

Book Review

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Fashionopolis: The Price of Fast Fashion and the Future of Clothes

By Dana Thomas

DANA THOMAS
FASHIONOPOLIS



**THE PRICE OF
FAST FASHION &
THE FUTURE OF
CLOTHES**

Review By Meyla Bianco Johnston

One of the last eco-conscious and socially responsible frontiers is definitely fashion.

Consider this:

- Nearly 70 million barrels of crude oil are used to make virgin polyester each year. In the past twenty years Americans have doubled the volume of clothes they throw away each year, from a mind-boggling 7 million tons to 20.
- In the early 1990s, the average American bought 40 garments annually with the vast majority ending up in landfills, putting them in the category of “disposable.”
- From 2000 to 2015, the world population grew by one fifth, and clothing production *doubled*, according to “The End of Trash,” in the March 2020 issue of *National Geographic*.
- Microplastics from synthetics have become ubiquitous in every ocean in the world and harm sea creatures as well as humans. Studies now being conducted are uncovering shocking damage that is escalating rapidly.
- Young women, often the most vulnerable in the workforce, are being subjected to inhuman work conditions in many offshore garment factories where regulations are close to non-existent. They are paid so little that they become trapped into what amounts to indentured servitude with no hope for escape. Safety conditions are often appalling, and lives are lost regularly in horrific accidents.
- The seemingly altruistic act of donating clothes may have less

benefit than you think. First of all, only 15% of clothes are donated instead of thrown into a landfill. Of these, just 1/5 go to those in need of clothes, with many donated clothes being sold for profit.

If these facts intrigue and horrify you, don't miss *Fashionopolis*, a book that can quickly bring anyone up to speed. By shining a bright and unyielding light on fashion falsehoods and little-known practices, it offers a formidable education on the reality of textiles today.

A Brief History

Fashionopolis explains how the advent of the lockstitch sewing machine in the 1830s ushered in an era of previously unimaginable industrial clothes manufacture that has evolved into a very complex system that is changing dynamically.

For instance, in 1965, there were few Chinese-owned workshops on the Lower East Side of New York City, a total of about 35. But by 1980, those 35 stores had grown to 430 and em-

many say has never recovered.

However, Nashville is now emerging as the fashion hub of the United States, behind only Los Angeles and New York. A large portion of the work here began with government contracts, including military garb, but costume design for the music industry is also an important segment. And creative brands are cropping up all over with an eye toward supply chain, provenance and sustainability.

There Is Hope

While *Fashionopolis* competently shows the stark reality of today's clothes industry, it also offers positive examples of how things are changing for the better.

As conscientious companies have become aware of the problems inherent in industrial clothing manufacture, they have vowed to change, even when it costs them.

The Clean Clothes Campaign is a \$30 million endowment underwritten by brands to mitigate financial strain for those who have been hurt in industrial accidents.

Rightshoring is the process of getting the manufacturing that went overseas with NAFTA back into the United States.

ployed 20,000 people. And from the mid-seventies on, Hong Kong was the largest clothing exporter in the world, primarily producing lower-end Western clothes.

In the early 1990s, Los Angeles replaced New York's garment district as the main American fashion production hub. But 1994's North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) abruptly moved most of these jobs overseas, leading to a slowdown of the American garment industry that

Rightshoring is the process of getting the manufacturing that went overseas with NAFTA back into the United States. And it is working, because apparel and textiles are the third-most rightshored sectors recently. But when the companies return, it isn't just business as usual as when the work left America. Companies are dedicated to rebuilding the stateside textile economy deliberately and with a sustainable long game in mind. Now, social issues,

technology and blockchain transparency rule the day.

The Higg index measures companies on these merits, allowing consumers to clearly see if they want to buy the product based on their carbon footprint and social and labor practices.

Denim is being reimagined using natural indigo dyes instead of the dreadfully toxic synthetic dyes so harmful to the natural world. Now, 99.99 percent of denim is dyed with synthetic indigo which contains ten chemicals, many of which, such as benzene, cyanide, formaldehyde and petroleum, are known to be toxic and even carcinogenic.

Technology is growing exponentially, and paradigms are shifting. Examples of innovation include bonding machines, which seal seams without sewing them.

When each shopper can connect a \$3 Wal-Mart tee shirt with the devastating consequences to people and the environment, and *not* make that purchase, things will improve for the most vulnerable in the work force and the environment can recover from decades of industrial pollution.

This well researched and rigorously documented book provides a crash course for anyone interested in fashion, clothes or making a difference through their consumer power.

Look for it in your local library or anywhere books are sold. ●



China's Consumer Power

Factors such as rapid industrialization, rising incomes, increasing urban living, improved education, postponed life stages and greater mobility are rapidly increasing consumer spending in China.

China is currently the second largest economic power worldwide, attracting attention from large multinational companies who realize China cannot be ignored.

The Chinese per-household disposable income of urban consumers doubled between 2010 and 2020. Middle classes are expanding more quickly than any other country has, historically.

China's economy will surpass the United States and become the #1 economic global powerhouse in 2032 if trends continue.

In China, 100 million households earn at least 60,000 yuan per year (about \$9,000) 2010 to 2020 – roughly equivalent to the U.S. This will double consumer spending power in nearly a quarter of China's cities and counties in the next ten years.

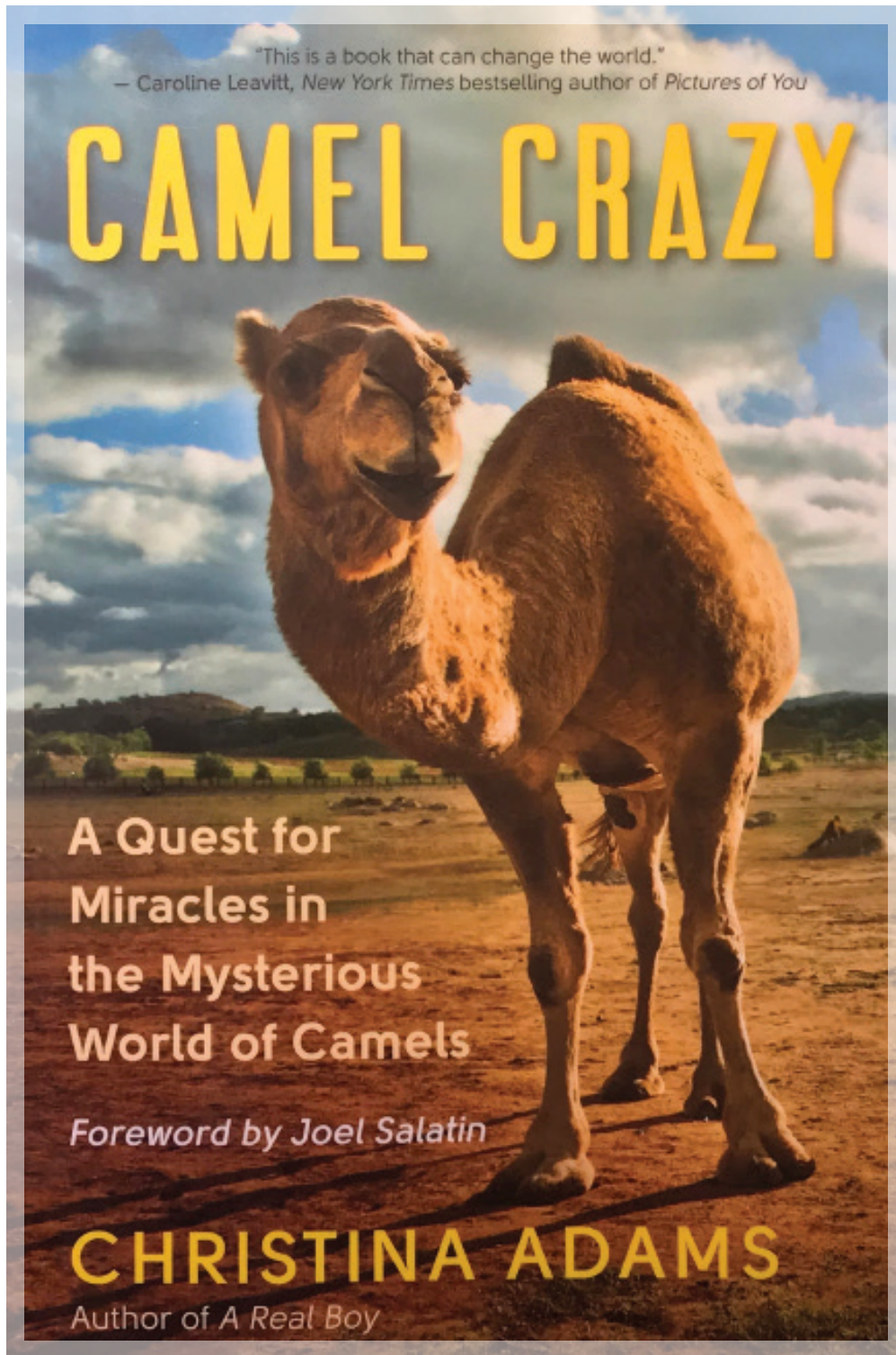
Chinese consumers are increasingly choosing to pay for small and large ticket items with apps instead of credit cards.

