad, so control of consumption is warranted. Moreover, commerce which serves those satisfactions is at best a lowly instrumental activity and at worst morally suspect.
- II. Demoralisation i.e. the rejection of that evaluative context whereby desires (including those for luxuries) are seen as effective motives and poverty (now meaning being impoverished) is bad, while control of consumption when not counterproductive is an unwarranted intrusion. Commercial societies that produce and consume luxuries are better than pre-commercial ones, as exemplified in David Hume's essays 'Of Refinement in the Arts' and 'Of Commerce' (1752).
- III. Remoralisation? i.e. an examination of contemporary critiques of consumption in general, and luxury in particular. Four critiques are non-exclusively identified [a] 'Marxist' – exchange-value trumping use-value and producing luxury goods exemplifies a systemic capitalist imperative; [b] Ethical – owning/desiring more creates unhappiness rather than happiness and the pursuit of luxuries is a hedonic treadmill undermining self-discipline; [c] Social – the evanescent instability of luxury and its embodiment of a privatised life-style erodes social capital and crowds out public space, and [d] Ecological/Green – current lifestyles where possession of luxuries is a mark of success wastefully depleting limited resources, especially when a simpler more harmonious life of fewer desires is possible. But is there any relevantly sustainable ground in terms of which luxury can be re-moralised and the legitimacy of desires assessed? Are any supposed solutions practically tenable?

Conference Programme: Friday 18th June 2010

9.00am: Registration and coffee

9.30am: Keynote Speaker

Professor Chris Berry
University of Glasgow
Luxury: a dialectic of desire?

10.45am: Coffee break

11.00am: Session one

The City and Luxury

Dr Steven Adams
University of Hertfordshire
The flight from Hell and other distractions: luxury and consumption in post-revolutionary France

Annette Condello
Curtin University
Spatial luxury: outlying buildings in the ancien régime

Veronica Manlow
Brooklyn College of the City, University of New York
The in-store luxury shopping experience: evaluations and impressions in a sample of New York City college students

12.30pm: Lunch

1.30pm (until 3.00pm): Session two

The Culture of Luxury

Dr Djurdja Bartlett
London College of Fashion
Vogue in Russia: new style, new class, new luxury

Natalia Cherjovsky
University of Central Florida
Lavishness as vindication: the role of luxury in hip-hop

Shaun Borstrock
University of Hertfordshire
The real thing

The Economics of Luxury

Joseph Nunes
University of Southern California
Conspicuous consumption in a recession: toning it down or turning it up?

Dr Kenneth Feinstein
Nanyang Technological University
The separation of value from wealth: can luxury be the basis of an economy?

Designing Luxury

Dr Sean McCartan
Coventry University
Luxury and boat design

Robert Chesters
Loughborough University
Less is more... luxurious

Catharine Rossi
Royal College of Art/ Victoria and Albert Museum
'Marble marble everywhere': designing luxury in 1960s Italy

3.05pm (until 4.35pm): Session three

Branding Luxury

Stacy Anderson and Dr Anna Watson
London College of Fashion
Sustainable Luxury: acknowledging and interpreting sustainability in branding strategy

Dr Fabian Faurholt Csaba
Copenhagen Business School
Brand strategy and the performance of luxury: the case of Georg Jensen

Klaus Heine
Technical University of Berlin
A theory-based and consumer-oriented concept of luxury brands

4.35pm: Coffee break

5.00pm: Session four

The Art of Fashion as Luxury

Karinna Nobbs
Glasgow Caledonian University
The form and function of the luxury fashion flagship store.

Denise Vernon
University of Salford
The art of willful extravagance...

Dr Nicky Ryan
London College of Communication
The new Medici: mediating luxury through art

6.30pm: Close and drinks reception

The Perception and Psychology of Luxury

Liselot Hudders
Ghent University
Consumers' perception of uniqueness in a democratized luxury world

Professor Maria-Rosa Llamas-Alonso
University of León
Beyond the bling-bling concept of luxury: a contemporary Freudian perspective

Theodore Diehl-Peshkur
For better or worse: The role of materials and methods in creating a new perception of 21st century luxury

Luxury through the Ages

Dr Anthony Mangieri
Savannah College of Art and Design
Dress and the art of luxury: embellished textiles, aristocratic identity, and wealth in Ancient Greece

Nina Levičnik
University of Ljubljana
History of wine consumption vs. architectural design

Dr Adelina Valente
Escola das Artes, Universidade Católica Portuguesa
Is wood a luxurious material? An approach to the 18th century British influence on Portuguese cabinet-making

Dr Steven Adams
University of Hertfordshire

The flight from Hell and other distractions: luxury and consumption in post-revolutionary Paris.

Paris has long been synonymous with the production and consumption of luxury goods. During the ancien régime, proof of nobility was shown through 'représentation', the external demonstration of noblesse through the public display of lavish goods and dress. When financiers and senior government officers began to wear the kinds of clothes hitherto reserved for the nobility, the appropriation was seen to betoken the collapse of an established social order.

The French Revolution definitively destroyed the idea that a noble's 'estate' or condition found its proper expression through luxury; rather, codes of display were inverted. After 1789 a citizen's patriotism and integrity were expressed through displays of conspicuous simplicity, even conspicuous poverty. The right-wing coup of 1795 saw the return of a semblance of political order after the bloodshed of the Terror of 1793-4 and it was no longer politically suspect to dress luxuriously. Consumption, it seems, became a palliative for bloodshed and tyranny. But the old stable social order on which codes of luxury were once predicated could not be so easily recovered. Thereafter, luxurious consumption generated a proliferation of elaborate dress codes and manners that were deprived of any stable social referent. The wildly eccentric dress codes of dandies such as the *incroyables* and *merveilleux*, for example, prompted a raft of commentary on the morality and politics of conspicuous consumption. The elaborate dress of the *incroyables* was not a return to the manners of the ancien régime but rather a clear indication that the equation representation = état no longer applied in France. In this paper I want to explore some of the connections between consumption, representation and the fluid class boundaries during the 1790s and not least the superfluity of visual forms they generated. It is within this period, I suggest, that for the first time we find that *luxe* is a contested concept with an ambivalent connection to value, appearance and social status, a condition that endured throughout much of the nineteenth century and continues to have a resonance today.

