

The Goddesses of the past and present (Part 2)

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

20 Feb 2018

This is a continuation of Dutch trend forecaster Li Edelkoort's presentation at Lisof yesterday, on her latest trend book, *Goddesses* for spring/summer 2019...

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Epona

Epona is the Celtic goddess who lives for her donkeys, her ponies and her horses. She was an icon in Rome and became the master of the cavalry. The soldiers on horse would take her images throughout Europe, so she is still found in many stables across Europe today and there are several Epona festivals, even in the US, where people go with their horses in the sea to get blessings and so on. There's a whole culture around her, says Edelkoort, and it's delivering brands like Hermès.

This woman has a keen interest in antique jewellery. "She is dressed in big dresses and because of the main of these animals and all the attire, she is a fetishist and there are a lot of loose ends on her garments, so there's a lot of fringe and things hanging and little ribbons and so on to bring it all together."

Artemis

Artemis is another very strong character. She roams the forest with her nymphs, so she teaches younger generations. "When she was born, her father asked her what she wanted most in life and she said, 'I want to have a tunic so that I can run (she doesn't want to have long dresses), I want to have dogs, so I can run with my dogs and I want to have an arch to shoot and hunt.' So this is what she got and this is how she spent her life, and this is how she's pictured in 17 and 18-century paintings when she was very popular amongst all ladies in society who wanted to be painted like her... If you look at her shoes, there's nothing we need to design, we just go to history and here it is."

She wears medium, bright colours with neutrals. The importance of plain colours and beautiful fabrics like linen for day and satin for evening.



Li Edelkoort | Photographer: [Thirza Schaap](#)

“ *It's definitely a newcasual wear thing, sort of a newsafari thing if you want. It's a hunting story and it has, therefore, a bit of aggressive detailing.* ”

Flora and Fauna

"Then I wanted to look at Flora and Fauna because every season I need to do something about flowers... In 1987 we first spoke of the garden scene and it has never left us since. This is how slow fashion is, and so every season you need to come up with a new story – how to make flowers contemporary. So, of course, I go to Flora, but what I didn't know and expect was that her twin sister is Fauna."

Likening them to twins, she says it's hard to be you and together at the same time. "The challenge for a twin is always to be as much yourself as together, so you don't want to be too much yourself because then you lose your other part." Fauna and Flora make this work as one has nature and the other the animals, so they depend on each other. "So, this is a story where we mix both ends – where we mix the floral and the feathers, where we mix the colours of nature, where we have the serpent as well as the flowers, where we have the feathers as well as the flowers, as well as the shells, as well as the birds."

“ So, it's an exuberant paradise story, especially designed so it seems from Gucci and Dolce & Gabbana and Valentino and all the brands that are telling stories, still. ”

It's about embroidery and very much embellished materials. We should really venerate these two more because they're regarded as minor deities, but they're actually our whole environment. Again, it's very strange that there are fragrances for Flora and none for Fauna, she adds.

Mama Oclo

Mama Oclo and her brother were sent by their father who is the sun, and mother who is the moon to educate the people of Peru. It's a sibling archetype where the woman is so close to her brother that she doesn't need to have any male things in her, so she's a 'male-less' woman so to speak and her relationship with men is almost incestuous or semi-incestuous. "Her brother was sent to do architecture and building, while she was sent to do weaving and clothes making. He made the north of the city, she made the south of the city, like Paris, which is strange because the north of Paris is business and the south of Paris is culture. In Florence, it's the same."

“ So, this is about weaving, hand-weaving, folklore, it's about feathers, and natural dyes and indigos and bright colours, and every big volume in the skirt using multi-material – very cool I think and certainly the revival of weaving, which is a big thing in society. ”

Adoma

Edelkoort tells this African narration: "Adoma was born so beautiful – a sort of Beyoncé I imagine – that she doesn't want to marry. Then there's a big party where the boys are choosing the girls and so the girls go to the river and then they take the girls on the boat to an island. So she goes to the river and there's nobody to get her because she decided not to marry. So she's standing there in all her beauty like an idiot and she's sort of wondering, 'What now?', and then comes a crocodile and the crocodile gives her his back and she steps on the back of a crocodile because he is going to bring her to the party. But before he takes her under the river where she is made beautiful, even more so by all the fish and crustaceans and the crocodiles – they do her hair, they do her bijou, they do her clothes, and so then he brings her to the island and she's so extremely beautiful and everybody is in awe and forgives her that she does not want to marry and she's the attraction of everybody, girls and boys and animals and so on."

