

# International Forum on Perspectives and Challenges for the Crafts Sector

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**Atypicality and antipolitics in the understanding of Venezuelan crafts: A critical approach from design**

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*Abstract:*

The existence of points of convergence between the crafts, art and design and the progressive obliteration of those boundaries traditionally used to define them are a common view nowadays. In the Venezuelan case, such world-wide trends add on to a set of circumstances which have given a scanty consistency, a peculiar nature and a comparatively incipient development in the region to the Venezuelan crafts. According to the author this is due to factors such as: (1) the high level of cultural dispersion of Venezuela's primeval inhabitants; (2) a colonial past lacking strict guilds and artistic schools of clear influence to support this activity and help defining local styles; (3) a poor consciousness about which of the elements intervening in the conception of its objects are Spanish, African and indigenous; (4) a "port economy" that favours foreign influences over local culture since Venezuela's birth as an independent nation (1830); and (5) a legislative tradition quite limited in its definition and approach to the craft sector. To this long-standing state of affairs, new factors have recently emerged to agitate even more the precarious nature of Venezuelan crafts. Among them we ought to mention: (1) the so-called "Design Markets", organised by local creators (artisans and designers), in which craft objects are presented with design ones as if they were the same thing; (2) educative endeavours from private foundations to encourage a design-like aesthetics for the crafts in order to uphold their commercial side; and (3) government initiatives in the form of national events and publications from the Venezuelan Ministry of Culture which envisage the crafts as a sort of design. With this scenario in mind, many are the challenges that should be overcome for a true characterization and development of the Venezuelan crafts.

*Key words:* crafts, categories, Venezuela, atypicality, antipolitics.