Annette Condello

Curtin University

Spatial luxury: outlying buildings in the ancien régime

This paper explores the links between luxury and space, and tracks its spread from Italy to France, mainly the royal estates and gardens of that latter country. Focusing especially on the outlying buildings at Fontainebleau Palace, their interior and exterior spaces, it discusses how luxury evolved through the media of buildings and gardens. After exploring these links, the paper proposes a theoretical perspective for understanding the relationship between forms of architectural (and theatrical) spectacle within spaces designed for stately courts and gardens—a perspective drawn from studying the sources for 'architectural' *hors d'oeuvres*. I argue that these were novel architectural forms as they specifically were derived to provide places for extravagant consumption and are best exemplified by country house follies, such as Monsieur Merville's Broken Column House (1780) at Desert de Retz. Then, the paper discusses how the extravagant venues, specifically dining rooms, affected the French nobles' tasteful sensibilities in the *ancien régime*. I argue that spatial luxury particularly in late eighteenth-century France, evident in the form of hospitable venues where royalty or aristocrats were allowed to indulge themselves and their companions to a considerable degree, were subject to moral criticisms of excess.

Veronica Manlow

Brooklyn College of the City, University of New York

In-store and online purchasing: attitudes, preferences and behaviour of luxury shoppers in Paris.

Until recently luxury brands have had several good reasons to resist developing an Internet presence and selling online. Luxury is fundamentally at odds with mass availability, and open access to the general public. It prides itself on providing exclusive service and presenting products to select clientele in an aesthetically pleasant environment. Luxury fashion is indeed a paradox. It has moved more toward the direction of fashion, and as such it has attained a broad appeal and a broad reach. There is a difference of opinion on whether luxury fashion brands can successfully sell online without compromising their brand's identity or whether they should develop an online presence but avoid e-commerce. The Wall Street Journal in its 2008 Wealth Report says that "experience may not matter much to the wealthy." The counter position, that experience matters most, most forcefully advanced by Caperer and Bastien (2009) has been subject to much criticism, yet it has perhaps also been too easily dismissed. One must be cautious not to equate luxury fashion with other types of luxury purchases such as travel reservations, and be aware of the fact that customers use both in-store and online shopping to complement one another.

Using a grounded theory approach interviews were conducted with 5 affluent consumers in Paris, France who were members of two exclusive social clubs. Two of the respondents would never forego the in-store experience which was a source of enjoyment for them. Three sometimes conducted research online but made all purchases in-store. During the interviews it became evident that if one could attain the same products online at a discounted price, individuals would be motivated to purchase online from the brand's website, or from an authorized, reputable seller's site. Savings would have to be in the range of 20-30% for it to be worthwhile to buy online. Fifty members of two exclusive clubs in Paris were asked in a questionnaire if online distributors were given the right to sell Louis Vuitton products on the Internet, and if the products were sold for 20-30% less, would they: a) buy the product in a store at regular price; b) buy the product online from an authorized distributor at 20-30% less or c) visit a Louis Vuitton store and later buy the product on the Internet. Interviews were conducted with 20 shoppers outside the flagship store about their shopping experience, and their opinion on the same question. While shoppers interviewed outside the store were, almost without exception, uninterested in shopping online, a substantial portion of affluent individuals (66%) would choose the "free rider" option: use the store as a means of investigating products, and in some cases as a source of enjoyment, followed by a purchase online from an authorized dealer provided that they could be assured of authenticity, and could save money. Suggestions are made for how luxury fashion brands can maximize the advantage of an Internet and e-commerce presence.

Joseph Nunes

University of Southern California

Conspicuous consumption in a recession: toning it down or turning it up?

The media and pundits agree – consumers are turning away from conspicuous consumption during the recession. Yet this opinion comes exclusively from self-reports and expert opinions. Our research finds evidence that Louis Vuitton and Gucci, the world's top two luxury brands (Interbrand 2009), have changed their product lines during the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, to offer significantly more conspicuously branded products.

We examined data on designer handbags offered by Louis Vuitton and Gucci before the recession began (January 2008) and in the midst of the recession (May 2009). If consumers are demanding less conspicuous products, we would expect this to be reflected in these product lines and would expect to observe a trend towards understated designs. Or, if firms do not tone down their products, we should observe a marked decrease in profitability as they fail to meet customer demand. This is not what we find.

These brands are far more prominently displayed on new product introductions when compared to those products withdrawn. Further, both brands simultaneously increased prices significantly. These tactics have not resulted in financial ruin; the divisions of parent companies LVMH and PPR SA, appeared to have fared exceptionally well during the period in question. These results imply that those consumers who do not exit the luxury goods market during a recession are still interested in logo-laden products, and perhaps even more so.

Why do certain consumers favour more conspicuous branded products during a recession? We argue it is the result of consumer segmentation based on the need-for-status. While consumers low in their need-for-status can reduce conspicuous consumption without risk of damage to their elite identity, those with a high need-for-status are still concerned with status signalling. They feel a need to engage in conspicuous consumption to maintain their distance from the have-nots.

Session one: The Economics of Luxury

Dr Kenneth Feinstein

Nanyang Technological University

The separation of value from wealth: can luxury be the basis of an economy?

If luxury is the expenditure of excess value, as Georges Bataille defines it, then what happens if it becomes the focus of an economy. Using Bataille's definitions of a general economy, value and expenditure, we can see that the current world financial crisis is caused by just this situation. The basic question of what creates value and when and how does it need to be expended has become confused.

The current financial system appears to have separated the relationship of the accumulation of wealth from its expenditure. In doing so it has created a financial system that becomes a simulacra of an economy. This separation of perceived value from actual value is the cause of the current crisis. Does this current economic model actually devalue the true nature of luxury through the valorization of the trappings of luxury? This is what I would like to explore in this paper.

Dr Djurdja Bartlett
London College of Fashion
Vogue in Russia: new style, new class, new luxury

This paper addresses the theme of luxury in post-socialist Russia through three key issues: the politics of style, the concept of luxury, and consumption practices. The paper examines these issues through research on the impact of *Russian Vogue* on the appreciation and use of luxury in Russian society.

