

# Collaborating with Fair Trade Producers: Design and Trends

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1. Level	UG
2. Pre-requisite knowledge required by educators	D. Specific knowledge required: Knowledge of fashion industry and trend forecasting
3. Pre-requisite knowledge required by students	D. Specific knowledge required: Knowledge of fashion industry and trend forecasting
4. Number of students	Any number
5. Length of time required	One term
6. Type of activity	Group work, Ideas for projects, assignments and briefs, Practical
7. Discipline	Design, Marketing
8. Topics covered	Environment, Fair trade, Ethical initiatives / brands, Textiles, Trade

## OBJECTIVES / LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Understanding and experience of ethical trading issues.
- Recognising and understanding the value of historical/traditional influences related to design.
- Gaining new practical skills through primary research.
- Exploring and understanding the refinement of technique.
- Understanding the importance of the needs of a specific market and the potential and sensitive relationships with traditions.
- Understanding and awareness of the subtleties in both design and communication.



Over the past five years at the University of Brighton, we have gradually been incorporating into our programmes a number of events and projects to raise and develop students' awareness of both ethical and ecological issues relating to the fashion and textile industries. Two years ago, the new MDes courses in Textiles and Fashion were validated, integrating these issues into specific objectives and learning outcomes for each unit of study.

In 2006, I met Judith Condor-Vidal from Trading for Development, and associate member of the World Fair Trade Organisation (IFAT), at a 'Fashioning an Ethical Industry' training event, and we have developed many allied projects since then.

Over five weeks in June/July 2007, we ran a series of twelve workshops with IFAT members/producer groups in the alpaca regions of Latin America (Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile). These included showing knitted textile and knitwear designs developed by our students in targeted projects that had focused on an understanding of the communities' abilities and needs. We also discussed the importance of quality control and exchanged technical skills. From the mutual insight gained, it was possible to progress design samples, which were presented to buyers at Topshop, La Redoute and other European fashion outlets. An exhibition showing a film, photographs and artefacts from the workshops and the visit was displayed at the university and several students are currently organising placements with some of the groups. We also met with representatives from the British Embassies in each country, to help ensure their future support for our projects.

In a further project, a team of Level 2 students produced a 'trend newsletter' featuring student designs for distribution throughout the IFAT network. The first pilot issue was prepared for the May 2008 COFTA (Cooperation for Fair Trade in Africa) conference for African members of the IFAT network, held in Cairo. Noel Chapman presented the newsletter, entitled '*Translate*'. Two students, Laura Andrews and Laura Gokhale, presented it at workshops they ran for producer groups in Ecuador. In addition, it was sent for the Rio de Janeiro IFAT conference for South American producers in August 2008 and to the Sri Lankan IFAT conference for Asian producers in October 2008. After comment and feedback from IFAT members, we plan to create further issues on a regular basis, involving students at all levels. If this proves to be beneficial and is well received,

it might be possible to include contributions from students attending other universities.

## **PROJECT BRIEF: TREND NEWSLETTER FOR 2009/2010**

UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON SPRING TERM 2008  
SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE  
AND DESIGN – TEXTILES  
TEXTILES FOR FASHION, PRODUCT AND  
PRESENTATION UNIT CODE AD29 I  
LEVEL TWO KNITTED TEXTILES

### **A University of Brighton Project for the World Fair Trade Organisation (IFAT)**

This is planned as the pilot for a long-term project. Each year a new group of students will take the helm. The newsletter will be distributed amongst all IFAT members globally. We hope that there would be a possibility of the recipients sharing its contents as far afield as possible, thus creating a multiplying effect and enabling accessibility to those who may not have internet access or are unable to read.

The newsletter will provide information on future trends, drawing on informed research and your innate "finger on the pulse" to forecast and create sympathetic designs that will provide valuable information to producers who do not usually have access to this information. There might be a small section for information on a particular traditional design from a specific country (preferably one that fits in with the trends being discussed). This would provide a knowledge exchange from producer to producer and celebrate traditional skill and design.

As this is the first issue, you will need to come together as a team to discuss the format, title, focus and identification of trends. Then decide to each develop a specific theme, which will relate to your knitwear project. Next term, all information and designs will be drawn together, critically selected and professionally brought to a conclusion.

There will be a legally binding agreement stating that the knowledge and design ideas for the newsletter are regarded as a donation.



You will be introduced and sensitised to the general themes through tutorials and workshops on fair trade with Noel Chapman and Judith Condor-Vidal.

Your learning benefits will include:

- Understanding and experience of ethical trading issues.
- Recognising and understanding the value of historical/traditional influences related to design.
- Gaining new practical skills through primary research.
- Exploring and understanding the refinement of technique.
- Understanding the importance of the needs of a specific market and the potential and sensitive relationships with traditions.
- Understanding and awareness of the subtleties in both design and communication.



This is an excerpt from:

### **Sustainable Fashion: A Handbook for Educators**

Edited by Liz Parker on behalf of Fashioning an Ethical Industry, UK, and Marsha A. Dickson on behalf of Educators for Socially Responsible Apparel Business, USA.

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