

FRESH INSIGHTS | INSPIRED APPLICATIONS

## The Future of Luxury: A Fleeting Experience?

From Ian Schrager to Giorgio Armani, the luxury industry has recently fallen in love with 'experience.' Major players around the globe are heralding ephemeral emotional fulfillment as the bright horizon of the next consumer age. And the numbers seem to confirm this prognostication: in 2006 alone total luxury sales grew more than 14%.

Luxury, at its core, has always been a way for people to flaunt their place in the worldwide social hierarchy. So while the nouveau riche of the world now style the once inaccessible wares of Burberry and Prada, luxury experiences like 'carbon neutral' weddings and graffiti-art customized sneakers remain the untrammelled elite expressions: perishable, singular and loaded with quiet superiority.

But even as experience is the desire of the moment, it is far from a permanent

panacea for an industry characterized by change. As long as there are unwashed masses, people will create new and unpredictable symbols of status to escape them. Experience may be elusive, exclusive and expensive, but it won't be the ultimate aspiration for long.

With massive advances in environmental sustainability, genetic engineering and mobile technology waiting just a few years around the corner, a new wave of luxury signifiers is inevitable. So, enjoy the experience while it lasts.



### SOURCE STIMULUS

Having an LCD TV is a status symbol for people in Japan today, but the origin of the TV is the true luxury

## Luxury on display

SHARP's new "Kameyama Model" TVs are made exclusively at the Japanese Kameyama LCD Panel Plant. The line was a response to consumer demand for premium models specifically made in Kameyama, as Japanese consumers believe that Japanese electronics, while more expensive than those from other countries, have superior safety and performance.

Field notes from our Global Source trendspotters

### EXPERT THINKING

## Attitudes towards social responsibility are affecting the design world

"I think the general cultural trend is towards fair trade and an interest in supporting indigenous culture and independent artists and non-mainstream things. That sort of 'lefty' type of mentality has totally sunk into jewelry and most designer people are interested in the limited edition, small, local, and independent products. That couldn't be more popular right now."



Grace Bonney is the home design maverick at the helm of cult Brooklyn blog, Design\*Sponge

Business observations from our Expert Council

Infinia Foresight is a Predictive Marketing Consultancy. We design strategies for a changing world to help companies anticipate and capture future opportunity.

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Infinia Foresight  
phone 212 463 5100  
email info@infiniaforesight.com  
www.infiniaforesight.com