Vogue arrived in Russia in 1998 as a representative of advanced market capitalism and its advertising and retail strategies. Its politics of style were primarily intended to promote its advertisers, and to protect the allure of their image in socially unfavourable surroundings. *Vogue* initiated its readers in the latest styles of dress and looks by introducing a completely new imagery. Through a highly symbolic and rapid process, *Vogue* made the leap not only from a concept of Soviet uniformity to a sophisticated and luxurious expression of the latest western *haute couture* but also embraced the intellectual austerity and minimalist luxury of Japanese and Belgian avant-garde fashion. The paper argues that these different styles were not only about fashion. *Vogue* introduced to Russia a new concept of fast luxury. While luxury was previously perceived as a space-bound category understood in terms of plenty, it moved towards a time-bound category of novelty. As new post-socialist fast and fragmented concept of time ingrained itself in consciousness and consumption practices, novelty and luxury in dress became equally appreciated. In struggling to impose an appropriate image of western luxury brands within a new post-socialist reality, *Vogue* positioned itself as an educator of its wealthy but un-sophisticated readership. *Vogue* connected the new economic capital possessed by the Russian super rich with a new symbolic capital - a type of knowledge that was new to *Vogue's* readers due to the previous material and symbolic shortages.

Vogue carefully orchestrated the New Russians' emblematic travel from the practices of haphazard conspicuous consumption towards the acquisition of the symbolically more complex expressions of luxury.

However, *Russian Vogue* cultivates the most extravagant luxury and has the highest number of columns dedicated to luxurious consumption among the all *Vogue* editions. The paper argues that these columns are reservoirs of transgressive desires which symbolically threaten the prevailing boundaries of decent and indecent, and moral and immoral.

Vogue's presentation of luxurious dresses and accessories also introduced a new social context for luxury. There are many striking similarities between the lavishness and elitism of both tsarist and socialist luxury, and the global luxury that is available in Moscow today. Just as before, today's luxury excludes the majority.

However, there are important differences as well. Socialist luxury, for example, existed at two levels: the highly representational for everybody to see, and the very secretive for only the privileged few to enjoy. In contrast, today's luxury is in the open, available to everyone with money in their pocket. The willingness of the new Russians to spend facilitated the arrival of the most luxurious brands in Moscow, but also made luxury consumption very public.

Natalia Cherjovsky

University of Central Florida

Lavishness as vindication: the role of luxury in hip-hop

Ostentatious displays of financial status and prowess are a familiar—even compulsory—ingredient of the hip-hop churned out for the world's consumption. Allusions to making large sums of money, or 'getting paid,' are also customary, as are accounts of spending obscene amounts of cash with complete abandon. In the book *Why White Kids Love Hip-Hop*, Bakari Kitwana notes, "'get money,' for example, is as central to the hip-hop generation as social uplift is to the civil rights generation". Flamboyant jewellery, multiple expensive cars, lavish mansions, *haute couture*, and trips to exotic locales are some of the elements featured without fail in the lyrics and images of hip-hop lifestyle sold to the world.

Critics are quick to indict hip-hop as duplicitous, pledging allegiance to anti-establishment, but worshiping at the altar of consumerism. However, those critics often fail to take into account the historical, racial, and socio-economic aspects inexorably and inextricably entwined with hip-hop and how the tropes of materialism and luxury are lived less as an indication of support of the establishment and more as a vindication over it.

Hip-Hop emerged from the ghettos in the inner cities in the Northeast of the United States, and many elements that pervade the genre and culture are a reflection of the street culture of said neighbourhoods. In an environment marked by indigence and scarcity of resources and where lack of opportunity for upward mobility is the norm, material possessions, which often signify having beaten the odds and risen above one's fate in life, become iconic. They not only represent having overcome but are also a metaphorical slap in the face of oppressors, proof that the status quo is malleable.

Author Patricia Rose points out in *Black Noise*. "...clothing and consumption rituals testify to the power of consumption as a means of cultural expression". In this sense, people in underprivileged neighbourhoods fetishize material goods and consider them markers of identity and proof of having persevered, triumphed, and eluded failure, poverty, and despondency, which are largely understood to be the legacy of the ghetto. In sharp contrast to those concentrated on writing songs about subjugation and struggle, which might resonate with their audiences, many artists pen lyrics that do not "... reflect the hard-core reality of urban youth but their Möet-sipping, Rolex-wearing aspirations". This imagery is fodder for young minds that dream – not just as a fantasy but as a coping mechanism that allows them to endure their reality—about getting out of the neighbourhood and becoming rich and famous. In *The Hip Hop Generation*, Kitwana reflects, "For many, the American Dream means not just living comfortably but becoming an overnight millionaire while still young". The likelihood of such fortune is unrealistic—especially in the ghetto. However, companies capitalize on those fantasies, and as people "...struggle to survive, these corporation work diligently to sell them a slice of modern life – from automobiles and electronics to food and entertainment" (Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation*).

Shaun Borstrock
University of Hertfordshire
The real thing

The notion of branding has become synonymous with luxury as a means of capitalising on global markets where value is added through perception and implied notions of authenticity. Communicating the ideals of a luxury brand occurs mostly through the authenticity of the experience, the appeal of the real. As Gilmore and Pine observe, 'in industry after industry, in customer after customer, authenticity has overtaken quality as the prevailing purchasing criterion, just as quality overtook cost, and cost overtook availability'. This in line with fashion and lifestyle is defined, described and disseminated through many fashion portals.

It could be said that consumers look to buy into experiences that are defined as authentic, the real thing. Brands respond by ensuring the consumer believes that what they are buying is authentic, that through an affinity with the past the implication is that a product is 'special'. Authentic becomes 'custom made', 'limited edition' or 'bespoke', marketing terms applied to readily available goods and services so they are perceived as exclusive in order to raise their value. Heritage is used in a similar way where once the concepts of 'handmade' and 'finest materials' are translated to take advantage of modern manufacturing processes and supply chain resources.

This paper explores how consumer brands use the notion of authenticity to add value to their goods and services which supposedly elevate the brand into the realm of luxury.

Session two: Designing Luxury

Sean McCartan
Coventry University
Luxury and boat design

This paper examines the contemporary understanding of the term luxury in the context of boat design. In doing so it examines the trends in interior and exterior design aesthetics, to identify commonality and specifics of design language, across the full spectrum of boat design, from small craft with limited interior space to super yachts.

An appreciation of pleasure and luxury is fast becoming of primary importance to both the consumer and the design industry alike. Consumers want design functionality and usability as well as products that elicit other feelings such as luxury and pleasure. Luxury is intrinsic to the leisure boat market but in contrast the design of commercial vessels is driven more by functional requirements and cost rather than aesthetics.

