



Luxury: A Rich History

Peter McNeil, Giorgio Riello

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We live in a world obsessed by luxury. Long-distance airlines compete to offer first-class sleeping experiences and hotels recommend exclusive suites where you are never disturbed. Luxury is a rapidly changing global industry that makes the headlines daily in our newspapers and on the internet. More than ever, luxury is a pervasive presence in the cultural and economic life of the West - and increasingly too in the emerging super-economies of Asia and Latin America.

Yet luxury is hardly a new phenomenon. Today's obsession with luxury brands and services is just one of the many manifestations that luxury has assumed. In the middle ages and the Renaissance, for example, luxury was linked to notions of magnificence and courtly splendour. In the eighteenth century luxury was at the centre of philosophical debates over its role in shaping people's desires and oiling the wheels of commerce. And it continues to morph today, with the growth of the global super-rich and increasing wealth polarization.

From palaces to penthouses, from couture fashion to lavish jewellery, from handbags to red wine, from fast cars to easy money, Peter McNeil and Giorgio Riello present the first ever global history of luxury, from the Romans to the twenty-first century: a sparkling and ever-changing story of extravagance, excess, novelty, and indulgence.

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