China's luxury market grew 20 percent year-on-year in 2018 for the second straight year. Millennials (relying on wealthy parents' income) and women make up the bulk of these buyers.

From 2015 to 2018, Chinese domestic luxury spending increased from 23 percent to 27 percent.

By 2025, the disparity between luxury shopping abroad and in China is expected to be equal.

Book Review



Review By Meyla Bianco Johnston

This question, sparked by simple curiosity, was all it took to change Christina Adams' life completely:

Adams: "What else do they do with the camel milk?"

American camel farmer Gil Riegler: "They give it to premature babies in hospitals in the Middle East."

Prompted to embark on an intensive round of research driven by a mother's intuition and love, Adams thought that camel milk could probably help her autistic son, Jonah, with his food allergies and behavioral problems, just like it helped the Middle Eastern babies.

A journalist and researcher, she came ready-made with the curiosity and analytical tools in place to tackle a journey many believed would be fruitless.

But her hunch was not wrong! Adams learns that antiviral, antibacterial camel's milk contains enzymes, reverses autoimmune dysfunction and is well-known in many parts of the world as a tonic for the infirm.

Though she is struggling through a divorce and beset with a new financial reality, Adams decides to get camel milk for her son to drink — no matter what it takes.

She first approaches Israeli doctor Amnon Gonenme online about the benefits of camel milk. A PhD and researcher in biological sciences specializing in cancer, he is unaware of

any research on the topic of autism. But his Middle Eastern friends agree to bring frozen camel milk for Jonah across an arduous but figurative desert, rife with obstacles — LAX.

Jonah shows remarkable improvement after drinking just ounces of the milk, amazing Adams and filling her with hope for his future as she maintains an intricate milk thawing and dosing regimen, diving deeper into learning about the benefits of camel milk.

The rest of the book takes Adams around the world, from Texas to Dubai to India and, through conversations with elderly "camel boys," to the Somalia of many years ago.

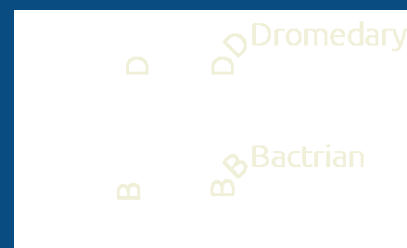
By halfway through this book, you will probably be wondering if camel milk can help you or a family member heal from an illness or feel better in general. Luckily, Adams has included a thorough list of camel's milk suppliers at the end, along with practical camel milk-handling tips and general dosing instructions.

Camel Crazy will be fascinating to people who wish to learn more about how these majestic stalwarts of culture have been providing food, fiber and labor to humans for millennia. Others will be interested in how camel milk can bring better health to a wide range of people. Anyone who loves or breeds camelids, those interested in world culture and the autistic community will all find salient points of interest and sparks of delight in this fascinating read. ●

Check it out at your local library or look for it wherever books are sold.

Camels

- Are just one of the camelid family which also includes wild guanacos and vicuñas and domesticated llamas and alpacas.
- Live in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Ethiopia, Pakistan and Kenya, though they evolved in North America.
- Walk using both legs on one side at once — that's why they sway and are sometimes referred to as "ships of the desert."
- Show stress through poop: "peanut" poop comes from a happy camel, "grapes" are a slightly stressed camel's output and you'd better run from a camel pooping "guacamole."
- Have a third, transparent eyelid that protects against sandstorms.
- Can let their milk down at will when conditions are good for nursing, every 90 minutes or so.
- Will not give milk unless they are content — and they can give milk without having babies.
- According to personal interviews with elderly Somali camel herders, humans can survive indefinitely on camel milk.
- There are two types: Bactrian and Dromedary. A good way to remember this is illustrated below:



Book Review

Fibershed

By Rebecca Burgess



Review By Meyla Bianco Johnston

“The Fibershed wardrobe was a vernacular that communicated the wild, naturalized and domesticated diversity of my home region.”

Like all monumental revolutions, Fibershed started off with a seemingly simple event. As Rebecca Burgess taught children to dye, she had to use protective clothing and be aware of the hazards of the materials. She realized that the chemicals in the synthetic dyes were harmful and unnecessary and fundamentally questioned their use.

“Why do we, as a cultural and economic system, allow this toxic trespass in the first place?” she asked

The Less is More Philosophy

There are many simple ways to start increasing your awareness and then decrease your textile impact.

- Buy clothes secondhand
- Purchase yarn directly from a farm or ranch
- Commission your own clothes with local makers
- Consider buying from designers who consider sustainability, use biodegradable materials and interact with local supply chains

Adapted from *Fibershed*



herself, recognizing it is a “fundamental societal question.”

She deeply educated herself about natural dye and traveled the world learning about dye plant traditions from a range of cultures’ elders and dye masters. This quickly expanded into a much broader study of modern textile manufacture.

Burgess studied the tenets of the Slow Food movement born in Italy, which rejects unconscious supply chain systems and emphasizes the value of cultural heritage. This global movement acted as a model for her parallel ideas regarding dyes, textiles and clothing.

She learned about the horrors of the advent of fast fashion around the year 2000 and the accelerated trend cycles which encourage disposable clothing. As Burgess delved deeper, she understood the profound exploitation the system creates for vulnerable workers, many of whom are women and children. In addition, the shocking harm fast fashion causes the earth and the continuing threats it creates for a sustainable future made her want to act.

Burgess’ decision to source her wardrobe only from materials grown

or made in her immediate area (around 150 miles) for one year became a seminal project in the development of *Fibershed*.

The author has a unique talent for seizing on important ideas and taking them to the finish line while acting as a model for others. She marries nature with contemporary needs in a practical yet aspirational way, always sure there is a better way to clothe ourselves and determined to create positive change.

This normal-sized book contains outsized ideas. Learn more about how Fibershed is leveraging carbon-sequestering in soil, using education to connect end-users to farms and ranches and rebuilding regional manufacturing.

Everyone interested in alpacas, textiles, the earth or a sustainable future should have this important book on their shelf for reference. It will change the way you see clothes, fair trade, the global textile chain and your own role as a consumer. ●

Visit fibershed.org to learn more, subscribe to the informative eblasts and explore becoming a Fibershed Affiliate.