Here we discuss the relevance of 'emotional design' in respect to leisure boat design and the concept of luxury. The user-centred design approach adopted within Boat Ergonomics at Coventry University requires an understanding of user characteristics, expectations; desires and needs translated through sensitive and balanced design solutions. It recognises the need to go beyond usability in certain sectors and understand emotional, hedonic and practical requirements.

In this analysis we examine how the concept of luxury informs the design process. In terms of mass production and branding, luxury will be examined for a range of boat market sectors, from mass production through semi-custom to bespoke design to determine how contemporary branding, allows this spectrum of production levels to remain 'luxurious' to their respective customers.

Robert Chesters Loughborough University Less is more... luxurious

This paper investigates the relationship between luxury and design. Moreover, it aims to establish that functionalist designers offered a new version of luxury to the consumer during the interwar period, through the manipulation of manufacturing materials.

In 1910 Walter Gropius detailed a programme for the establishment of a company to develop housing on aesthetically consistent principles. In this programme, he stated: "The guiding idea ... is to be that comfort is not to be obtained by overdone bogus splendours, but by ... selection of tested materials and reliable techniques." (*Form and Function*; 1975 Benton, T.; Benton, C.; Sharp, D.)

Within the discipline of Design History, Gropius and the Modern Movement are well-researched fields. However, the relationship between these ideas and luxury goods such as the domestic wireless has not been fully developed. Products by modernist designers such as Wells Coates and Serge Chermayeff have been identified and described by a number of academics. In the 1970s Adrian Forty (*The Electric Home*; 1975) detailed designs by Coates and Chermayeff for several radio cabinets, but he was largely interested in establishing these designs as examples of the modernist idiom. More recently, Alan Powers (*Serge Chermayeff: Designer Architect Teacher*, 2001) included several radio cabinets by Chermayeff in his biography of the designer, but did not consider the status of the wireless as a luxury product.

To consider the relationship between modernity and luxury, Walter Gropius' 1910 statement requires further scrutiny; it touches upon essential principals of the nascent "functionalist" movement. Gropius sought quality materials for the home and attempted a more essential and democratic approach to luxury, rather than the apparent luxury of excessive ornamental forms. Functionalism ideas began to develop amongst a number of avant-garde architects and designers during the interwar period. Concurrently, new technologies in building, manufacturing and information appeared. At this time, the wireless receiver was an unprecedented technology imbued with luxury status due to cost and novelty. In 1925, at the Paris Exposition des Arts Décoratifs, Jean Burkhalter and Paul Poiret exhibited wireless equipment as part of their interiors, lending the wireless a fashionable and exotic caché.

As the century progressed wireless attained the position of being a popular distraction. This shift occurred due to economic practices and technological advances; restricted ownership was no longer a key signifier of luxury. Once possession of a wireless began to lose its kudos, manufacturers sought other ways to improve the status of their products. Designers were employed to enhance the suitability of the machine for inclusion in the contemporary domestic interior. To address this issue, designers turned towards the quality materials Gropius had suggested some years before. Betty Joel reworked existing cabinets in exotic woods and new chrome plated metals; while Gordon Russell, Chermayeff and Coates approached plywood and plastics to produce aspirational functionalist designs in modern materials.

Through the judicious use of materials to enhance the product, modernist designers offered a new version of luxury to the interwar consumer. Although aiming to eschew the "bogus splendours" associated with luxury through applying functionalist principals, the designers used modern manufacturing techniques to make the apparently exotic more affordable. Through historical study, this paper will contribute to the debate concerning luxury and design as it is understood today.

Catharine Rossi

Royal College of Art/ Victoria and Albert Museum

'Marble marble everywhere': designing luxury in 1960s Italy

The controversies over luxury take a different shape in Italy: from the Renaissance period onwards, the production and consumption of luxury goods has long been associated with the country. A degree of moral ambiguity and the strong presence of a craft tradition, have both contributed to luxury's cultural and economic significance even in the democratizing and industrializing impulses of the post-war years. In Italy's emergence as a consumer society in the 1960s it became the defining language for the celebrated realm of Italian design, but the role that craft played in the realization and reconfiguration of luxury in design has been overlooked, as has craft's crucial role in post-war Italian design in general.

Italy's history is prone to myths and legends, and this is certainly true of the 1960s. This was the 'boom', the economic 'miracle', when the country experienced huge growth as an industrial, and consumer nation. However, while mass-consumption continued to remain more of an aspiration than a reality for Italians, the nation's new found affluence became a powerful and desirable image, transmitted through film, television advertising and the pages of new design magazines including *Abitare* and *Interni* and women's weeklies such as *Grazia* and *Arianna*. Bruno Munari went so far as to identify a 'mania for luxury' amongst Italians, that translated into a renewed emphasis on the twin components of luxury - craftsmanship and precious materials. This paper focuses on the use of marble, a material that pulls together the themes of Italy, luxury, craft and design in the 1960s in order to bring to light the overlooked role that the material had in redefining luxury in modern, design-led terms.

Marble was of course the material of classical sculpture and Renaissance architecture - but also fascist myth-making. It gained new prominence in a decidedly decadent turn among Italian designers responding to an image of new-found prosperity but also seeking to find a suitably modern and democratic use of Italy's luxury reserves. Architects including Gae Aulenti, Enzo Mari and Tobia Scarpa produced domestic marble objects for producers such as Danese and Flos who turned to the skills of Italy's wealth of marble artisans to realize their modern imaginings. The high levels of craftsmanship involved lent authenticity and national prestige to the products of Italian design at home and abroad and provided a new, modern outlet for the historical idea of luxury.

By focusing on how marble was caught up in the language of luxury and design in the 1960s, this paper not only highlights craft's crucial and yet overlooked role in Italy's celebrated post-war design history but also considers just one of the ways that luxury, ever-present in society, is continually redefined and reconfigured by the conditions that surround it.

Stacy Anderson and Dr Anna Watson

London College of Fashion

Sustainable luxury: acknowledging and interpreting sustainability in branding strategy

In a time when the meaning of luxury is questioned and challenged alongside the role of corporate social responsibility, the interrelationship of such parallel changes are of increasing importance to both academic and industry agenda. Though much academic study has focused on the subsequent marketing implications of sustainability, its relation to luxury brand strategy remains largely ignored.

