

MAKER to LEYER

Cotton Inc: Green & Growing

Ronel Jordaan

2009 Color Trends

Senegal: Organic Cotton
and Natural Dyes

India: Cruelty-free Silk

West Africa: Local Cotton

Lesotho: World's Most
Beautiful Mohair

HOW fiber DEFINES OUR LIVES

spring 2009

Welcome to Aid to Artisans' premiere issue of *Maker to Market*.

Throughout these pages, we will shine a light on the people and processes that bring beauty, heart and soul into your world. The makers, the market, and everything in between.

The makers are undeniably talented crafts people and entrepreneurs who use their hands to design beauty, to commemorate tradition, to remind us that we are all creative beings on this earth together. Artisans have a strong and personal relationship with the materials they use and their crafts offer us opportunity to rebuild our connection with the natural world. Crafts remind us of the maker, the making and the material. Crafts have a story to tell us, the story of the maker behind the products.

The craft market consists of designers, importers, wholesalers, retailers, organizations, and companies that advocate for style and artistry, ethical trade and eco-responsible sustainability. The maker wouldn't exist without the market, nor the market without the maker. Forging these vital links between artisans and the market is central to Aid to Artisans' mission.

In each magazine issue, you'll see regular features such as "Looking Out" where we highlight a person or company that is leading the way in the marketplace. "Looking Forward" will answer the *what's next* in market trends. "Looking In" will take you on an inspiring journey to ATA's programs around the world. Here, you will see that the core of what we do begins with the tenacity of an artisan's entrepreneurial spirit.

This issue's theme pays homage to the natural fiber. The United Nations has declared 2009 the "International Year of the Natural Fibre" in an effort to raise awareness of natural fibers and their sustainability, and foster effective global partnerships among the many natural fiber industries.

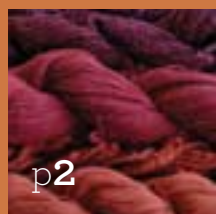
In honoring natural fibers, we celebrate the different materials and techniques used by artisans, as we unite in our efforts to improve each other's lives by connecting fibers, skills and knowledge.

Not only must we recognize the profound influence of natural fibers in our lives, we must also realize that these fibers are a lifeline for millions of people around the world. In many developing countries, natural fibers bring food to people's plates. They help farmers, artisans and entire communities find sustainable income.

This year offers us the chance to pause and think about how natural fibers have connected all of our lives for centuries.

1

CONTENTS



p2

looking out

p2 COTTON INC: GREEN & GROWING

Cotton Inc. continues on the path of sustainable agriculture and maintaining the environment to support production in the future.

p11 RONEL JORDAAN: FIBER ARTIST

Spotlight on an innovative South African textile designer and fiber artist working with ATA's Lesotho program.



p11



p3

looking forward

p6 2009 COLOR TRENDS

Inspirational color trend boards for product design and development. Understand what consumers are looking for in color and why.

looking in

p3 SENEGAL: ORGANIC COTTON AND NATURAL DYES

ATA's pilot program addresses the ginning, carding, spinning and dyeing of Senegal's local and organic cotton.



p5



p10

p5 INDIA: CRUELTY-FREE SILK

Avani, artisan group in ATA's India program, integrates care for the environment and all living things into their silk product production.

p10 WEST AFRICA: LOCAL COTTON

ATA helps add value to the cotton sector in Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali increasing the incomes of farmers and artisans.



p12

p12 LESOTHO: WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL MOHAIR

Artisans in ATA's program spin and weave contemporary products from a special angora goat that roams the wild Maluti mountain ranges in Lesotho.

COTTON INC.

green & growing

As a famous frog once observed, "It's not easy being green." But what appears to be more difficult than being green is defining what it means. For the cotton industry, green begins at the agricultural level with a three-pronged definition of sustainable agriculture: to minimize the environmental footprint, to be economical and profitable and to enhance the quality of life.

The point where these goals intersect, in any given system, is where the net effect comes the closest to meeting the goals of sustainability. Being completely green, or completely sustainable, then, is an ideal that can only be approached with incremental successes.

The green road to sustainable practices is a crowded thoroughfare these days. Some know where they are going, some are along for the ride and others, like the cotton industry, are ahead of the curve. Cotton Incorporated took its first step down the green road to sustainability nearly three decades ago. Since then, the company has been guiding cotton growers to ever-greener pastures of environmental friendliness.