Book Review

Strange Harvests: *The Hidden Histories of Seven Natural Objects*

By Edward Posnett

Review By Meyla Bianco Johnston



Strange Harvests documents some of the least known natural materials on Earth and explores their origin, harvest techniques, place in world commerce, sustainability and uses. Anyone interested in natural products or fibers is sure to find something of interest in this unusual book.

Author Edward Posnett tirelessly travels to remote locations across the world to learn, firsthand, about each of these rare and expensive materials as he interviews the hardy souls who bring them to market.

Eiderdown

In arctic Iceland, Posnett observes the painstaking harvest of eiderdown by local people. Despite their modest circumstances, they continue to harvest the down humanely and sustainably, as their communities have done for generations, which involves waiting until the eiders have used the down for their nests and their chicks have hatched successfully, then picking each feather out of the dung-encrusted nests for cleaning.

Edible Birds' Nests

In Malaysia, Posnett meets the nimble risk-takers who climb hundreds of feet into the ceilings of massive limestone caves to harvest edible swift's nests. Sold into Asia as a delicacy, the nests fetch incredible prices. In the past, the harvest nearly wiped out the birds but is now slightly more regulated and sustainable to ensure the birds' survival. The nests require painstaking cleaning and processing, adding to their market value.

Civet Coffee

To brew up a steaming cup of coffee whose beans have passed through the intestinal tract of a rare cat-like animal may not be your cup of er, tea, but civet coffee is a coveted delicacy. Unfortunately, the demand has created abuse of civets, and author Posnett leaves South Asia disheartened by greed and the sad results for the civets.

Sea Silk

If you've never heard of sea silk, you're not alone. Also known as bysuss, sea silk is made of minute threads of a keratin-like substance exuded by bivalves and harvested in the Mediterranean Sea. Used by mollusks to attach themselves to the sea floor, this curious substance

must be cleaned of minute seashells and vegetable debris before it can be processed for some of the most expensive textile accessories in existence. Posnett meets the very few people in Sardinia who know how to work the fiber and finds himself embroiled in a Sardinian conflict as to who is the true queen of byssus.

Vicuña Fiber

As the living ancient relatives of alpacas, vicuñas are an especially valuable treasure. In this vignette, Posnett travels to the highest altiplano in Peru and participates in a vicuña chaccu, then witnesses the annual shearing ritual. He examines how they were resurrected from the brink of extinction and speaks to experts whose opinions differ on the practice's sustainability. For anyone

interested in alpacas, this portion of the book is especially interesting.

Tagua Nut

Imagine a pure, creamy substance that begins as a milky liquid and hardens to a consistency perfect for carving. In Northern Ecuador, Posnett learns how Tagua grows on a type of palm tree and is utilized the world over as "vegetable ivory," or an alternative to elephant ivory. Becoming rarer today because of the proliferation of oil palm plantations, this wild tree is still sustainably harvested by tribespeople for its useful, carveable nuts.

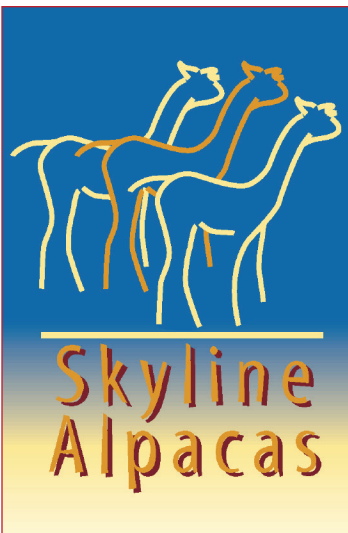
Guano

If you can imagine thousands of seabirds eating massive amounts of anchovies, then excreting copi-

ous amounts of poop daily and that poop landing on small, sunbaked South American islands, you can appreciate how deeply the layers of poop could build up over time. In the 1850s, the nutrient-rich dung was eleven stories high and subsequently harvested by Europeans to nourish their depleted farms. When the immense supply was exhausted, they left, paying no mind to the decimation they had inflicted on the seabirds. Posnett travels to the outlying Chinca islands of Peru to meet the lonely bird security guards who provide government protection for birds while dung reserves are beginning to build up again.



• Posnett, Edward. *Strange Harvests: The Hidden Histories of Seven Natural Objects*. New York: Viking, 2019.



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The Eye of Fiber: An Uncommon Story from Around the World

Story and photos by Linda N. Cortright



Review By Meyla Bianco Johnston

Alpaca breeders will know Cortright from her enduring and unique magazine, Wild Fibers. This new book is just as dynamic as her previous volume, Twisted Tales.

Arranged by country, this engaging and beautiful book brings the exotic and biodiverse world of fiber to you, no matter whether you are a city fiberhead or a country animal breeder.

Visit Mongolia, Oman, Romania, Namibia, Russia, Peru, South Africa, India and the United States from the comfort of your armchair as you get an insider's view of the real lives of fiber animals and their keepers.

Through stunning photography and a story-telling style of narrative, Cortright effectively shows you how it really is to travel to the ends of the earth led by a passionate love of fiber.

Journey through the desert of Oman where you learn how surprisingly short-coated goats fare in a desert environment and how their fiber is woven into camel halters.

Get a close-up view of the thundering hooves of bison in Montana and see how musk oxen calves in Alaska are raised by hand.

Ooh and ahhh at the angelic faces of Mongolian cashmere kids as their bright white, silky fiber billows in the stiff mountain breezes called dzuds.

Of particular interest to alpaca people is the chapter on Peru, which details various fascinating facts about camelids and how Andean peoples

pass textile traditions down through familial interaction and practical work.

From sea to shining sea and over every mountain and canyon in between, this book brings a satisfying showcase of fiber and new facts.

Cortright's labor of love will appeal to fiber artists, animal lovers, animal breeders and cultural experience seekers.

A truly enjoyable study of humans, animals, fiber, art and culture and also a wonderful gift.