Sustainability in its widest context has been recognized as the holistic concept for such issues of ethical, social and environmental responsibility, having evolved from more reactive and segregated ideas of Corporate Social Responsibility, to more proactive and integrative activities contributing to overall business strategy. With such ideas of 'eco' and 'authentic' luxury (Bendell & Kleanthous, 2007) still considered relatively new concepts for luxury brands (Sanderson, 2008), much opportunity exists for exploring and defining appropriate brand strategies for companies in pursuit of sustainability. This paper investigates how luxury brands can acknowledge and interpret sustainability in their branding strategy. Given the relative paucity of research in this area, this study has utilised a case study approach in order to provide a rich description and insight into the experiences of four luxury fashion brands, alongside in-depth interviews with industry professionals to enable further insights to be gained. The consequent analyses build upon the existing literature and theoretical branding frameworks to offer a new perspective through a consideration of the effects and influences of sustainability for luxury brands. Notably, the divide between brands which are established based upon sustainable ideals compared to traditional luxury companies seeking to incorporate such principals, has implications on the direction of influence between branding and sustainability strategies. This divide was found to be primarily attributable to whether the brand exhibited either reactive or proactive behaviours in terms of its intention to respond to, or to change consumer mindsets. Furthermore, the factors which influence the importance of sustainability to branding strategy were identified as the brand's history, nature of core values, management perspectives, perceived consumer importance, bureaucracy, global temporality and degree of pro-activeness. From these findings, four branding strategies emerged which illustrate the various relationships between sustainability and luxury, namely: Sustainability in Efficiency; Sustainability in Practice; Discreet Sustainability, and Sophisticated Sustainability. The degree of sustainability's prominence within each of the four strategies was evidenced as a function of both the nature of the sustainability strategy itself (product or company oriented), and the allocation of the benefits from such strategies (customers or the company) through tangible and intangible dimensions. This paper ultimately extends knowledge and understanding of luxury branding strategies as framed in the area of sustainability, and as such is of interest to academics and practitioners alike. Areas for further research are identified, concentrated within consumer perception studies.

Dr Fabian Faurholt Csaba
Copenhagen Business School
Brand strategy and the performance of luxury: the case of Georg Jensen

Accounts of contemporary markets for luxury frequently draw a line between old and new luxury. This division offers commentators and their readers a way to fix the meaning of the transient and elusive concept of luxury and make sense of complex and often contradictory trends within the field. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes less clear what constitutes new and old luxury. While observers identify 'new luxury' with some of the same phenomena and trends – such as democratization; the globalization of luxury production, brands and markets; and the rise of luxury conglomerates – they differ in their understanding and assessment of the concept and its properties. It is uncertain whether the distinction between old and new reflects changing material properties and practices, new forms of organization and strategies in the luxury industry, altering consumer attitudes, consumption patterns and practices, a broader application of the label of luxury or other new ways of conceiving and representing luxury. This inquiry explores concepts of 'new luxury' in terms of (deliberate) luxury brand strategies drawing on an extended case study.

In 2003, after having been acquired by a private equity fund, Danish design and crafts company Georg Jensen embarked on a strategy to become a global luxury brand. The new owner and the new CEO, saw Georg Jensen's pursuit of luxury as great opportunity to turn the fledging enterprise into a healthy and profitable business. Over the next five years, management sought to establish Georg Jensen's credentials as a legitimate luxury brand. As the profit and growth expectations were repeatedly frustrated, the board of directors decided to replace the CEO. Subsequently, the luxury strategy has fizzled out somewhat. Drawing on interviews with top executives, local managers and company store employees as well as ethnographic research at company's flagship store's on three continents, the study details the development and efforts to implement Georg Jensen's luxury brand strategy. The paper moves on to analyze how luxury becomes performed in corporate strategy practice and reflects on the efficacy of luxury brand strategy formulas.

Klaus Heine

Technische Universität Berlin

A theory-based and consumer-oriented concept of luxury brands

Not only is luxury a relative term that could refer to almost everything, depending on whom you ask, it also has become a worn out label for almost everything. While many luxury brands refrain from calling their products luxurious, some discount supermarkets and beer brands do. Moreover, luxury brands increasingly sell non-luxury products, while some non-luxury brands try to sell the feeling of luxury. So what does "luxury" mean today? These confusions help to explain why there is still no recognised concept of luxury in the business literature. However, the definition of luxury brands relates to the definition of luxury products, which again relates to the way luxury is defined. Consequently, the goal of the article is to develop a comprehensive concept of luxury for brand management. The first section of the article therefore works on building a theoretical framework that is then completed in the second part with an empirical study of luxury consumers. Despite the confusions, the first part reveals a basic understanding of luxury that is generally accepted across all research disciplines. It discusses the temporal, economic, regional, cultural, situational and – as luxury is not equally luxurious – the hierarchical relativity of luxury. Based on that, the article distinguishes three major perspectives on luxury including the philosophic-sociological, the micro-economical and the managerial concept of luxury, which are clarified with their common research interests, major representatives and specific definitions of luxury. Subsequently, the article presents the first systematic analysis of luxury definitions in the management literature. It differentiates and evaluates consequences- vs. characteristics-based definitions and business- vs. consumer-oriented definitions and proposes a characteristics-based and consumer-oriented approach. It demonstrates, however, that a consumer-oriented approach needs to be constrained by a theoretical framework. The literature analysis identified a list of deficits with regard to existing concepts, leading to a set of requirements for the current study. This includes preventing a mix-up between characteristics and preferences, characteristics and motives or between essential and accessorial characteristics. Subsequently, the article presents the first empirical survey about the luxury understanding of heavy luxury consumers with a sample of 31 millionaires. A specific methodology was developed for this study based on the repertory grid method and complemented with the preference differences technique and projective and creative interviewing techniques. A content analysis of the data led to five essential characteristics of luxury products including price, quality, aesthetics, rarity, specialty and symbolism as well as further sub-dimensions. These characteristics are explained in detail with reference to the existing literature. Based on that, the definition of luxury brands was derived and the concept of luxury was integrated into the luxury brand identity concept. The article concludes with a discussion of the results and their benefits for researchers and marketers. Besides its methodological contributions, it enriches the literature with the first comprehensive concept of luxury, which is built on theory-embedded consumer perceptions. It offers marketers a guideline for the upgrade of their products and brand communications to the luxury segment and researchers a foundation for further analysis, for instance about the relationship between the means (product characteristics) and ends (motives, values) of luxury consumption.

