

MULTICHANNEL

## Walpole celebrates skilled craft through artisan mentorship program

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*Promotional images for Walpole Crafted*

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By SARAH JONES

British luxury organization Walpole is championing the role of craftsmen in the luxury industry with a program that gives business guidance to artisan entrepreneurs.

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The 2015 Walpole Crafted program, presented in partnership with patron Vacheron Constantin and in association with Fortnum & Mason, gives up to 12 individuals or businesses access to mentors and educational workshops designed to help them scale their business. While the luxury industry prides itself on the handwork that goes into its products, technology is displacing traditional production in many mainstream companies, making this type of program a necessary platform to preserve the craft and profitability of independent makers.

"The Walpole organization was named after Robert Walpole who was a patron of the arts and architecture in the late 1600s and early 1700s who championed the artisans during the golden age of craftsmanship and manufacturing," said Rebecca Miller, CEO of [Miller & Company](#), New York. "Walpole made a strategic decision in 2005, to refine its mission statement from promoting British excellence to promoting British luxury."

"A natural vehicle for any organization or brand to bring a new undertaking to light is to create awareness through a medium or experience that offers first hand participation or engagement," she said. "By creating a mentorship program, Walpole is in a prime position to partner with not only an established luxury brand such as Vacheron Constantin who shares similar values, but it affords an even greater opportunity to provide a platform by which artisans have the ability to share their talents directly with the end consumer who will inevitably learn to appreciate their skills and a desire for ownership."

Ms. Miller is not affiliated with Walpole, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Walpole was unable to comment directly before press deadline.

Made by hand

Crafted was launched in 2007 by program founder and chairman Guy Salter and Walpole. In a note on the program's Web site, he explains that while brands extoll their craftsmanship as a marketing tactic to justify purchase price, "only a relatively small number of mainstream luxury companies still have outstanding craft credentials and have built their business models, pricing, employment policies and marketing around the 'making' philosophy."



*Walpole member Asprey artisan at work*

The candidates are expected to have a strong passion for craft mixed with an interest in growing their business. Industry experts then help a select group of up to 12 realize their full potential possible if they expand beyond a single person business.

After judges narrow down the competition to a select few, these applicants will be given the opportunity to go to London to give a presentation of a business plan that covers the next three years and examples of their work to a panel of judges and experts. Those chosen will also be required to participate in the London Crafted Showcase, presenting one or two pieces in a space that mimics their workshop.

Mentors include Robert Ettinger of Ettinger, Alistair Hughes of Savoir Beds, Pamela Harper of Halcyon Days and Walpole's Michelle Emmerson.

Alumni of the program have ranged from ceramists and glassworkers to milliners, jewelers and tailors. The class of 2014 included furniture maker John Galvin, sculptor and plaster artist Geoffrey Preston and leatherworker and saddler Mia Sabel.

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/wvnmdXijqrU>

### *Walpole Crafted Makers of the Exceptional at the Royal Academy*

Walpole opened up the application process online on Aug. 24, and interested parties can apply through Sept. 22 [here](#).

Technology has disrupted the luxury industry, but the impact varies across sectors and depends on how innovation has been incorporated, according to a panel session at the Financial Times' Business of Luxury Summit June 8.

The "How new technology is influencing manufacturers" panel, led by Rachel Sanderson, the Milan correspondent of the Financial Times, brought together fashion, jewelry and home interiors to give summit attendees a "snapshot" of what is currently happening in this "moment of digital disruption." For luxury, there is a struggle between implementing new, innovative technologies and the timelessness of artisan craft that defines the industry ([see story](#)).

"The luxury industry has faced recent challenges concerning ethical and sustainable behavior and processes," Ms. Miller said. "Any initiative that serves to provide and support good practices through transparency will fill the need to increase the brand's equity in the consumer's hearts and mind.

"Further, any initiative that is designed to advance traditional artisanal skills, which luxury brands cannot survive without, strengthens their ability to enjoy on-going success," she said.

### Craftsmanship celebration

The luxury industry is finding ways to promote artisanship to the general public through immersive exhibits and campaigns.

Brands recently came together for London Craft Week to remind consumers of the importance of fine craftsmanship and its essential role in the luxury industry.

London Craft Week is a new event that took place from May 6-10, highlighting all elements of craft and bringing together skilled craftsmen and brands from around the world. Fine craftsmanship is an important element of luxury, and brands can help form closer connections and justify expensive prices by reminding consumers of the extensive work that goes into creating products ([see story](#)).

Walpole member Harrods is currently showcasing the passion behind the handcrafted luxury goods it sells with a month-long storewide campaign that brings artisans and consumers together.

During Made With Love, the store will host a number of limited-edition and exclusive

items designed specifically for the retailer and will also bring in representatives from brands to provide demonstrations or personalization services. Introducing the makers of its luxury goods to consumers may boost consumer loyalty while also justifying purchase price ([see story](#)).

For the brands partnering with Walpole, this association with Crafted will be highlight their principles.

"Fortnum & Mason's guiding principle includes tracking down the original and the unusual, deliberately seeking out small, artisan craftsmen from Britain and beyond," Ms. Miller said. "Vacheron Constantin is known as a good corporate citizen who fosters meaningful partnerships with the arts communities by establishing relationships and promoting them in the same way they source and manufacture their timepieces, in a responsible manner exercising the business activity in harmony with the environment and practicing the use of sustainable natural resources.

"By collaborating on an event that fosters mentoring and opportunity for young talent, they collectively honor their guiding principles, traditions and ensure their brands have the ability to provide livelihoods and quality products for generations to come," she said.

"This program allows first-hand engagement to better understand the context of how things are made, why they are sought after and the prices they command."

Final Take

*Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York*

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