See a preview then get your copy at wildfibersmagazine.com. ●



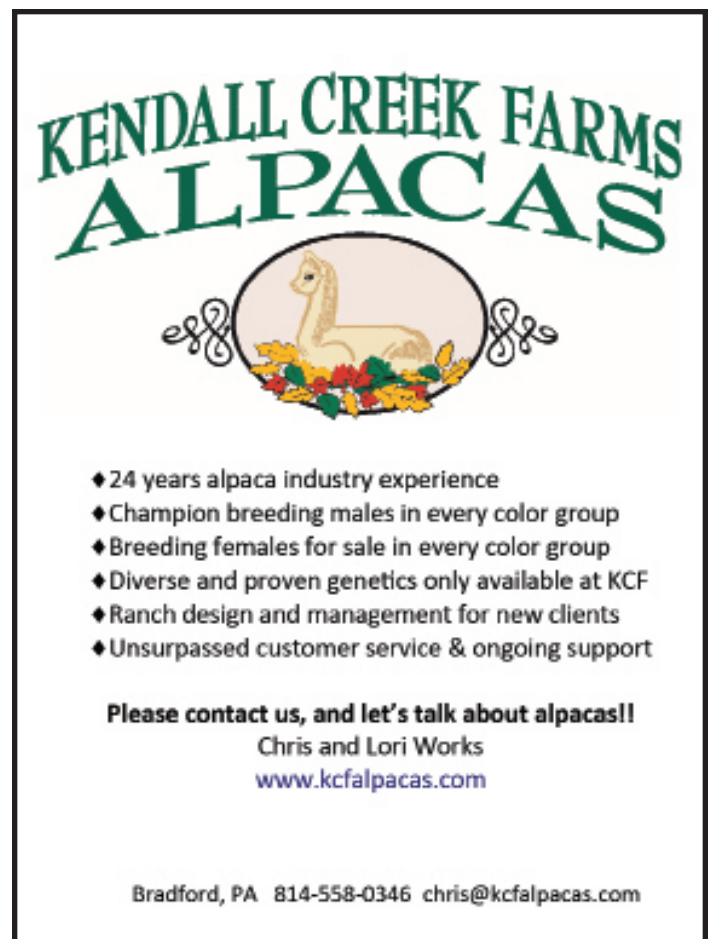
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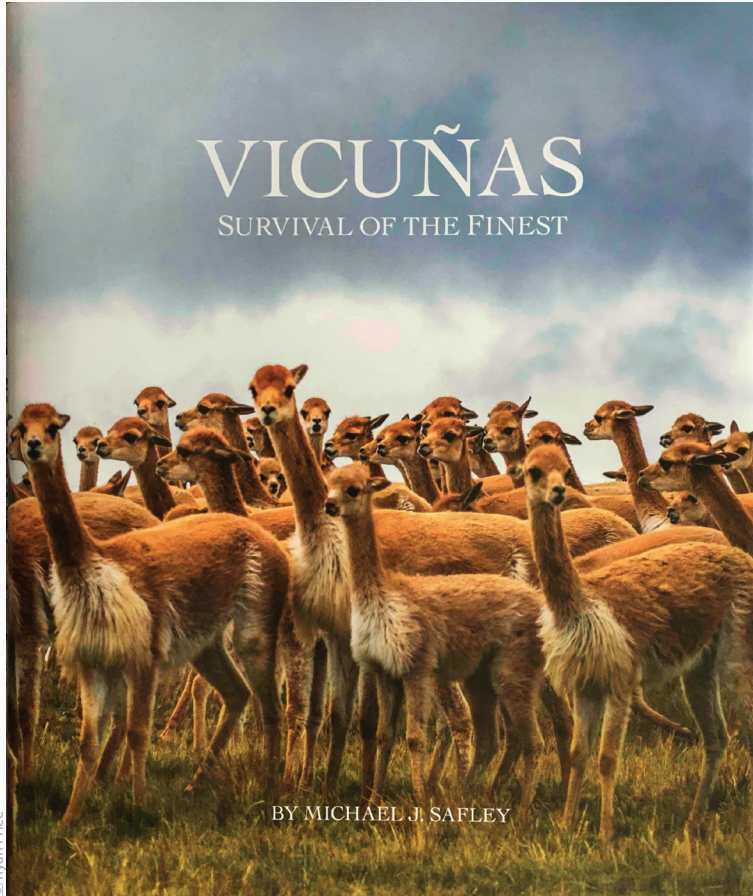
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Book Review

Review By Meyla Bianco Johnston



Vicuñas: Survival of the Finest

By Michael Safley

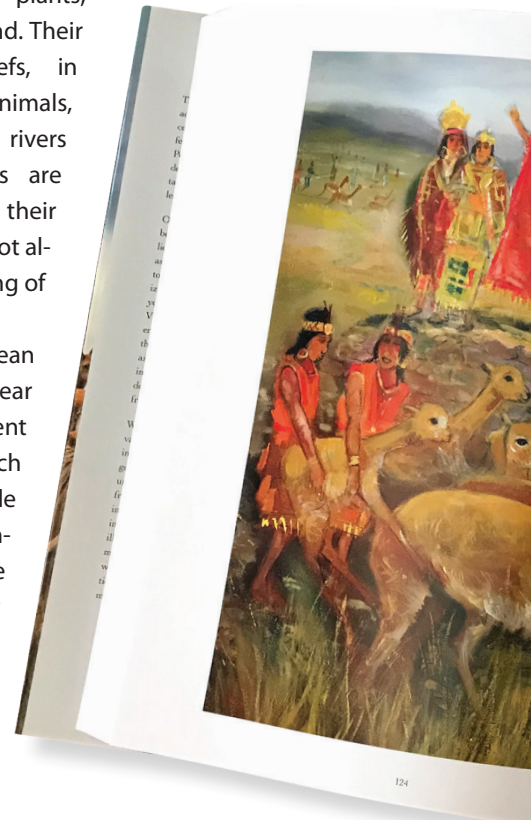
Written with real love for the people and animals of Peru, this large format book is a beautiful tribute to one of the most fascinating and unique animals on earth: the vicuña. While the casual observer may notice that the vicuña is featured on the Peruvian crest, flag and coins, this book commits to go deeper. It explains why vicuñas are so spiritually significant to Peru and remain an enduring symbol of Peru's indigenous history and culture.

Myth

Because the parallel relationship between vicuñas and indigenous peoples stretches back over the centuries, this volume starts with a clear and compelling explanation of Quechua beliefs surrounding Pachamama (Mother Earth), the creation myth and vicuñas' unique role in the cultural landscape.

Safley explains why the Quechua people, descendants of the Incas, are actually the original environmentalists, seeing themselves as part of an intertwined web of plants, animals and land. Their animistic beliefs, in which all animals, plants, rocks, rivers and mountains are imbued with their own spirit, do not allow for the killing of wild animals.

Many Andean creatures appear in their ancient myths and each has a special role to play. The condor brings the sun to the sky each day and also transports the vicuñas to heaven when they die.



Facts

The fact that vicuñas are one of the oldest non-domesticated animals on earth is in itself incredible, especially when you consider that wild vicuñas "separated from a new species of camelid that morphed into today's domestic alpaca."

Vicuñas are uniquely suited to their environment as well as resistant to domestication — they organize their own family groups and defend their territories vehemently.

The well-researched book includes fascinating vicuña facts, just one of which is how their hearts are a full 50 percent larger than mammals of the same size, allowing them to thrive at extremely high altitudes.

History

Safley's book explains the history of the Picotani community where vicuñas were brought back from the brink of destruction after the Sendero Luminoso's reign of terror. The harrowing near-loss of these magnificent animals was more recent than you might think, and the fate of the vicuñas hung in the balance for a long time, making their eventual survival even more incredible.

Luckily, the people of Peru recognized their profound connection with vicuñas and worked to make sure they endured, leveraging the chaccu ceremony to raise awareness and making savvy deals with Italian luxury brands for the annual vicuña clip.



The Volume

Vicuñas features incredible, large photographs with incredible detail — you can almost feel the vicuñas' remarkably fine fleece. This book will make a truly exceptional gift for anyone who loves travel, animals, alpacas or Peru's vicuñas.

Proceeds from the sale of the books go to help the highland peoples of Peru via Quechua benefit (quechuabenefit.org). ●

Also Noted

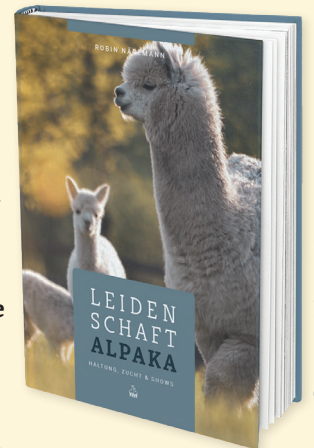
Leidenschaft Alpaka: Haltung, Zucht & Shows

(Beyond Fleece: Breeding, Shows and Passion for Alpacas)

By Certified AOA Judge Robin Näsemann

Self Published, 2021
224 pages

Don't miss this new German volume which focuses on alpaca fleece processing, assessment, shows, fiber analysis, posture and breeding. With more than 300 images, it clearly illustrates many foundational knowledge points for all breeders and owners. Get it on Amazon or direct at show-richter.de or abolengo-alpaka.de/shop. Available in English spring 2021.