Liselot Hudders

Ghent University

Consumers' perception of uniqueness in a democratized luxury world

Until the 20th century, the consumption of luxury goods was reserved for the higher classes. These goods were unique, scarce, exclusive and handcrafted with a limited availability. The elite highly desired these luxury goods because they could be used to distinguish them from the lower classes. By overtly displaying luxury goods, consumers signaled their wealth to others in order to impress them and gain higher status. However, since the nineties, the market for luxury goods is experiencing considerable growth. Several factors have encouraged this growth, such as the increased spending capacity of the middle classes; the rising demand for luxury from emerging luxury markets, such as China or India; and the expansion of the luxury category.

More and more goods are now classified as luxury goods. These goods are labeled as new luxury goods because consumers are willing to pay premiums for these well-designed and well-crafted items which are – unlike old-luxury goods – produced in high volumes. Due to this democratisation, the concept of uniqueness and scarcity is put at risk although it was a very important characteristic of old-luxury goods in the past. Despite the large volumes and the lower prices, luxury goods companies are still trying to offer the illusion of uniqueness to consumers.

In this paper, it is our aim to investigate consumers' attitudes towards the concept of uniqueness in a democratized luxury world. Congruent with the international study of Dubois, Laurent & Czellar (2005), we want to investigate if we can distinguish two segments, democrats and elitists, who oppose a more modern vision of luxury to a more traditional vision of luxury. Furthermore, we want to have a clear view of the socio-demographic profile of both groups, and their attitudes, feelings and purchase intentions towards luxury. Finally, we want to investigate if their purchase intentions have changed with the recent financial crisis: ominous messages of luxury goods companies such as Porsche announce a decline in the sales of luxury goods.

We conducted a large scale survey in Belgium with 1578 consumers (50.1% males). Ages ranged from 16 to 90 years. A K-Means clustering based on 9 items clearly distinguished two clusters of consumers, democrats (N= 824) and elitists (N= 713). Both segments have a clearly different socio-demographic profile in terms of sex, age, education, job, marital status and media usage. Surprisingly, there are no significant income differences between democrats and elitists. Furthermore, elitists and democrats differ in their knowledge of luxury and their motives for luxury consumption. Finally, they have a different attitude towards the attributes of luxuries, such as superfluity and excellent quality.

We did not find any significant differences between these segments for their emotional reaction towards luxury and their purchase intentions of luxury goods in the product categories clothing, wine, watches, cars, accessories, home decoration, travel, cosmetics and perfume. However, democrats are more inclined to buy luxury foods than elitists. Finally, we found that elitists are more inclined to change their luxury consumption due to the financial crisis than democrats.

Professor María-Rosa Llamas-Alonso

University of León

Beyond the bling-bling concept of luxury: a contemporary Freudian perspective

Luxury is a dynamic and polysemic concept, its meanings and traits vary depending on the historical age. While in some ages luxury was beloved, in others it was reviled and persecuted. In all its forms whether glorified, coveted or sacred, public or private, ostentatious or introspective no one looks at it with indifference. In archaic societies luxury was based on wastefulness and squandering, had strong magic and religious connotations and the aim of attaining prestige. The luxury of Ancient Egypt was splendid while the in Ancient Greece luxury was a public focus on the body and the mind. Luxury became a synonym of excess during the Roman Empire in both public and private spheres. From the 17th century and onward luxury witnessed popularization understood as leisure and convenience while during the 20th century two trends became the cornerstone: the increase and popularization of the luxury consumption and the coexistence of extreme luxury with affordable luxury (McLuxury). So, through history, the notions of luxury have been constructed differently.

The main objective of this research is to look at how consumers talk about luxuries widening the perspective and shedding light on the meanings of luxury within the current fashion system of the postmodern society or consumer society (Baudrillard, 1988). Metaphor elicitation was used in order to know the meaning of luxuries nowadays, encouraging consumers from Stockholm, London, Berlin and Madrid to express their concepts of luxury. Informants from these cities were diverse in terms of age, gender, education and occupation. They were informed about the study in advance and asked to bring to the interview pictures representing what is a luxury for them. During the course of the interview they were encouraged to express their feelings, experiences, meanings and association with the pictures. The interviews had a duration between one and a half and three hours, were tape recorded and then transcribed verbatim to analyze the meanings behind the concept of luxury.

Findings show that nowadays luxury has many sides. Some are related to materialism while others have to do with emotions; some are close to hedonic consumption and others find similarities with eudaimonic well-being; some are part of everyday life while others are related to dreams and aspirations. So, in today's society it makes more sense to talk about luxuries instead of luxury. Through the analysis of images and verbal accounts from the interviews four dimensions of luxuries emerged. Three are related to being and one is related to having): being free (freedom), being with others (relationships), well-being and having (possessions). "Having and being refer to two fundamental modes of existence, to two different kinds of character structure the respective predominance of which determines the totality of a person's thinking, feeling, and acting" (Fromm, 1978:). Rooted in Freud's dichotomy of having and being, the categorization of luxuries in contemporary society is unfolded in this paper, broadening the scope of research in luxury.

Theodore Diehl-Peshkur

For better or worse: the role of materials and methods in creating a new perception of 21st century luxury

Many traditional luxury goods of the recent as well as ancient past focused primarily on the production of quality items, made with great care and attention to the choice of materials and workmanship. With leather goods one can consider such aspects as the quality of leather and the number of stitches per centimeter, in jewelry the purity of the gold alloy and the clarity and color of gemstones with the quality of soldering and forging, or in woven textiles the weight of the yarns used and density of the warp and weave. These are just some of the aspects that can be trademarks of quality reached at high cost – ergo exclusiveness- creating a luxury product as defined in a more traditional vein.

Technological innovation, specifically in relation to the luxury consumer goods of previous centuries, was not, generally speaking, a part of this mix when it concerned luxury products that were meant for personal use, despite the fact that one can certainly find notable exceptions scattered through the timeline of history. (A particular exception with its roots in the mediaeval period concerns the technological developments of clocks and watches; each innovative development making them ever more attractive as luxury items to the elite. Even today this remains a driving force behind much of watch market's growth and development).