"When you focus on sustainability, you're focusing on maintaining the environment so it will be able to support production in the future," says Dr. Kater Hake, Vice President of Agricultural Research for Cotton Incorporated. "You're also maintaining a quality of life that perpetuates the industry and environmental responsibility."

Cotton farmers have a vested interest in being good stewards of the land. Not only is the land their livelihood, it's where they live and raise their families. Operating clean and green is likely more important to them than to even the most eco-conscious consumers and retailers.

"We live in the middle of a cotton field, so we're very concerned," says farmer John Pucheu. "We're interested in keeping the farm in good shape, environmentally speaking, for future generations."


Over the past year, the eco movement has given consumers an additional point to ponder as they purchase - the environmental impact of what they buy. The Cotton Incorporated Lifestyle Monitor™ Environment Survey (2006) reveals good news and bad news about consumer attitudes. The good news is that consumers are thinking about the environment and are buying earth-friendly products. The bad news is that consumers are confused by the multitude of marketing terms.

Awareness of how the small choices we make add up to a large impact on the world we live in is very high. When respondents to the survey were asked whether they had ever considered purchasing a product and then decided not to because of the products potentially negative impact on the environment, 56% replied "yes."

John and Jane Q. Public have little or no idea what the new, green marketing vocabulary is saying. Because they were unable to differentiate one green category from another, consumers simply stopped looking. In fact, a scant two percent of men and four percent of women stated they spent "a lot of time" seeking out environmentally-friendly clothing.

What they did seek out were bargains. Eighty-one percent of respondents to the Monitor cited price as the key motivating factor to apparel purchasing decisions; a 13-year high. Then, as now, the key factors influencing purchase are price, fit, style and color.

But, all is not lost. Consumers' natural instincts are guiding them not only to good deals, but to a very natural fiber - cotton.

American designers are also finding natural fibers a natural choice for their collections. In a recent issue of InStyle magazine, designer icon Donna Karan remarked on summer apparel: "Clothes are going to cling to you, so there is no choice but to wear cotton, cotton, cotton. A cotton bodysuit is the basis of my whole summer wardrobe." 

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THE NATURAL DYE PROCESS TOUCHES MANY HANDS AND HELPS MANY ECONOMIC SECTORS. IT HELPS AGRICULTURE AND ARTISANS. NATURAL DYES BOOST THE LOCAL ECONOMY. THE MARKET IS BURGEONING AND EVERYBODY WANTS NATURAL DYES. EVERYONE WANTS COLOR ON THEIR COTTON.
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ORGANIC COTTON: it takes a village

In the rural Senegalese villages near Koussanar, a USAID Croissance Economique (Economic Growth) project implemented by ATA is in its beginning stages of helping artisans become more eco-effective with organic cotton, from the ginning, carding, and spinning to the dyeing and making of final products.

Many people, from farmers to artisans, play a key role in the growing and processing of cotton that transforms it into something beautiful and useful. While ATA focuses on assisting artisans to develop and market their crafts, we recognize that our work can't be done without the support of raw material providers and respect for the environment.

La Fédération Yakaar Niani Wulli de Koussanar, an ecology and fair trade focused agricultural non-profit organization representing 80 villages and 2000 producers who are farmers and artisans, is one of these key providers. The group worked with longtime ATA consultant, Docey Lewis, to help improve the artisans' ability to card and spin their local cotton. Though access to organic cotton is limited, working with those artisans who live near the source of the existing organic cotton reduces the high costs of fuel associated with trucking raw materials around the country, and more of the final cost of goods ends up in the hands of the artisans.

Docey, a textile designer and master weaver, worked in the village of Maccanding where spinning and weaving are traditional. Docey taught the artisans how to use new equipment that has already increased their speed. Not only are they now able to spin faster, but they also have more control over the size of their yarn. Combining thick, thin, and medium yarns to make a more complex 2-ply yarn gives the artisans a variety of options for creating novelty yarn, which can be sold to Senegalese weavers and eventually exported to high-end yarn shops around the world.

"As the craft community continues to expand from sites such as Etsy.com and as the economy continues its downturn, consumers are looking for creative ways to give gifts like knitting their own organic blanket made of handspun yarn. Now more than ever, they want to know that their gift is not only environmentally-sound, but

is helping to supply a sustainable income," says Lauren Barkume, ATA Program Coordinator for Africa.