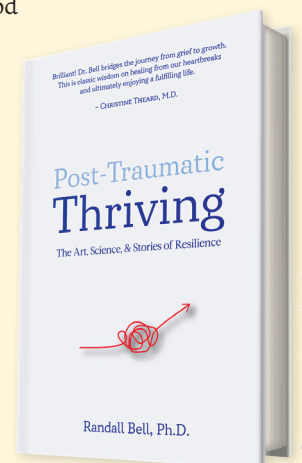
© Courtesy Robin Näsemann

Post-Traumatic Thriving: Turn Trauma into Your Fuel to Thrive

By Randall Bell

Leadership Institute Press, 2021
365 pages

Clear, concise and comforting, Randall Bell's book addresses extreme hurt from wartime psychological impacts, the long-term difficulty wrought by early childhood losses and the ongoing uncertainty of the COVID-19 crisis. Using easy-to-understand graphs and real examples of people struggling against the lasting effects of trauma, Bell's straightforward explanation legitimizes trauma as it offers real solutions to overcome it.



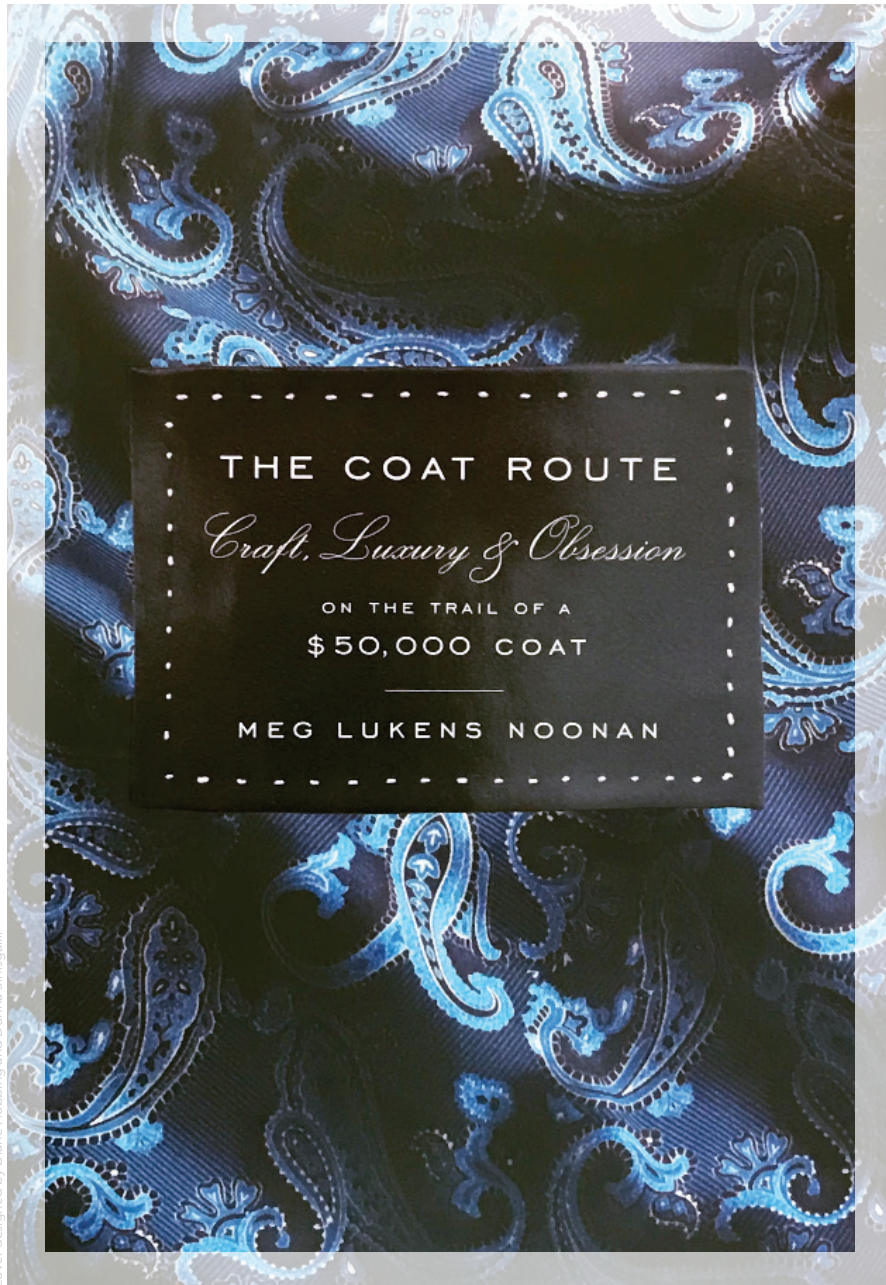
© Courtesy Dr. Randall Bell

Book Review

The Coat Route:

Craft, Luxury & Obsession on the Trail of a \$50,000 Coat

By Meg Lukens Noonan



Review By Meyla Bianco Johnston

S

Simply put, this fascinating book tells the story of a custom vicuña overcoat, painstakingly created for a very lucky man. Yet nothing about this book is as cut and dry as that; details matter. In fact, summing up such an exciting book is difficult without giving too much away. This book is chock-full of tantalizing details you'll want to discover yourself, trust me.

Meg Lukens Noonan's beautifully written book details each step of the garment's creation through stories she experiences firsthand by traveling to the source of each part of the coat. Her journalistic curiosity takes her to the highest altitudes of Peru and the most legendary workshops of Europe. She explains the fascinating ins and outs of old world tailoring, textile manufacturing, block printing, button making and even metalworking techniques that have, for the most part, disappeared from consumer goods and are no longer commonly understood today.

The Roots

The beginning of *The Coat Route* is devoted to telling the story of the West End of London, where the luxury tailoring tradition still thrives. Noonan explains how the most finely made cloth is still supplied to bespoke tailors on the West End via England's textile manufacturing

district. This prepares the reader for the intense care paid to clothing on this erudite level and highlights the hard and deliberate work required to produce it.

The Tailor

Present throughout each engaging section is maestro fourth-generation tailor John Cutler of Sydney, Australia, the creator of the coat. Cutler makes use of his extensive experience and his skilled team to create the coat for businessman Keith Lambert of Vancouver, Canada using classic methods practiced for many generations.

The Fleece

Noonan explains in sensory detail just how the world's finest and most coveted fleece is obtained. She travels to the altiplano of Peru where she experiences a vicuña chaccu, or roundup, to see the real source of the remarkable fleece and learn more about the animals themselves. This has the effect of providing context for the origin of all vicuña fabric.

The Cloth

After talking over the possibilities for materials for his coat with Cutler, Lambert chose to have the coat made from vicuña fabric because he wanted a coat even finer and more rare than cashmere. He knew this vicuña coat would represent the pinnacle of earth's available materials and human artistry.

The Lining

The paisley print silk lining for the coat was something Cutler believed he would not be able to obtain from famed silk maker and printer Stefano Ricci, who rarely agrees to allow his silk to be used in anything other than his own highly



© Mark Bennington

Above: Meg Lukens Noonan spent ten years as a correspondent for *Outside Magazine* and has written for *The New York Times*, *National Geographic Adventure*, *Travel + Leisure*, *Esquire*, *Men's Journal*, *Vogue* and many other publications. She has two daughters, is a graduate of the University of Vermont and lives in Hanover, New Hampshire.

Below: Keith Lambert in the custom made vicuña coat created for him by J.H. Cutler in Sydney. It fits him exactly and was tailored "as if machines did not exist." Cutler even altered it to accommodate one of his shoulders, which is just slightly lower than the other. When he checks the coat, he makes sure to get a coat check tag, but other than that, he doesn't take any special precautions to keep it safe.



© Meg Lukens Noonan



© Meg Lukens Noonan

sought after luxury ties. However, after extensive negotiation with Cutler, Ricci finally relented, and the fascinating process of the lining's creation is detailed down to the silkworms and the diet they require.