Basically, she's very sure about herself, so it's about being comfortable in your skin, in bright colours, African fabrics, African motifs, embroidery. "And it's about the southern hemisphere coming of age – it's about all these things at the same time. And the beauty of this is really overwhelming."

Oshun/Oxum

Both African and Brazilian is Oshun or Oxum. Born in West Africa, she was a minor goddess but became very important after travelling with her people as slaves to Brazil for mining gold. Hence, she's the 'goddess of gold', as she helped them survive this hardship, and she's still venerated in Brazil today.

"She toys with men like she toys with her gold jewellery. Like her men, she loves all gold colours, yellow and gold. She forecasts the future, so she puts people under her spells. Her gold is hammered and wild and primitive, like her fabrics. It's not a beautiful gold, it's a sort of primal gold – it's a new way of thinking of gold," says Edelkoort.

Saraswati

Saraswati from India is the 'creative goddess', in charge of poetry and embroidery and theatre. She could be the minister of culture or a curator. "We see this sort of creativity in fashion schools where they mix materials, patterns, brighter colours, patchwork, bits and pieces of recycled materials, and where we have bijouterie which is completely unusual, sort of bringing stones together in a random way – quite incredible – where there is this layering of pompoms and feathers and furs and ribbons, and what not, embroideries and so on."

Nike

Nike doesn't know that she is a goddess, but she is... She is a 'bankable goddess' because she always wins. She's like Serena Williams or the Williams' sisters, explains Edelkoort – always winning, and always willing to win. She was the only goddess with wings, so she could fly and so she was free.

"She teaches us that we can make activewear with a romantic edge, with frills, with female colours, that it can be worn as bijouterie, and that we can put a bit of the Olympus into our activewear and shoes and look at drape and cut from antiquity and bring it into the current activities." This is a new notion of activewear and it's characterised by drawstrings, layering, volume and headbands – like tennis bands – and there is transparency as well.

The Old Goddess

The Old Goddess is a 'general goddess' as she exists in almost any other culture. Where wise people, old people are gathering, where old people are looked upon for wisdom and their advice, where the symbolism of old age here is very important.

“ This is for us a quest to demand ageing in a new way, in a natural way and in a beautiful way. We are not the only ones thinking this. The magazine Allure is making a big manifest against all beauty products that are claiming 'anti-ageing', because they think it is racist amongst old people and so there is going to be a growing awareness that everybody will get old, even if you stretch it to the limit as a lot of American women do, their hands and their husbands still give them away. But I can tell you in America they are like walking mummies – it's a disaster, nobody has ever decided that this is beautiful or desirable. So, this is to say, let's let it go, do whatever you can do to age gracefully, be healthy of course take care of your skin, do whatever you can, but don't really go away from this. ”

This woman is a yarn spinner and people would put a comb of linen on her doorstep to ask her energy in if you need help making some yarn. This is appropriate because Edelkoort thinks that handspun yarns will come back, or at least yarns that have a handspun character. "There is going to be more life in the plain fabrics," as well as mended and decayed fabrics, she adds. "Many of the fabrics here are plain, so we need to do things to make that plainness full."



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Eirene

Finally and fortunately, Edelkoort had to include Eirene, the ‘goddess of peace’. She’s a diplomat and she knows how to bring diverse camps together.

“ *This is needed because there are real problems in the world, where the camps are so extremely far away from each other that we need this sort of diplomacy. We need such a figure in society. She carries the white flag to say let's not have war, so this is all about dressing in white and white and white.* ”

For the first time, we’re starting to see white used as a political statement, which is very interesting she says. “White will definitely be a tool here. She is really all about very dignified colours and beautiful earrings and her image in a way sums up a bit of where we are going in terms of fashion...”

In case you missed it, make sure to [get tickets](#) for her Cape Town seminar at the Artscape Theatre on Saturday, 24 February. There’s so much more inspiration where this came from... Follow Li Edelkoort [@edelkoort](#) and Trend Union/Trend Tablet on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).



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