For the natural dye component of the project, ATA called upon the resources of 20 Senegalese dyers including Mariama Sylla, who comes from an esteemed family of natural dyers, and world renowned natural dye consultants Boubacar Doumbia and Michele Wipplinger. Boubacar, a Malian dyer, helped teach the artisans the process of bogolon, painting with mud on naturally dyed cloth, while Michele, owner of Earthues and consultant at Color Marketing Group that forecasts color trends for the design world, focused on a new natural dye palette.

Michele brought mixing spoons, beakers and long rubber gloves. She also brought Earthues dye packets to begin the process of adding color to Senegalese cotton, currently very few plants grown in Senegal are able to give bright colors. She started by showing the artisans a basic palette of current trend colors including deep red, rich purple, indigo blue, green and bright yellow. Once they had this basic palette, she showed the artisans how to experiment and create a variety of additional colors, for example, a yellow dyed cloth dipped with indigo that forms a green or teal depending on the mixture.

Michele also encouraged the artisans to play around with colors, giving them an edge on the standard muted browns and greens one finds in traditional naturally dyed cloth in West Africa. These subtle and muted colors are what most of us associate with natural dyes. Usually, this is because the plants available locally produce those types of colors, but often even if artisans are able to achieve brighter, bolder colors they fade. Michele taught them that the key to fixing natural dyes is a three-step technique she learned from an old dyer in France. First, the cloth must be scoured or cleaned using soda ash, then food-grade alum acetate (the same material used in tooth paste and cake icing) is applied, and finally tannin is added. Tannin comes from a variety of trees native to Senegal and helps absorb and fix the dye into the cotton.

"The natural dye process touches many hands and helps many economic sectors. It helps agriculture and artisans. Natural dyes boost the local economy. The market is burgeoning and everybody wants natural dyes. Everyone wants color on their cotton, no one likes white cotton! The added value to the people who grow and use the dyes and to the final consumer is tremendous," Michele says.

While ATA's pilot project is still in its early phases and there is much more needed to create finished, marketable products, our efforts will continue because of their importance to so many people.

As villages of farmers worldwide continue to grow natural dyes, as Senegalese women spin the cotton yarn, as men weave traditional cotton cloth bands, and as consumers around the world continue to see the eco-value and beauty of naturally dyed organic cotton products, we once again realize how this fiber connects us all. MM

CRUELTY FREE SILK from the himalayas

In a remote region four hours from the nearest roadway, Avani artisans have proven that it is possible to achieve economic and environmental sustainability.

For the past 10 years, these artisans have lived and worked in earthly harmony in the Kumaon Himalayas of India, a mountainous land with a fragile yet abundant ecological system.

Rashmi Bharti co-founded Avani with a steadfast vision: to generate fair trade income for rural artisan communities by creating products that would help protect the fabric of their environment.

When Rashmi met Aid to Artisans in 2006, she learned how to sell her vision to a high end global marketplace that truly values words like natural fiber. With Barefoot College's expertise in solar panels and rainwater harvesting, and ATA's market links, design mentoring and training at the New York International Gift Fair, Avani artisans now produce everything from solar torches to cruelty free silk dresses. Ten years ago, Avani's staff consisted of 20 families in one village. Today, Avani employs almost 550 artisans in 40 villages.


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Could you explain how Avani's silk is cruelty free? Avani's silks are cruelty free because before the cocoon is boiled, the butterfly leaves the cocoon, therefore being allowed to live. In industrial silk production, the worms are boiled in the cocoon. Also, spinning from the cocoon is done by hand rather than on a reel. By hand, this process can be done more carefully.

Where do you sell natural fiber silk and what is the added value? We mostly sell at exhibitions in Delhi and Bombay, and we also export. The added value to our products is the fact that all are made using natural fibers and dyes, we also use eco-friendly processing techniques at the center including solar energy and rain water harvesting, and therefore all the products are made in harmony with nature.

Can you explain your silk-making process? We have 48 looms and production centers in the local villages for spinning. One silk worm produces between 300-400 meters per cocoon. The Oak Tussar is the most complicated of the silks to rear because at the first stage we need to put the plants into a bottle containing water with the worms on the leaves. After 15 days, the water is no longer needed and the worms are just left on the leaves to produce cocoons. The lifecycle of these silk worms is 45 days.

What is the difference between the silks you work with? Mugar is the shiniest of the silks, and also the most expensive because of its shiny quality. The Eri is the warmest of silks. Eri silks also absorb the natural dyes well, whereas the Mugar does not absorb dye at all. Oak Tussar silk absorbs the natural dyes easily, and is cultivated in high altitude only.