However, for today's luxury products, technology has actually changed the entire meaning, concept and perception of luxury itself. The industrial micro-environments of the modern office, home and car have all coalesced together into a new perception of what defines luxury. Where a heavy gold or platinum watch once stood out as a standard for the luxurious, today people are prepared to pay more than four times the price of a platinum watch for one made of a material like ALUSIC, normally used for the construction of telecommunication satellites. A complete tourbillon watch can thus be created weighing less than 29 grams, and this lightness is perceived as an ultimate luxury. In essence it is a transposition of the concepts used in Formula 1 racing where each car is measured by the gram, and no expense is spared to make it lighter. In such a watch, lightness has become a marketable and treasured luxury value driven by our emotional experience of technology.

Companies like TAG HEUER have special R&D departments to research new materials such as non-scuffing, light weight metals or high tech plastics to use in watches and sunglasses, and this information is further shared within the LVMH group to create light weight luggage and other luxury items. Going a step further to methods of production, even stochastic analysis has been used in the creation of luxury watches in order to speed up production and limit development time. These new driving forces of technology have fundamentally altered our experience, valuation and even our emotional responses to what defines luxury in the 21st century as well as the quality of the products themselves.

Karinna Nobbs

Glasgow Caledonian University

The form and function of the luxury fashion flagship store

Since the concept of the flagship store was first introduced to retailing in the 1970's, both its form and function have evolved considerably (Kozinets et al. 2003, Jones & Doucet 2001, Varley 2005, Moore et al. 2000). Today luxury fashion flagship stores are ubiquitous on the prestigious streets of London, New York, Paris and Milan, yet their strategic potential has never been empirically considered. This study contributes to academic enquiry by identifying the form and functions of the luxury fashion flagship in terms of their contribution to brand strategy. A volatile retail environment, increasing online competition and a more discerning global fashion consumer have created a rising number of larger-than-normal, exclusively located and sophisticatedly designed flagship stores. Based on a review of the branding, retail and luxury literature it was concluded that flagships stores could be described as an emerging research interest. Extensive exploratory research in the form of site visits to luxury fashion flagships within five fashion capitals and in-depth interviews with luxury brand personnel were undertaken. This data allowed seven definitive characteristics of a luxury fashion flagship store to be identified. In terms of the role of the flagship store, Moore & Docherty's (2007) conceptual model was confirmed and built upon to reveal five main functions, three of which pertain to brand strategy. In sum, the research makes an academic contribution by offering a definition of a luxury fashion flagship store and by providing two conceptual modules which can now be quantitatively tested. Six critical success factors are also offered for practitioners involved in flagship creation and management.

Co-author: Professor Christopher Moore and Professor Grete Birtwistle

Denise Vernon
University of Salford
The art of wilful extravagance...

The Westwood Label thrives on, and delights in, its contradictory nature. From the luxurious excesses of Watteau's canvases to the individualist anarchy of the Situationists, Westwood is highly eclectic in her sources of inspiration. If luxury is symbolised by the excessive, Westwood's tailoring, volume and materials embrace the decorously unnecessary and luxurious. Clients of Westwood fill the social space and the *mise-en-scène* of their grand performances. From art student to international celebrity, the clothes conjure up fantasies of luxury – wealth, self-possession, self-gratification, power and the confidence of the aristocrat or the aping *bon viveurs* of earlier ages who wore their wealth on their backs. Yet the brand/label is also framed by a street credibility, the envy of any fashion label, sprung from the nexus of pop, fashion and street culture that was Punk. The 2009 spring collection acknowledges trends of individuality and customising with her 'high end' tablecloths (Susannah Frankel, *The Independent* 31/1/2009) attracting the confident younger client. The paper explores the ways this longstanding British label and its remarkable iconic founder reconcile these apparently contradictory forces of anarchy and luxury, and synthesise them to forge an international brand whose appeal has kept pace with the rapidly shape-shifting culture of fashion.

Nicky Ryan
London College of Communication
The new Medici: mediating luxury through art

'We're not so naïve as to think that we don't contribute to this business. But it's beyond money. Above all, I think, it's about the fact that she's afraid of being vulgar.' (M Kimmelman, 'The Patroness', The New York Times. March 23 2008.)

The artist Carsten Höller made this observation about Miuccia Prada and her patronage of the arts. Höller was one of the many artists whose projects such as the recently opened Double Club in London received financial support from Prada. Today some of the most prolific and powerful patrons and collectors in the international art world are the owners of luxury fashion and goods conglomerates. François Pinault the chairman and principal owner of PPR (Pinault-Printemps-Redoute), Bernard Arnault, Chairman and CEO of LVMH (Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy) and Miuccia Prada, owner and Creative Director of Prada, all possess significant art collections and have established independent Art Foundations. This paper aims to explore the rationale behind the increasingly close association of luxury brands with the arts. How is luxury redefined through the patronage of the arts and the appropriation of strategies employed in artistic practice?

A major challenge for luxury fashion companies such as Prada, PPR and LVMH was to sustain growth and enter new markets whilst maintaining the exclusivity of their brand portfolio, thereby addressing the inherent contradiction between the exclusive luxury product and the conditions of mass consumption. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's writings about social distinction and his analysis of the 'field' of cultural production set out in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984) and *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), it will be argued that prestige brand owners are competing for material and economic success, professional power and status within the subfield of luxury fashion. Art is deployed as a crucial weapon in the struggle for domination due to its economic and symbolic value for corporations. Prada, Pinault and Arnault construct an image of themselves as model patrons, funding contemporary art and hiring architects from the international intellectual elite in order to achieve distinction.

This paper is divided into three sections beginning with an analysis of the spectacular luxury flagship buildings created by Prada and Louis Vuitton. The second section focuses on the art foundations established by luxury brand owners including Pinault's Foundation at the Palazzo Grassi (2006), Arnault's Louis Vuitton Foundation for Creation, designed by Frank Gehry due to open in 2010 and the existing Prada Fondazione (1993) and new gallery spaces planned to open in 2012 designed by Rem Koolhaas. The final section will critically engage with the institutional rhetoric generated in relation to these cultural spaces including press releases and promotional books in order to examine the discourses surrounding the mediation of luxury through art.

The paper concludes that the concept of luxury has increasingly become linked with 'artistic creativity' through the patronage of avant-garde art and architecture by the owners of luxury businesses. Flagship stores and corporate museum spaces are designed to appeal to the aesthetic judgement of an affluent and art-savvy audience who respond to a carefully constructed brand image where commercial intentions are obfuscated by the mediation of luxury through art.