The Buttons and Trimmings

Readers may be surprised to learn that even the buttons used on the coat come from a long and colorful tradition starting in Victorian England.

The word “bespoke” was first heard in 17th Century England in tailoring circles. When ordering a garment from a tailor, he would select and reserve a length of fabric for the finished piece. That cloth was then described as “bespoken” for.

Since 1884, four generations of John Cutler's family have been creating the finest clothing for well-heeled clients. Cutler has been a bespoke tailor and shirt maker for 53 years, having started with his father, Bruce, in 1965. His company caters to luminaries in business, entertainment and sports.



Left: A large group of vicuñas on the Peruvian altiplano with their distinctive cinnamon fleece, destined for luxury clothing. Lukens Noonan traveled there to discover the source of the expensive fleece made to manufacture the fabric and ultimately, the coat commissioned by Keith Lambert.

Below: The exquisite vicuña overcoat itself, the product of a dwindling number of artisans capable of old world techniques at this level of expertise. "Europe's trade group leaders have speculated, with deep regret, that the current generation of expert artisans—weavers, leather toolers, carvers, shoemakers and tailors—might very well be the last," Lukens Noonan says.



Noonan takes the reader to the factory and through the specific processes required to make them.

The coat also includes a final flourish: an engraved gold tag made by John Thompson, an engraver identified as a prodigy while young and still known as one of the most skillful gold engravers in the world.

This is truly a tale of excellence and pride of workmanship, and it is an important read for those involved with or interested in luxury consumer goods today. Many of the techniques described are becoming closer to extinction with each passing day because the artisans fully trained in these trades are simply dying out.

Don't miss the chance to experience a little of this cultural richness yourself through this excellent book. ●

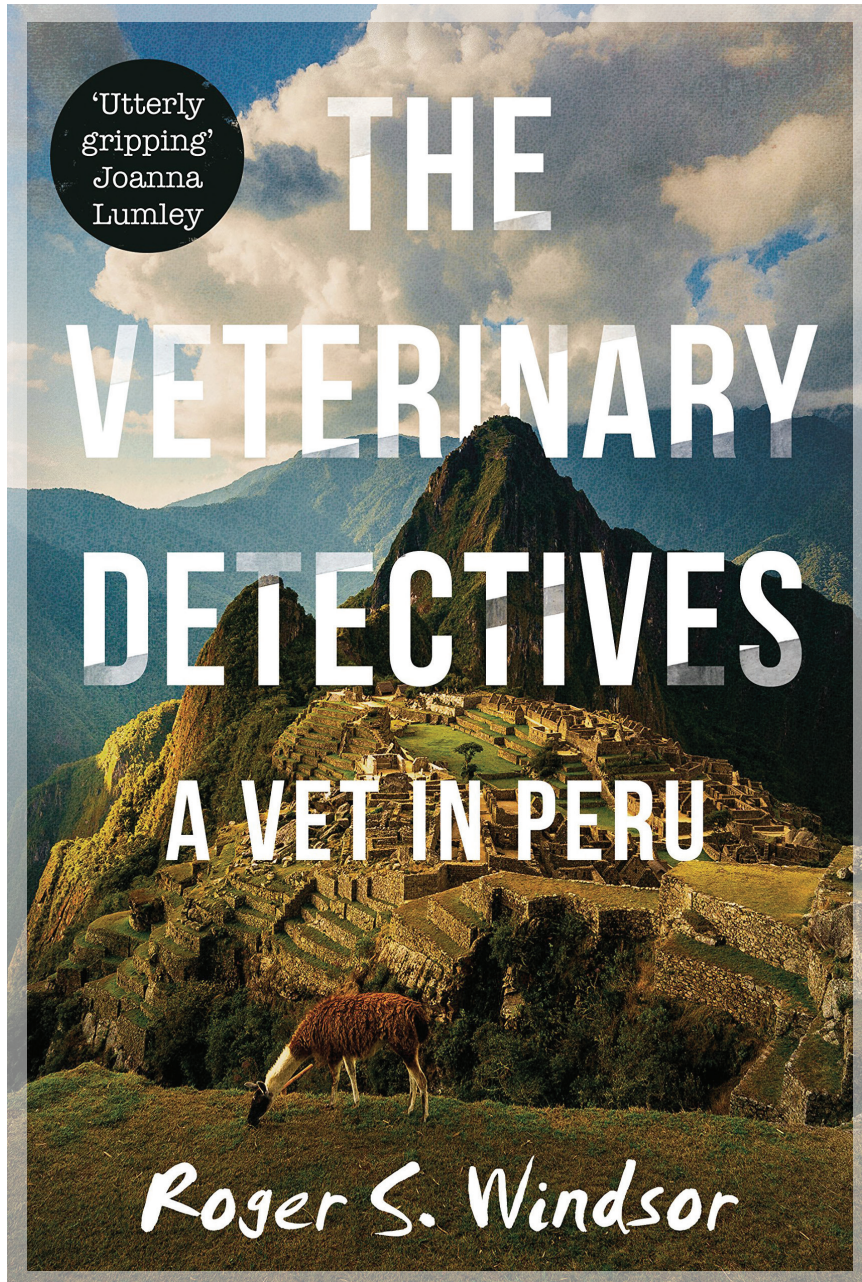


- Personal interview Meg Lukens Noonan.
- Lukens Noonan, Meg. *The Coat Route: Craft, Luxury, & Obsession on the Trail of a \$50,000 Coat*.
- Noonan, Meg Lukens. "Journey of a \$50,000 Coat." *The Irish Times*. February 08, 2014. Accessed December 28, 2018. <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/journey-of-a-50-000-coat-1.1682134>.

Book Review

The Veterinary Detectives: A Vet in Peru

By Roger S. Windsor



Review By Meyla Bianco Johnston

This fascinating memoir details the life and work of English veterinarian Roger S. Windsor and his family during their stay in Arequipa, Peru during the '80s and '90s.

Windsor's objective in Peru was to set up diagnostic veterinary laboratories and clinical services to allow local farmers to lower animal mortality, increase profits and eventually, stabilize communities.

During the time Windsor and his family were living and working in Peru, the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) was actively terrorizing the country, making life that much more difficult for everyone. Nonetheless, the Windsors do not hesitate to do as the locals do, making lasting friendships and hosting social events as they stay calm and carry on.

As Windsor travels across the unforgiving altiplano, he tackles the significant veterinary challenges of Peru with herculean tenacity. He is particularly adept at sourcing scientific staff, materials and equipment.

During his Peruvian vet adventure, Windsor is first charged with helping local dairy farmers increase milk yield. To do so, he first needed to address the herds' health.

During a bovine epidemic, as he puzzles over a cause, casualties were high and burial sites become scarce. Windsor procures an incinerator to dispose of the infected bodies to contain the disease.

Wrangling funds and purchasing the incinerator was one thing. Having the large, heavy machine delivered via a primitive, high-altitude road to a remote village was quite another. The hair-raising installation is truly memorable.

Similar local situations permeate the book to create a unique sense



of place.

For anyone who has visited Peru, many references to earthquakes, ancient architecture, delicious food and uniquely South American attitudes will be familiar.

Despite all of the challenges, Windsor succeeds in setting up a fully functional bovine testing laboratory from scratch. Under his guidance, cows and calves grow healthier, milk yields increase and the surrounding Andean communities reach a new level of stability and economic independence.

After his work with cows, Windsor and his team embark on a new project centered on alpacas. They created Laboratorio Regional de Sanidad Animal del Sur del Perú (LABVETSUR) and Laboratorio Regional del Norte de Sanidad Animal (LABRENOR) to help camelid farmers directly.

By identifying and treating disease, the labs decrease cria mortality, increase the average weight of alpacas and improve fleece production. LABVETSUR and LABRENOR also introduce simple and inexpensive remedies that make the average farmer's life much better.