Why is it so important that Avani continue its eco-initiatives? The ecology of the Himalayas is very fragile and hence needs to be protected with great intent. It is very important that any income generation program should not bring an adverse effect on the people, soil or water of the area. The process of production is as important as the product itself. We are addressing a market that understands these concerns and is willing to look at alternatives. 

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2009 color TRENDS

In today's age of globalization, the importance of color and its influence on modern life has never been so evident. From cobalt blue kitchen mixers to lime green iPods, consumers are choosing to have color in their lives. A closer look at where these color inspirations come from brings us to West Africa, East Africa, Southeast Asia and India, among other places. To help inform and inspire artisans, designers and creative professionals everywhere, these color trend boards, developed by Michele Wipplinger, guide the way for 2009.

Michele is president of Earthues Inc., an international color and design consulting company specializing in ecology and the artisan. She has over 30 years experience in the field of design and ecological processes, with an emphasis on natural dyes. She is also on the Executive Board of Directors for Color Marketing Group and received the United Nations award for her environmental stewardship on the development of an ecological natural dye process for the American textile industry. To view her work visit www.earthues.com.



White

Whites are about elegance and finishes. They are defined by the materials on which they are applied and the unique ways in which each substrate reacts to the finish. Surfaces such as ceramic, leather, textiles and wood are being treated with white pigments or metallics for special effects. Specifically, the application of a platinum metallic or pearlescent finishes gives a unique patina and luster to flat white surfaces, adding value to the finished goods. All of these special effects are on the rise especially when applied to whites, off-whites and other light neutrals.

Trend forward for 2009-2010: eroded and weathered off-white surfaces; text and graffiti on white walls and ecru cloth, faux textures reminiscent of tree bark on silver vases and transparent molten glass candle shapes.

Orange

Orange is a color in transition. It is moving from a bright yellow-based orange to soft romantic versions of peach, ochre-based bronze, soft floral inspirations of coral and the robust tones of paprika. By the end of 2009 and through 2010, soft mandarin hues and persimmon colors will prevail. Secondary colors of softened red-purples, mauve, mid-tone turquoise and olive green will add color relief and a fresh perspective to the entire orange range.

Primary palette: peach, ochre-based bronze and coral

Secondary palette: paprika and mauve

Accents: turquoise and olive green



SAVE
THE PLANET
WEAR
FLIP-
Flops



from top left going down:

Aqua to Blue Green

Blues of all hues are evident now and will be dominate throughout 2010 and beyond. This focus on blue will usher in a whole range of blues from the deep teals to rich mid-tones of cerulean blue, sky blue, tropical blue and lavender grey. Blue is the new green carrying the environmental message inspired by global warming and our focus on water.

In the midst of this sea of peaceful aqua and teal blue resides a soft grey-purple which blossoms to mauve giving a softness to the palette.

Primary palette: aqua green, teal, turquoise and deep cerulean blue
Secondary palette: true blue, grey green and olive green; mauve
Accents: English red, lime yellow, peach, coral and burnt orange

Coral to Pink

Coral is a soft emerging hue that speaks to fashion—handbags, shoes and jewelry. This color is prevalent on accessories such as ribbons, beads, buttons, metallic appliqué and other decorative elements. A comfortable feminine hue that works well with metallics and the complimentary colors of aqua and soft olive green.

Primary palette: old rose, mauve, pink and cranberry
Secondary palette: magenta, desaturated blue purple and persimmon
Accents: old gold metallic, mandarin and nicoise green

Yellow

Acid yellow is going out in favor of a warm, red-infused yellow that is easy to apply across many product categories. It is a glowing hue that is floral-based, Buddhist inspired, psychologically uplifting and speaks to ecological concerns and hope for the future.

Interesting color combinations using this fresh yellow include a range of soft ochre reds, blood orange and bronze. The addition of aqua, soft mauves and navy blue will add a punch to this soft gentle yellow.

Primary palette: yellow, soft lime and golden yellows
Secondary palette: rich red brown, peach and bronze
Accents: grey mauve, soft aqua and desaturated navy

Green

Greens have evolved from a strenuously acidic color to a softer variation of a lime green. This version of green supports olive green, yellow-green, brown-green and ochre gold. Lime green is a young color that is ecologically inspired. Look for it to last for another year and then to be replaced with “basil green,” a green that is a darker and richer option to the light yellow-based greens we are now enjoying.

