

INTERVIEW

between Catherine Day, London-based design-student,
and Jolijn Fiddelaers, owner `IXXinspires&creates`:



First of all, let me thank you for agreeing to be interviewed about your experience as a designer working with artisans in India.

You're welcome!

1. My first question is why as a designer from Western Europe you have decided to work with craftspeople in India?

In 2010 I started up my new company **IXX** - designstudio and label:

IXX – LABEL for exclusive and sustainable products.

IXXcreates – STUDIO for product-development & co-creation.

IXXinspires – lectures & workshops to express our vision.

My vision is that designers, being professional `creators`, have a unique chance to contribute to a more beautiful, more sustainable and more conscious life on our planet. In this respect I am always looking for interesting projects and collaborations in which I can actually contribute to a better world by simply using my talents and expertise in the `right` way. All IXX-projects are sustainable in one way or the other. The `IXX-meets-India`-project is one way to act, produce and trade sustainable. I see this project as a cross-cultural partnership with valuable chances for both partners to learn and benefit.

2. What do you think designers from developed countries can offer craftspeople in countries like India?

I've worked as an industrial textile-designer and as a teacher at the Academy of Visual Arts & Design in Maastricht. So I know what the industry is about and what the schools focus on. My experience is that our Western society is built on conceptual and scientific values. It would be great if we could learn how to dedicate our competences to support `the whole` (the eco-system we are part of) without judging other peoples position as right or wrong.

3. For this project you are working with a NGO for handloom-weavers. How did the collaboration come about? Where are you now?

Though I don't believe in coincidence I just `happened` to meet Annapurna, from the NGO, in Maastricht at my studio. She was getting her masters-degree at Maastricht University and for a survey she and a classmate interviewed me about `colours`. We slightly spoke about India and she invited me to come over once. The next day I realized I was very enthusiastic about the idea and I actually wanted to go there. Two months later, in February 2010, I flew to India to learn more about the country and to discover the possibilities for collaboration. I met the team of designers and craftspeople and I felt connected right away! We got to know each other and found

out that we shared values and we had faith in each other's expertise. We decided to work together. Back home I designed a collection that was suitable for their production-methods and they started working with my designs. Six months later I visited India again and we finished the prototypes for this collection. In 2011, they actually started producing for IXX and I received the first stocks a few months later. In 2011 I launched the IXX-meets-INDIA-collection and in 2012 we served our first big BtoB-client. Now, in 2013 both IXX and our Indian partners are ready to scale the business and grow the market. Currently IXX is looking for a marketing/sales-partner to achieve this with.

4. What were the key challenges overall in this project? What do you think are the key challenges going forward?

It was a challenge to comprehend each other despite cultural differences, also design-wise. I think we succeeded. Currently we are working on optimizing communication, distribution and quality. Indian craftspeople are very skilled, but in India it's very common to accept f.e. small holes in the fabric. Our Western quality-standards are extremely high. And we are very organized and structured. That is certainly not the case in India... You should only experience the Indian traffic to understand what I mean. The main challenge for the future will be to keep up with time-schedules, scale the business and improve / maintain high quality-standards.

5. Given the complex nature of sustainability issues in countries like India and the role of textile production in these issues, in what way can designers from Western Europe make a positive difference?

Designers could make a positive difference if they are willing to take the time to investigate and understand the Indian traditions, culture and society. Social, cultural, economical and environmental issues are as important as design-issues when it comes to projects like this. Designers should be able to understand 'the whole' and base their decisions and actions on that.

Thank you!