Windsor's characteristic insistence that the labs remain self-supporting helps ensure that the laboratories could continue after his departure.

With the alpacas, Windsor continues using the scientific method to help camelid farmers solve baffling problems, one variable at a time. Through close observation of animals and conversation with locals that runs the gamut from business to pleasure, he creates an authentic, diverting story.

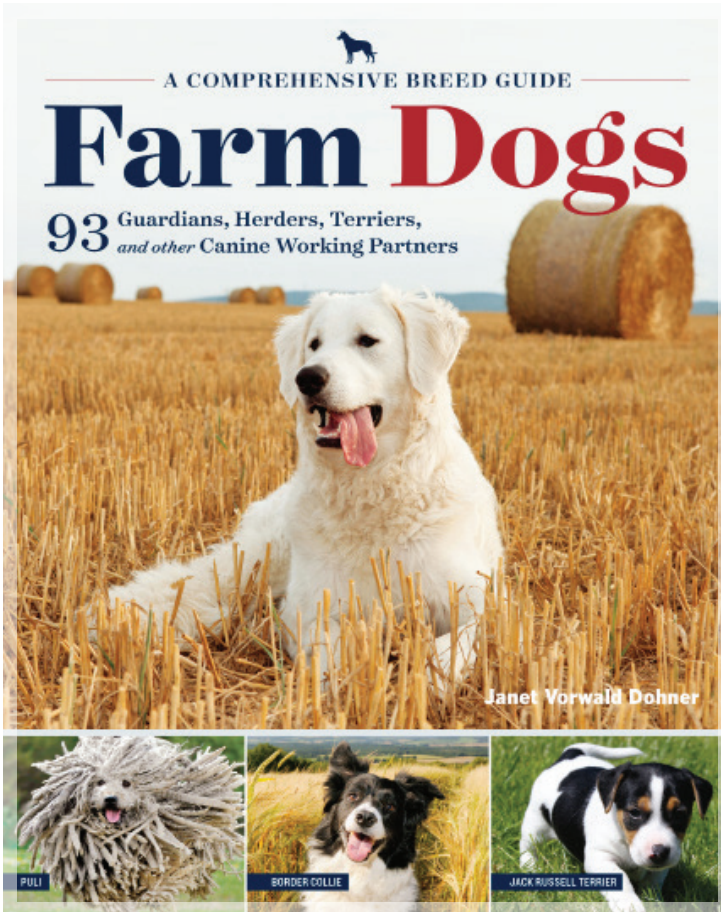
In one case, he was able to connect the seemingly disparate dots between the locals' love for wild watercress, the snails that live on it and tenacious liver flukes in alpacas.

His unique method of pragmatic problem solving permeates the book, showing, step by step, how he came by the moniker "veterinary detective."

Interested? Don't miss this book, available from The Book Guild Publishing's Bookshop online and on Amazon.com. ●

Book Reviews

By Meyla Bianco Johnston



***Farm Dogs; 93 Guardians, Herders, Terriers and other Canine Working Partners* by Janet Vorwald Dohner**

Dohner describes *Farm Dogs* as a deeply personal project that actually started with a transformational gift she received during her childhood, *Man's Best Friend*, a National Geographic Book of Dogs.

"I pored over its pages, reading and re-reading the text and memorizing everything about the breeds. I cannot deny that the chapter on 'Working Dogs of the World'

was my favorite," Dohner says in a blog on her publisher's website.

Janet Dohner's deep love for dogs shines through every page of her remarkable book *Farm Dogs*. Starting with a solid foundation detailing how humans and dogs came to meet, the book is further divided into chapters including: "Livestock Guardian Dogs," "Herding Dogs," "Terriers and Earthdogs" and

"Traditional and Multipurpose Farm Dogs."

What sets this book apart is the idea that there are a wide range of useful and charming farm dogs, each with distinct histories and unique characteristics to dovetail into many different human farm situations. Each breed is analyzed in great detail including a list of alternate names, a heartfelt introduction, a detailed explanation of its appearance, its history and uses on the farm. You simply won't find a more thoroughly researched and comprehensive book about dogs anywhere.

The photographs throughout are outstanding — it is easy to fall in love with the regal livestock guardian Pyrenees, the feisty herding Kelpies and the busy, vermin-eradicating Cairn terriers, to name just three.

Reading the section about your favorite dog breed is illuminating — you will doubtless learn a new fact about your beloved companion, work mate or new addition. Dohner also takes care to correct common misconceptions about breeds or breed groups, clarifying that livestock guardians do not herd stock, for example.

The "Choosing the Right Dog" chapter encourages deep consideration when choosing a dog and explains how to determine which have been bred responsibly. The author also offers responsible owner tips throughout to keep the new addition to the family happy, healthy and on-task.

Perhaps a child in your life would like to read *Farm Dogs* in the same way Dohner read *Man's Best Friend*. Every working farm should have this volume on hand — and so should every dog lover. Buy your own copy and one for a friend at www.Storey.com. ●



- Dohner, Janet Vorwald. "A Lifelong Dream: The Origin of Farm Dogs." Storey Publishing. Accessed June 30, 2020. <https://www.storey.com/article/lifelong-dream-origin-farm-dogs/>.
- Cross, John. *Man's Best Friend: National Geographic Book of Dogs*. Washington, D.C.: Book Service, 1974.

***Baby Alpaca's Adventure* by Ann Rivera with illustrations by Liz Brizzi**

Conceived and written at Art Chapel and Nancy Chapel Izer's Alpaca Country Estates in Terrebonne, Oregon, this charming book tells the story of silver gray Estates Diamond Explorer, a male cria with a case of wanderlust.

With appearances by Farmer Art, Ranch Grand Mama Nancy and their dog Spike, Explorer rambles across Alpaca Country Estates getting a full ranch education along the way from a cast of fun and engaging characters.

The book includes an illustrated map of the Alpaca Country Estates property marked with all the locations Explorer meets his new pals and learns what it means to be a herdsire. A glossary helps kids learn new alpaca terminology they may have been unfamiliar with before reading *Baby Alpaca's Adventure*.

The About pages explain how the author was inspired to write *Baby Alpaca's Adventure*, her first children's book, after staying at the Alpaca Country Estates Bed and Breakfast.

Full of spunky and appealing illustrations and a fun and attention-grabbing storyline, it will keep a child engaged throughout. A wonderful holiday gift for any young person interested in alpacas, whether they have met them in person yet or not. ●



Get your copies at Alpaca Country Estates
www.alpacacountryestates.com.



A curious cria adds his edits to Rivera's work in the field at Alpaca Country Estates.

Book Reviews

By Meyla Bianco Johnston

Threads of Life: A History of the World Through the Eye of a Needle

A Universal Reference Book

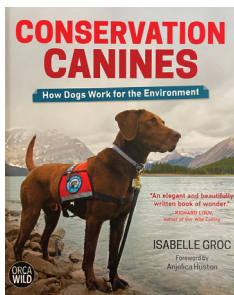


By Clare Hunter
Harry N. Abrams;
Reprint edition, 2020
352 pages

Framed with sewing and textiles as a means of individual artistic expression, this history-spanning book takes the perspective of the person behind the needle and her motivations, resources and place in time. The material

is arranged in thoughtful and unique chapters such as “Identity”, “Community”, “Art” and “Captivity.” The “Protest” chapter allows the reader to imagine suffragist banners as they were held aloft between marching women in the streets of American cities. *Threads of Life* brings the well-worn embroidery, weaving and sewing of the past to life through fascinating stories of conviction and skill.