Primary palette: tempered lime green and mid-tone olive green
Secondary palette: a russet orange, dark cerise and blood orange
Accents: mauve, blue-purple and a serious true royal purple

Indigo Blue

There can never be enough blue, especially indigo blue! Throughout Southeast Asia, India and West Africa, indigo blue is dominant. It is the only true natural blue dye. Although indigo blue

never really becomes passé, it is currently an important trend driven hue as we consider not only its color, but also its ecological contribution as a nitrogen fixer to improve soil.

Indigo blue is used in combination with lacquer reds and persimmon to create artistic colors that can be used in home furnishings, fashion and ceramics. Blue is a calming color—a collective color of the spirit.

Primary palette: dark navy blue to sky blue
Secondary palette: rich aubergine over lacquer reds
Accents: olive greens to aqua with persimmon

Neutrals

Neutrals continue to be trend-forward especially when textured and eroded. The importance of texture supports the light reflectivity of natural materials. Lamps are now being made wholly of root balls that are carved and shaped to allow light to leak out and create artful spokes of pattern that quiver across a ceiling. The qualities of wood, twigs, stone and grasses bring a fresh textural experience to natural materials and finishes. Neutrals have diversified beyond wood to include bamboo, recycled goods of all shapes, plastic shipping materials and weathered bits of glass, cloth and paper. The colors of these neutrals include an olive grey-green, the adobe red of Santa Fe and a grey-beige palette reminiscent of West African mosques.

Primary palette: coffee browns, espresso, adobe and mulberry
Secondary palette: grey ochre, taupe and greige
Accents: olive grey-green and mauve grey

Magenta

No palette is complete without a red-based purple. India is the inspiration where magenta dominates the landscape. The tints and shades of this color offer brilliant combinations. This palette evokes happiness and the melding of Asian and African sensibilities with a modern Western outlook. Look for these colors to remain trend forward through 2010.

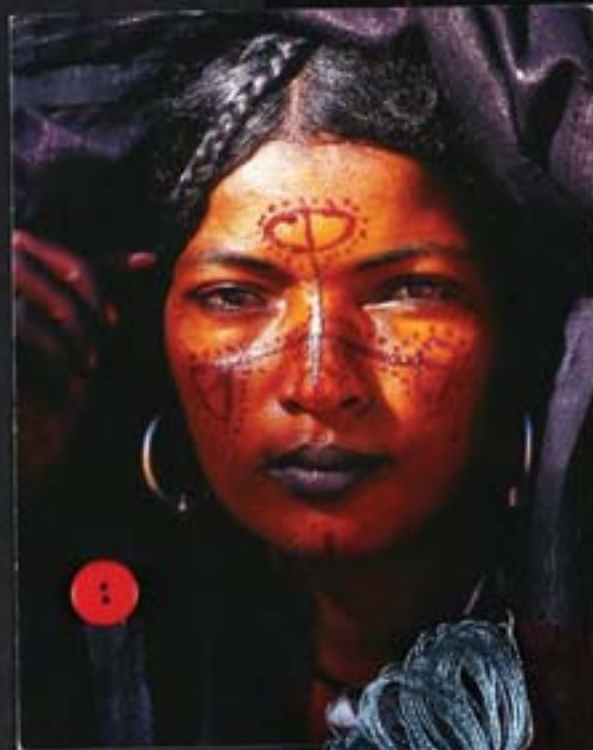
Primary palette: berry, mauve and cool red
Secondary palette: apricot, ochre and soft lime green
Accents: mid-tone blue and regal purple

next page: Blue-Purple

The mysterious blue-purples of the Sahara present a somber yet exotically electrified color palette. The North tip of Africa, West Africa and parts of East Africa, influences the colors: eroded purple blue, denim black, dark henna brown and dark indigo blue. The Tuareg people, sometimes called the “Blue People” because the indigo pigment of their traditional robes and turbans stain their skin dark blue, migrate from Mali to Morocco living along the edge of the Sahara throughout their journey.

Primary palette: navy blue, grey purple and a rich saturated teal
Secondary palette: a tonal range of hues from cranberry to mauve
Accents: pale golden ochre, soft orange and paprika





LIGHTEN UP

This manipulated photograph, showing the world at night, provides ample evidence of the need for a better power supply in developing nations. Since the 1970s, improvements have been made to bring electricity to countries in Latin America, Asia and the Middle East, but so far Africa has lagged behind with only 21 percent of the population having access to electrical power. It Bank is expecting a big power surge over the next especially in Africa and South Asia.



