

# CO-CREATIVE INSTINCT

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RETAILERS AND BRANDS ARE SEEKING TO INVOLVE CUSTOMERS IN DESIGN AND PRODUCTION, FOSTERING MORE INTIMATE AND MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH CONSUMERS, WHILE ALSO REDUCING WASTE AND CARBON FOOTPRINTS.



Post-Couture Collective

**Burberry** was one of the first labels to tap the co-creation phenomenon. Back in 2011, it launched **Burberry Bespoke**, an online project where customers design their perfect **Burberry** trench, choosing the colors, fabrics and trimmings.

Today, some projects offer the consumer an even more hands-on approach. **Post-Couture Collective** develops fashion concepts that are easy to assemble by the end user. Customers have two options: to receive the garment as a construction kit and put it together at home, or to download the digital design pattern and laser-cut the garment in a local 'Makerspace', a workshop that gives individuals access to high-tech machinery. Another Dutch label, **Pulp Fabrics**, debuted last year with a similar DIY concept, complemented by a retail space where visitors could purchase materials and patterns and assemble the items on the spot with the help of professionals.

Multi-brand retailers, too, are opening up to the idea of bringing design, production and consumption together. In January, London's **Selfridges** and label **Unmade**

installed a knitting machine on the store's 3rd floor as part of 'Bright New Things', a project celebrating young sustainable fashion. **Unmade** produces on-demand pullovers and scarves, using advanced technology that allows customers to digitally disrupt the color, pattern and scale of pre-made designs, before sending the end version to the knitting machine and seeing their garment made in the store. The business potential of **Unmade** has already been recognized: José Neves, the founder of **Farfetch.com**, and Carmen Busquets, the original backer behind **Net-a-porter**, have invested in the brand.

Involving customers in design and production has multiple benefits for all parties. It reduces the number of unsold garments and gives stores and brands new opportunities to create a feeling among customers that what they are purchasing is unique. On-demand in-store production also means zero storage and transport expenditure for the retailer, making co-creative projects a cost optimization technique that just happens to have great PR value, too.