Dr Anthony Mangieri

Savannah College of Art and Design

Dress and the art of luxury: embellished textiles, aristocratic identity, and wealth in Ancient Greece

Dress and adornment were significant expressions of wealth in ancient Greece, as they still are today. This paper explores how the representation of embellished garments in Greek art articulates a semantics of luxury that reveals evidence of aristocratic self-fashioning. My goal is to present a cultural history of luxury and dress in ancient Athens. In particular, I show how ornately decorated textiles speak, in part, to the ambivalence towards luxury that was found in ancient Athens with the burgeoning of democracy. While our popular conceptions about luxury are thought to have originated in the Early Modern period, I hope to show how the seeds of these ideas can be traced back to traditions from the Classical world.

Previous scholarship has tended to focus on literary sources that shed light on the world of Homer's "warrior aristocrat." The contribution of this paper is in using images as sources for a cultural history of the Athenian aristocracy and their attitudes towards the tradition of dress and adornment. While only scraps of actual garments have survived from ancient times, the representation of dress in Greek art signals the rich variety of lavish decoration that once adorned garments. Such decoration included patterns and borders, like meanders and palmettes, as well as figural decoration, including animals, monsters, and humans. These could be woven, embroidered, painted, or sewn (as in sequins or appliqués) on garments.

New research on the polychromy of ancient sculpture proves that embellished garments were a major artistic concern not only for vase-painters, but also for the makers of architectural sculpture and votive decorations. In effect, ornate garments serve as signifiers of luxury, which adds layers of meaning to the scenes in which they appear. The elegant dresses point to aristocratic concerns and suggest that the scenes should be interpreted in a context that engages in larger political and economic discourses. The representation of embellished textiles in Greek art parallels the changing fortunes and anxieties of the elite in ancient Athens, debates also found in the laws and writings of Solon and his conflicted attitude towards luxury. Solon was a statesman, legislator, reformer, and poet who became Archon or chief magistrate of Athens in 594 BC, and revised the Athenian constitution at a time when the city was at the brink of civil war because of unrest between the aristocracy and the poor.

The most common ways that ancient Greek dress has been approached is either as a cover that hides the body or as an outward marker of status and identity. In this paper, I also offer a new conceptual model for understanding ancient Greek embellished garments as constructing "sartorial bodies" or "social bodies," in which distinctions between the garment and body are blurred. Such decorative garments not only cover the body and signal luxury, but they become the sign for the cultural body of the ancient aristocracy. The luxury represented by elaborate dress thus becomes inextricably linked with aristocratic traditions and ways of life, ultimately fashioning elite identity.

Nina Levičnik

University of Ljubljana

History of wine consumption vs. architectural design

This paper aims to question the connections between the history of wine consumption and architectural design. The two disciplines/spheres on first sight might be considered as unconnected. The paper, however, contends that a connection between wine and architecture has existed since ancient times and that this connection is especially evident in the luxury segment of the wine market where value, fashion and taste are fundamental imperatives. Here, wine is seen not as an alcoholic beverage but as a product of cultural value.

The key questions are: which segments of wine production do we understand in terms of luxury? When and where are the connections between wine consumption and architecture? What is the influence of architectural design on the wine consumption, especially in the luxury sector of the market? What is the importance of architectural design in the formation of the splendid and inimitable French châteaux (Château Grand-Puy Ducasse, Château Grand-Puy-Lacoste, Château Haut-Brion, Château Mouton-Rothschild) on the one hand and contemporary high-tech wineries (Dominus Winery - California, Bodegas Ysios - Spain, Loisium Kellerwelt - Austria, Petra - Italy) on the other?

In conclusion the paper will, through the evolution of the architectural design of the luxury wine sector, show that luxury is not something static, but dynamic. In the past, wineries used to be little more than a cluster of sheds and cellars, scattered around and below the owner's house or château (This is still the case in the prestigious wine districts of France, Germany and Portugal.) But today world leading architects (among them Santiago Calatrava, Norman Foster, Zaha Hadid, Alvaro Siza, Frank Gehry, and Steven Holl are being challenged to re-imagine the winery as a bold contemporary expression of tradition and innovation, agriculture and technology, production and hospitality.

Luxury has always been closely associated with physical or sensory enjoyment. The creation of wineries as a tourist attraction thus turns wine into a lifestyle product.

Dr Adelina Valente

Escola das Artes, Universidade Católica Portuguesa
Is wood a luxurious material? an approach to the 18th century British influence on Portuguese cabinet-making.

Any eighteenth century furniture study must consider wood as a specific marker of each nation's culture. In Portugal, designers and cabinet-makers made highly idiosyncratic designs based on the woods they had at disposal for an important emerging British market. Several conditions were necessary in Europe to develop these opulent seventeenth and eighteenth century court and ecclesiastical styles. Formative factors included the local supply of technically suitable wood; the excellence of imported woods from the colonies; the use of high quality gold and gilt techniques; a class of patrons eager to consume novelties and fashionable products, and not least the emergence of a community of skilful, well-trained designers and artisans.

Portugal was one of the richest kingdoms in Europe and commerce in gold and precious stones were a valuable colonial business. Dye and medical species as well as shipbuilding woods were also an important source of the country's wealth. Such wealth generated a climate for ostentatious objects and Portuguese cabinet-making activity took advantage of it. Ornament was one of the main design criteria and the use of elaborate gold and silver, and painted decoration were used in abundance. Gold leaf was used in the finishing of ecclesiastical furniture made of local chestnut, a design inspired by the Council of Trent's religious directions.

This type of Baroque furniture is unique in Europe. The coloured and waxed forms of tropical woods challenged cabinet-makers' abilities in the field of domestic furniture production. Portuguese 18th century's design forms show the plasticization of "pau-santo" wood to match the production of the British use of mahogany. Rococo designs such as these also influenced the sinuous lines that William Hogarth painted in his 1745 self-portrait. Portugal was one of the main British trade destinations in the south Mediterranean and large quantities of fashionable furniture of this kind were exported. A British merchant class living in Portugal also spread the taste for such furniture and 'Brazil wood contratadores' special importers such as Purry, Melish and de Visme, participated in an international trade for such products. This paper sets out to examine this important but largely unknown strand of furniture design, one that has survived despite Portugal's dreadful 1755 earthquake.

University of
Hertfordshire