LOCALLY GROWN COTTON BRINGS SUCCESS TO west african artisans

Ten million people in West Africa depend on cotton for their livelihoods, according to Oxfam. The cotton sector in Benin, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Mali employs around 2 million people and accounts for 50% - 75% of export earnings. Equally important, in many rural areas where poverty is high, the sale of cotton seed is the main or only source of cash revenue for farmers. It is therefore critical in the fight against poverty.

Aid to Artisans is doing its part to help this important sector through its West African Cotton Improvement Program (WACIP), funded by USAID through the International Fertilizer Development Center. There are many players within this project assisting with all aspects of the cotton sector—from soil fertility, pest control and production yield increase, to adding value to the cotton itself. This last part is where ATA comes in: working with artisans to develop products from locally grown cotton increases their incomes and creates more market demand for the cotton.

In late October at SIAO—Africa's largest handcraft show—a 72 year-old artisan named Gisele Ouedraogo regained hope.

She received her first major \$500 order for her locally grown cotton products from Design Afrika.

“Participating at SIAO with ATA and WACIP was a life changing experience,” she said with her head held high.

Many more gifted artisans emerged from SIAO with distinguished honors—Madame Bassan Sacko, from Mali, received a second place award for her creativity in textiles, and Madame Toe Salimata, from Burkina Faso, won not one but two prizes for her creativity in textiles. The SIAO jury was awe struck by her yarn products and woven baby clothes made from naturally dyed cotton.

What all of these artisans have in common aside from their undeniable talent is that they created their products using locally grown cotton.

“In Benin, one artisan, Ludovic Fiogbe, was using Chinese cotton. We told him he would do better, sell better and have better quality if he used locally grown. After looking at his new products and seeing how they sold at the October SIAO trade show, he realized its potential on his own,” said Maud Mabika, ATA Program Coordinator for WACIP.

Since working with ATA for the past year, nearly 50 percent of the local-cotton producing groups have had their first export experience in the U.S. At the SIAO trade show alone, these artisans sold out their entire 60 square meter booth, earning profits of nearly \$25,000.

“This is one reason why it is so important for African artisans to focus on local cotton, because the production of this high quality is difficult and impossible for the huge U.S. or Chinese cotton farms,” said Frederic Alcantara, an ATA design consultant. MM



RONEL JORDAAN: NATURAL FIBERS FORM the fabric of our lives

Ronel Jordaan, a top South African textile designer for 28 years, has always been drawn to natural fibers. Ronel's most recent journey as a product development consultant with ATA has taken her to Lesotho, where she is doing design work with four mohair weaving houses; Elelloang, Helang Basali, Maseru Tapestries and Mats and Hatooa Mose Mosali.

Below, Ronel gives us insight into her fascinating career and how she feels the uniting force of natural fibers.

What led you to work with natural fibers? I did a course in Art Therapy and for one of my projects, I worked on felted wool. I loved the “hands on” feeling. The effect of the process is very cleansing and healing. I made the decision to start a felting business using South African merino wool for its high quality and easy access, and the fact that it is a renewable resource. Hand made felt is very labor intensive and thus I could create opportunities for other women to learn a new skill, improve their lives and that of their families.

On your most recent ATA design consultancy in Lesotho, did you learn anything from the artisans and what might you have taught them? The opportunity to explore products that use only resources available in rural areas in Lesotho. I learned that most artisans do not have access to good spinning wheels or wool and mohair (the best quality is currently exported). I saw how the artisans support each other and their patience and hard work, particularly with the older women.

On my first trip, I demonstrated how to layer felt (packing the wool/mohair in a warp and weft). Artisans learned to felt a scarf with the design added with spun mohair, and how to use techniques that are fast to improve production. They loved making a ‘fabric’ out of raw wool. They were trained to do three dimensional objects and to use recycled materials. I have exposed them to using frame looms to produce products they thought were not possible (scarves), and to not be constrained by the warp of the loom.

I'd love to get your thoughts on a central theme of our magazine—how fiber impacts all of our lives in some way.

Natural fibers have been used for centuries by humans in trade across valleys, borders, oceans. It has exposed us to other cultures. We've made new friends. It has kept us warm in winter, cool in summer. We have been able to use its healing properties and its strength in war and peace. It has been used in building homes, in our transport (road, air, sea). How fortunate we are!

