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Report
ARACARI

After twenty-five years of taking lucky tourists to experience South American culture, travel company Aracari is now bringing the region's finest crafts to the world through an online shop. Here company founder Marisol Mosquera and curator Marcella Echavarría explain the concept



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“**The focus is on art and design that gives a vision of Peru and Bolivia away from folkloric trinkets and souvenirs**”

Surely one of the boldest initiatives to have emerged from the post-pandemic reset is Aracari Shop. Aracari is an established name in the travel industry, a Peru-based company offering tailor-made luxury and sustainable travel to Peru, Bolivia and Galapagos. Now it is aiming to bring the quality crafts of the Andean region to a worldwide audience by bringing together the work of several revered Latin American artists, artisans and designers in one dedicated, online space.

‘The idea for the shop came up during the pandemic,’ says Marisol Mosquera, who founded Aracari twenty-five years ago. ‘As we were all locked up at home, it seemed a natural idea to bring our philosophy, our values and our destination to people’s homes and provide them with the travel experience without having to move. That is accomplished if we immerse them in the stories of the objects and the artists, and that is what we are trying to do with the shop.’

The high aims of the project can be seen in the appointment of Marcella Echavarría, a leading authority in the luxury and sustainable arena, as its curator. Echavarría, who has worked with the company since 2018, has led consulting

projects for the United Nations, UNESCO and USAID among others, and her clients include individual creators, artisanal brands, textile-related brands and retail concepts as well as travel companies. ‘Craft is no longer a peripheral or isolated area of specialist interest,’ she insists, ‘it is now firmly established in the mainstream. The growth in the public’s desire for authenticity, for experiences, for ethical and sustainable consumption have helped fuel an interest in making and in handmade objects.’

The stated aim of Aracari Shop is to focus on the art and design that gives a vision of Peru and Bolivia away from the usual folkloric trinkets and souvenirs. The curation will initially feature over thirty premium pieces that embody authentic Peru and Bolivia, with artists and artisans including Peruvian photographer Billy Hare, Bolivian textile artist Gaston Ugalde and master weaver and designer Alessandra Petersen.

When asked what elements are key to the character of a Peruvian home, Marisol Mosquera places textiles at the top of a list that also includes silver, colonial woodcarvings, art, texture, ‘and everything for the table, as life revolves around food and celebration’. Her



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01 Peruvian ‘colonial’ carpet by John Alfredo and Nerio Atauje



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02 Peruvian weaver Timoteo Ccarita at work

03 Vintage alpaca blanket (detail), Ponchos Rojas

04 Poncho Tiklla (detail), alpaca poncho by Timoteo Ccarita

05 Cape by Alessandra Petersen

06 Traditional heritage tapestry by Timoteo Ccarita



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own choice of textiles to wear in the coming months would be ‘Peruvian pima cotton tunics from Escvudo’ for summer, and ‘alpaca capes from Alessandra Petersen’ for winter. The ultra-high-quality items that Aracari Shop will be showcasing have their origins, Mosquera explains, in the challenges of the Andean environment. ‘Indigenous people had to survive and actually thrived in a very distinctive, diverse and often adverse geography. The refined, complex and unique output produced by native populations using the rare materials and tools from their environment is what I call Andean luxury.’

She reports that artists from the region can lack confidence and that she has experienced some difficulty persuading them to engage with a global market. However, early signs are that the market itself is eager to experience their cultural riches through the Aracari Shop concept. Her biggest surprise, she says, is ‘The enthusiastic reception, and validation that there is an obvious crossover between online shopping and travel!’

Aracari Shop believes it can go beyond being simply an e-commerce outlet for Andean luxury. It will endeavour to tell the stories of the artists and artisans and support local communities, helping to preserve traditional artforms for future generations. Artisanry in Latin America has been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and the subsequent lack of tourism in the region, so positioning these artists and artisans on an international platform should make a significant difference. In Marisol Mosquera’s view, ‘I think there is something special about a project where the aim is to promote our culture and communities, and sharing that vision with the world.’

www.shop.aracari.com



06