Conservation Canines

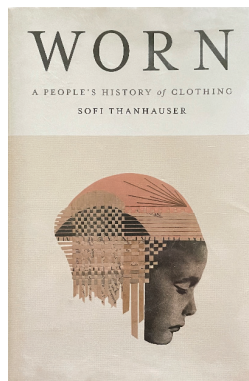


By Isabelle Groc
Orca Books, 2021
120 pages

Have a best friend who also happens to be a farm dog? Want to protect the environment? Then this book is for you. Meet the canines helping humans protect livestock and wildlife at

the same time. Understand how powerful dog noses can sniff out orca poop and why that helps whales survive. See wildlife poaching deterrent dogs at work and learn how dogs can even detect invasive species for humans to eradicate. With great photos and an appealing, clean format, this book is a great read — and a perfect gift, too.

Worn: A People's History of Clothing

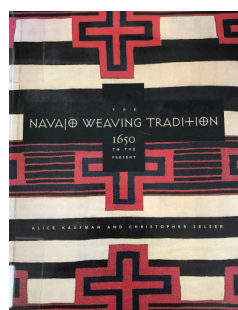


By Sofi Thanhauser
Pantheon, 2022
375 pages

Cleverly arranged by fabric types, this book takes the reader from linen to cotton to silk to synthetics and finally, wool. Find out why linen was used for undergarments and why it is a particularly labor-intensive fabric to make. Learn

the secrets of silkworms and how they were successfully kept in Asia and out of the hands of the west for centuries. Discover why and when synthetics came on and dominated the budget fabric scene. Then learn about the myriad benefits of wool and the diverse animals that produce it.

The Navajo Weaving Tradition: 1650 to the Present



By Kassia St. Clair
Liveright, 2019
368 pages

For those new to weaving, consider this your #1 inspirational sourcebook. See the striking visual designs of Navajo weavers as they have evolved since the seventeenth century. Detailed

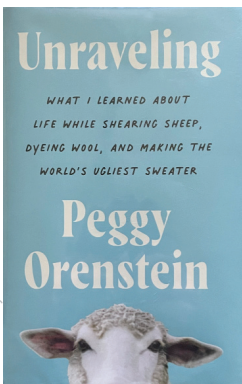
color photos allow you to really inspect the weavings and note how and why design elements changed over time. Learn the importance of the Churro sheep to the Navajo weavers and how that gene pool was under threat. Don't miss the fascinating section on methods and materials (including traditional vegetal dyestuffs). Highly interesting to artisans, historians, and those interested in animal husbandry.

Clear Mountain's
Stratton



Susan & Peter Goodwin
Cleveland, TN
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Unraveling: What I Learned About Life While Shearing Sheep, Dyeing Wool, and Making the World's Ugliest Sweater



By Peggy Orenstein
Harper Collins Publishers, 2023
195 pages

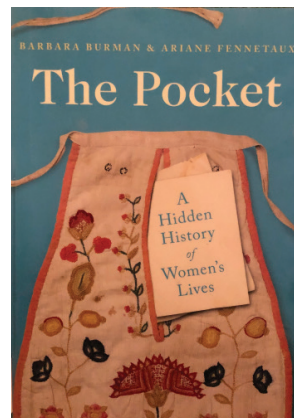
This single quote explains why you should read this entertaining and excellent book:

“Part of me wishes I ever found out about any of this, because I can never un-know it and I was already trying to be so conscious of recycling and composting and avoiding single-use

plastic and buying organic produce and driving a hybrid car and shunning chemical sunscreen and never using straws in my drinks and not flushing the toilet if it is only pee. Plus, I'm confronted daily with the ways that those individual changes aren't stopping the rising heat, fires, hurricanes, floods tornadoes, polar vortices or droughts. Can't I just buy a dangd pair of pants?”

With fascinating research, this book chronicles one woman's personal journey toward sustainability using humor and wit.

The Pocket: A Hidden History of Women's Lives, 1660-1900



By Barbara Burman
and Ariane Fennetaux
Yale University Press, 2020
264 pages

While you may be familiar with the modern lament surrounding the lack of pockets in women's garments, this book truly illuminates the subject. For hundreds of years, women wore pairs of pockets tied

around their waists to carry their most important objects, their frequently used tools and their cherished personal belongings. Learn how they were made and used and why they disappeared. Each pocket — from humble patchwork to luxurious silk — examines individual women's circumstances in a larger cultural context. The needlework will astound any textile artist.

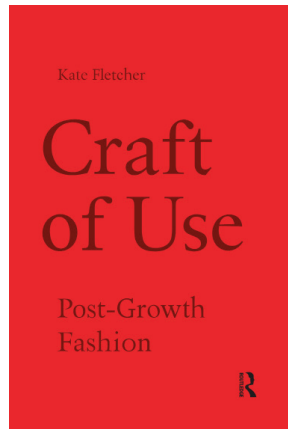
Book Reviews

By Meyla Bianco Johnston

Craft of Use: Post-Growth Fashion

By **Kate Fletcher**
Routledge, 2016
303 pages

In turns inspiring and funny, this excellent book examines the “craft of use,” or how consumers interact with their clothes on a very personal level against a backdrop of a new way to approach textiles. Using art portrait photography and international interviews, the author provides a real-life glimpse into individuals’ relationships with their favorite garments. How people use ethics to choose clothes, how people repair those clothes, how people re-purpose garments, how people find and buy their favorite clothes, inherited garments and more are explored. A really enjoyable read.

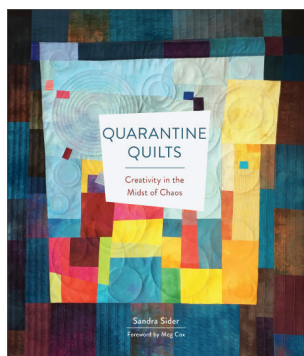


© Courtesy Kate Fletcher

Quarantine Quilts: Creativity in the Midst of Chaos

Foreword by **Meg Cox Schiffer, 2021**
160 pages

What do you do when a global crisis renders your normal way of life defunct? Create textile art, of course! Showcasing dozens of artists and their handmade quilts, this book explores how truly innovative art is often borne of anxiety. Incorporating quotes from history, it shows how creativity has been a coping mechanism throughout human history. Detailed photos of the widely varying quilt styles and fascinating artist statements bring this textile art to life.



© Courtesy Schiffer Publishing

The Golden Thread: How Fabric Changed History

by **Kassia St. Clair**
Liveright, 2019
368 pages

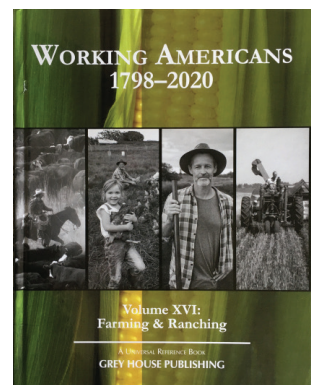
Fascinating from cover to cover, this book is for everyone with any interest in textiles or history. Read about:

- How certain camelids can predict sandstorms.
- What the heck “rooing” is (in terms of wool and Icelandic sheep).
- Why outfitting the average Viking ship required 10 years of labor — hint: fabric for sails was made of wool.
- Which archeological site yielded 1,100 textile artifacts between 1976-1981.
- What insect provided the fiber for crosshairs in firearms until the 1960s.
- Why the legend of the Golden Fleece is still relevant today.

Working Americans 1798-2020: Volume XVI, Farming & Ranching A Universal Reference Book

Grey House Publishing,
2020
600 pages

Like a portal to another time, this detailed book tells it like it was for generations of agrarian working people as they strove for survival and prosperity in the rural United States. Original reference materials such as family histories told in people’s own words, estate inventories and documents, diaries, magazine articles, photos and illustrations make everyday life in long-ago America accessible to contemporary readers.



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