

Q&A

Artemest promotes Italian craftsmanship through online platform

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Jewelry designer behind Orefra at work

By SARAH JONES

As the luxury industry as a whole is steadily growing in its embrace of ecommerce to reach a more global audience, startup Artemest is giving a home to Italian artisans online.

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The company's ecommerce site officially launched June 24, enabling consumers to shop a curated selection of 2,000 items spanning home furnishings, design, art and jewelry, as well as peruse a magazine highlighting the people behind the products. Beyond showcasing the artisans themselves, the new venture works to instill an international understanding and appreciation of Italian craftsmanship.

"Italy has always been synonymous with beauty, art, crafts and quality, which is exactly what Artemest is all about," said Ippolita Rostagno, founder of [Artemest](#), Milan.

"Still, we do not want to hide behind the made in Italy label to enhance the value of our products," she said. "We want to let the world know our exceptional Italian pieces, stories and makers so that we can actually continue to add value to the made in Italy brand."



Ippolita Rostagno

In this Q&A, Ms. Rostagno discusses her vision for Artemest, some of the challenges of creating a luxury startup and Italian craftsmanship.

Here is the dialogue:

What led you to decide to launch Artemest? Where did the concept for the site originate?

Artemest was inspired by a single imperative: I am a slave to beauty.

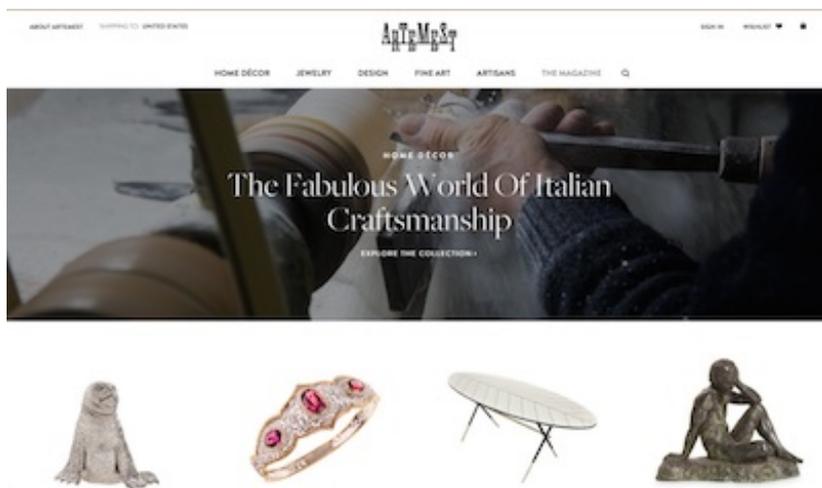
A lifetime spent in the company of craftsmen has taught me that shaping raw materials into beautiful objects with care, creativity and skill is a powerful experience.

I grew up in Florence and therefore feel, like most Italians, that art is the best expression of civilization. This conviction has prompted me to follow my heart and create a roadmap for everyone interested in learning about the products, methods and heritage of our passionate creators.

What differentiates Artemest from other luxury ecommerce destinations?

So far ecommerce has represented an alternative to the offline channel. The same products that could be found in flagship stores and boutiques have been brought online.

The extraordinary thing about Artemest, on the other hand, is that it brings the old world of Italian craft, taste and knowhow to an international public of décor enthusiasts and art lovers. With an exquisite selection of the most representative Italian makers, Artemest offers access to hidden treasures of Italian crafts, art and design.



Artemest homepage

Who do you see as the Artemest customer?

Exceptional details, materials, stories and traditions are the common traits of Artemest products. Therefore, everyone that is able to appreciate the true essence of beauty and quality is a potential customer!

In what way does Artemest bridge traditional luxury with the shopping habits of the modern luxury shopper?

The key to attracting the modern luxury shopper is the ability to offer an “experience,” no matter if the channel is an offline boutique or an online platform. The word luxury comes along with the concepts of exclusivity, social status and superior quality and it is fundamental to convey such feelings not only via the product, but also through the shopping experience.

Established brands can rely on the story and the power of their brand in order to enrich the overall experience for their customers. Artemest, as a start-up, can rely on the extraordinary story that lies behind each one of its craftsmen: their traditions, materials and techniques are absolutely one of a kind. Our Web site will feature a well-curated online magazine depicting this amazing world, and will tell the stories of its artisans through proprietary videos, photographs and articles.

Why was it important for the site to have an editorial and content component?

One of Artemest's main missions is bringing renewed focus to the relevance of craft. Every featured artisan has an incredible story to tell which helps contextualize the meaning of craft today. Therefore it was important to create a vehicle for sharing these amazing stories with our customers.



Glassworker Lilla Tabasso in her studio

How is your experience with your jewelry line translating to this new venture? Being in the luxury industry for many years as a designer has helped me develop a sensibility towards the product that you can only acquire with practice and dedication. Besides that, at one point in time Ippolita was a start-up as well. The experience of launching and growing a company from scratch gave me the confidence to do it again.

In your opinion, what is the importance of the made in Italy attribute? Italy has always been synonymous with beauty, art, crafts and quality, which is exactly what Artemest is all about. Still, we do not want to hide behind the made in Italy label to enhance the value of our products. We want to let the world know our exceptional Italian pieces, stories and makers so that we can actually continue to add value to the made in Italy brand.



Artisan at work in Ceramica Gatti workshop

How do you select pieces for Artemest? What traits do you look for in potential merchandise?

I always consider two factors: the product itself and the maker. All the products that we select are one of a kind and we are interested in highlighting the materials they are made from, the manufacturing techniques, the preciousness of their details or the story hiding behind them. But what makes these products truly unique are their makers. We only onboard the most representative Italian craftsmen, artists and designers, because it's their story and their ability that adds real value to our products.

What were some of the challenges you had to face in launching this startup? How did you overcome them?

I have to admit that my main concern before starting this initiative was that it was going to be hard to convince Italian master craftsmen to follow me in an e-commerce venture. The initial reaction of many of them is inevitably distrust or even suspicion. Luckily though I found that when I actually showed them the details of the project and told them my story most of them fell in love with Artemest. As it turns out they too are moved by the same passion and goals!

What is next for you? Where do you see Artemest in five years?

I started the project in September 2014 and the e-commerce platform is not online yet, but my ambition is for Artemest to become the most authoritative international showcase for exceptional Italian art and objects.

Final Take

Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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