



# The Luxury Network Newsletter

Luxury & the Manipulation of Desire: Historical Perspectives for Contemporary Debates

June 2014 Issue 4

The Network's third Workshop, on the theme of **The Geography of Luxury: East, West and Global Directions**, was held at Warwick on the 7-9 May 2014. It began with a study day looking at sumptuary laws in a comparative framework, a rare chance to think about this central aspect of pre-modern consumption and legislation and consider more well-known European cases in a global perspective. A fascinating range of papers covered England, Sweden, various parts of Italy, the Hispanic world, South Asia and Japan, and suggested a range of common features that speak to the anxieties aroused by a proliferation of luxury and its consequences for social and political order and the relationship between the state, the economy and consumers.

The second day of the Workshop expanded to include wider historical perspectives on the geographies of luxury, east and west. This culminated in Professor Maxine Berg's fascinating plenary talk on Asian luxury goods in early modern Europe, which, by following the movement of calico textiles produced in Bangladesh, reaffirmed the importance of the influx of eastern luxuries in stimulating European industrial innovation. Other papers examined ramifications of the flow of luxury goods from east to west and back again, from precious gems collected in early modern France to Italian designer handbags consumed in contemporary China, to the unexpected trajectories of clandestine trade and contraband goods stolen and scavenged on the seas in the eighteenth century.



## KEY PARTNERS

Giorgio Riello  
(University of Warwick)

Rosa Salzberg  
(University of Warwick)

Glenn Adamson (Museum  
of Art and Design, New  
York)

Marta Ajmar (Victoria and  
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Maria Giuseppina  
Muzzarelli (University of  
Bologna)

Peter McNeil  
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Catherine Kovesi  
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## Steering Committee

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The Workshop also included a morning devoted to exploring new doctoral research on luxury. Six papers were presented by postgraduate students, crossing disciplines from history to design to marketing. The first three papers covered aspects of the Italian pre-eminence in luxury consumption and production, from the political ramifications of the luxurious outfits of the Venetian Republic's ruling class to the path-breaking appeal of Italian designer Mila Schön's clothes in 1970s Japan. The later papers looked at contemporary iterations of the luxury trade, from the survival of bespoke and handmade traditions in Parisian ateliers to the production and marketing of sustainable luxury in the twenty-first century.

The last part of the Workshop, supported by and held at the Warwick Business School, comprised presentations from historians, scholars of design and fashion, marketing, business and industry figures who considered the global directions of contemporary luxury, with unique perspectives offered on emerging luxury markets such as India, China and Russia. The afternoon returned closer to home, with a focus on "The Britishness of British Luxury". A keynote lecture by Lifan Zhang, Associate Editor at the Financial Times and Editor-in-Chief of FTChinese.com and a creator of the FT's magazine *How to Spend It*, offered an enthralling and personal perspective on the role of the media in communicating ideas of British luxury globally. Finally, a panel session on British luxury began with a short presentation by Andy Parker, head of Global Marketing Communication at Jaguar-Land Rover, who discussed the ideas behind the latest Jaguar campaign and attempts to communicate the virtues of this icon of British luxury to a global audience. This led into a lively discussion with academics from business, history and design backgrounds, about what exactly defines "British luxury" and what challenges it faces in selling itself to the world now and in the future.





## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Fourth Workshop:** Luxury and the Ethics of Greed in the Early Modern World  
Villa I Tatti and European University Institute, Florence, 25-26 September 2014.

**Final Conference:** The Spaces of Luxury: Places, Spaces and Geographies from the Renaissance to the Present, University of Warwick in London , 6-8 February 2015.

**Forthcoming:** The Luxury Network is developing in collaboration with the University of Warwick's Knowledge Centre a new Luxury Page with interviews, podcasts and many other materials. All of this and more coming soon!

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The Leverhulme International Network *Luxury & the Manipulation of Desire* was initiated in 2013 and aims to connect the long history of luxury with the importance that luxury has assumed in contemporary society. It does so by fostering dialogue between academics and curators based in partner institutions and experts, journalists and business people working in the luxury sector internationally. The Network is part of the research activities of the Global History and Culture Centre at Warwick University.

**Global History  
& Culture Centre**  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK



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