What can we gain from recognizing 2009 as the “International Year of the Natural Fibre?” It will make us aware of the broad spectrum of fibers' availability, qualities and benefits. It will expose us to different techniques used by artisans and industries. It will hopefully unite us in our efforts to improve each others' lives through connecting our fibers, skills and knowledge.

How do you combine your love for nature and imaginative design vision to create such compelling finished products?

Observation is an integral part of the design process, and there is no better place for me to observe than nature. There are infinite possibilities! I love the challenge of exploring the possibilities of technique and fiber to create a product that will give enjoyment to the user.

Can you talk about the story behind your rock ottomans? They started their journey as pebbles! I was inspired by a South African architect who used real rock chips as a curtain in a Lodge. I have pebbles imbedded around a fireplace at my home- observation lead me to the creation of first pebbles that “grew” into different sized rocks. ■■



“OBSERVATION IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE DESIGN PROCESS, AND THERE IS NO BETTER PLACE FOR ME TO OBSERVE THAN NATURE.”

THE WORLD'S MOST beautiful mohair

“**LESOTHO MOHAIR IS WIDELY CONSIDERED TO BE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL IN THE WORLD. IT COMES FROM A SPECIAL ANGORA GOAT WITH THIN, GORGEOUS HAIR THAT GRAZES THE WILD MALUTI MOUNTAIN RANGES.**”

Lesotho artisans have spent many years working with mohair from goats. They create the entire product by hand, carding and spinning the yarn and then weaving it into finished pieces. The weaving businesses are typically comprised of a spinner or two who also cards the fibers, a few artisans who dye and a number of weavers and felters. Although the artisans work in separate weaving houses, they do share work when they receive big orders. Lesotho mohair is widely considered to be the most beautiful in the world, it comes from a special angora goat with thin, gorgeous hair that grazes the wild Maluti mountain ranges.

ATA has spent the past year teaching new techniques, designs and business skills to these talented artisan weavers in Lesotho with funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Ronel Jordaan, a highly creative designer who has always been inspired by natural fibers, was hired as a product design consultant. She helped Lesotho artisans design new products that would sell both regionally and locally, thus generating more income for them and their families. With her guidance, the artisans are now learning how to use wool from sheep as well as mohair to create innovative products.

Ronel, along with Aid to Artisans' South Africa Trust, has been teaching the weavers to apply trend-forward colors to their finished products. Using these colors, the artisans are learning how to make pillows, floor mats, bags, felted dolls, and stunning, textured, handspun and woven scarves using frame looms (a rare skill not used in most parts of the world). The artisans are also learning to work more with different types of wool including Karakul, a particularly rough wool from the karakul sheep. Karakul is ideal for easy felting and produces wonderfully textured results.


“We always talk to the artisans about what they would like to make, but very often they are not sure about new designs. It is so important to use contemporary designers who are in touch with trends and what is hot and happening in the markets we want to help the artisans access. What we do is bring knowledge and information about the artisans, what skills they have, what raw materials they use and have access to, to the designers. They in turn bring market and trend information and their designs to the artisans, incorporating that knowledge and thus creating new marketable, income-generating products,” says Kate Chisholm, ATA's Project Manager in Lesotho.

So far, ATA's training has helped Lesotho artisans exhibit at major regional trade shows including Decorex and the Morija Festival.

“The quality is fabulous. The designs are contemporary, and the colors are trend-forward as Ronel is great at that!” says Kate.

Capitalizing on the growing eco-market demand, Ronel and Kate are also working with Lesotho artisans to collect scraps from fabric producing factories, as well as other potential recycled raw materials. Using these fabric scraps, the artisans are creating products such as floor mats and they are stuffing ottomans with the recycled materials. Hopefully, these products will soon be available to the international market.

“At the Morija Festival we attended in early October, King Letsie the 3rd was quite taken with the recycled products. It was very exciting for everyone to get the attention,” says Kate.

Perhaps even more exciting, is that Neiman Marcus has shown preliminary interest in throws based on a Lesotho Hatooa Mose Mosali mohair weave scarf. A Neiman's buyer visited Ronel's stand at Maison & Objet in Paris in September, saw the scarf and loved it. The weavers at Hatooa completed the sample throw a month later, and the entrepreneur export ATA mentored has contacted Neimans. 



“
 AFTER GOD WHO
 CREATED THE EARTH
 AND EVERY LIVING
 THING, COMES THE
 ARTISAN, ME. ARTISANS
 CREATE EVERYTHING
 ELSE, FROM THE
 PILLOW YOU SLEEP
 WITH TO THE PURSE
 YOU USE EVERY DAY.
 I AM PROUD OF
 BEING AN ARTISAN!
 ”

- INNOCENT SOMKEITA,
 BURKINA FASO ARTISAN



TO THE trade

Here is an abbreviated list of natural fiber-focused conferences happening around the world in 2009. Go to www.naturalfibres2009.org for a full listing and details.

February 17 2009: IYNF 2009 Reception, in Brussels

March or April 2009: Natural fibres exhibition and natural fibres symposium, Beijing, China.

April 16-18 2009: International Seminar on "Emerging Trends in Production, Processing and Utilisation of Natural Fibres," Mumbai, India.

June 17 -18 2009: International Natural Fibres Congress, Frankfurt, Germany

August 2009: Tanzania: an exhibition and conference for the region to include East Central and Southern African producers of natural fibres.

September 3-4 2009: 10th International Cotton Conference, Gdynia, Poland. The conference will focus on the IYNF, including the role of natural fibers in the modern world, their role in sustaining and supporting developing countries, the contribution of natural fibers to ecological lifestyles and new applications and natural fiber processing technologies.

September 21-25 2009: International conference "Organic and Fair Trade Cotton - From Fashion to Sustainability," Switzerland.

November 3-6 2009: International mohair summit, South Africa, organized by Mohair South Africa.

PRODUCT sourcing

If you are a retailer or wholesaler interested in direct importing, we can assist you with your sourcing needs. As consumers become more educated, they are insisting upon ethical sourcing. We can be your trustworthy guide to socially responsible artisan enterprises.

Because we work so closely with artisans, we know their lives, their goals, their needs, their traditions, their materials and their villages. We believe that we are not only helping your business to connect with a new product resource, but with an artisan community.

Some current products and materials:



El Salvador

Hanging basket made from woven wicker wrapped around a metal frame



Mali

Batik pillows on locally grown cotton



Colombia

Fused glass for home décor and jewelry



South Africa

A wide range of products made from traditional Schwesche fabric



Burkina Faso

Tie-dyed curtains on locally grown cotton

Contact Colleen Pendleton, Sales & Marketing Director at Colleen_Pendleton@aidtoartisans.org for more information.

ABOUT ata

Mission

We create opportunities for low income artisans around the world to build profitable businesses inspired by handmade traditions. We offer access to new markets, business training, eco-effective processes and design innovation through a network of partners to promote sustainable growth and community well-being.

Programs

Currently, Aid to Artisans has programs in the Caribbean, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Mexico, India, Jordan, Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Mali, Senegal and South Africa.

Results & Impact

Artisan craft businesses play a vital role in the local economy of developing countries, constituting the largest sector of rural employment after agriculture. ATA has spent 32 years improving the lives of over 100,000 artisans in more than 110 countries where livelihoods, communities and craft traditions are at risk.

Over the past 10 years, ATA's efforts leveraged nearly \$230 million in retail sales.

Funding

Our work is made possible by the support from governmental institutions, multilateral organizations, foundations and corporations such as American Express Foundation, Ford Foundation, International Finance Corporation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the U.S. Agency for International Development. ATA programs are also supported by the generous donations of individuals and the active participation of designers, importers and retailers.

Aid to Artisans

“

NATURAL FIBERS HAVE BEEN USED FOR CENTURIES BY HUMANS IN TRADE ACROSS VALLEYS, BORDERS, OCEANS. IT HAS EXPOSED US TO OTHER CULTURES. WE'VE MADE NEW FRIENDS. IT HAS KEPT US WARM IN WINTER, COOL IN SUMMER. WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO USE ITS HEALING PROPERTIES AND ITS STRENGTH IN WAR AND PEACE. IT HAS BEEN USED IN BUILDING HOMES, IN OUR TRANSPORT (ROAD, AIR, SEA). HOW FORTUNATE WE ARE!

”

- RONEL JORDAAN, SOUTH AFRICAN TEXTILE DESIGNER

Photo: Kate Chisholm, Angora goat taken outside the Hatooa Mose Masali's workshop in front of the Mountain of the Eagle.



Rolland Hitech30 contains 30% post-industrial recycled fibre, is certified Environmental Choice and manufactured using biogas energy.