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Support Tradition – Choose Hand Loomed Textiles

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Hand loomed textile designs are beautiful and creative, and usually one-of-a-kind, and we *love* them here at Hearts. Not only are hand loomed textiles a way of passing traditions down from one generation to another for many cultures, they result in higher quality textiles that tell tales of the people from whom they originate. “Our pieces engage you, not only because they’re beautiful, but also because each piece has its own story about where the materials came from and the artisan’s overall background.” That’s Stephanie, our creative director.

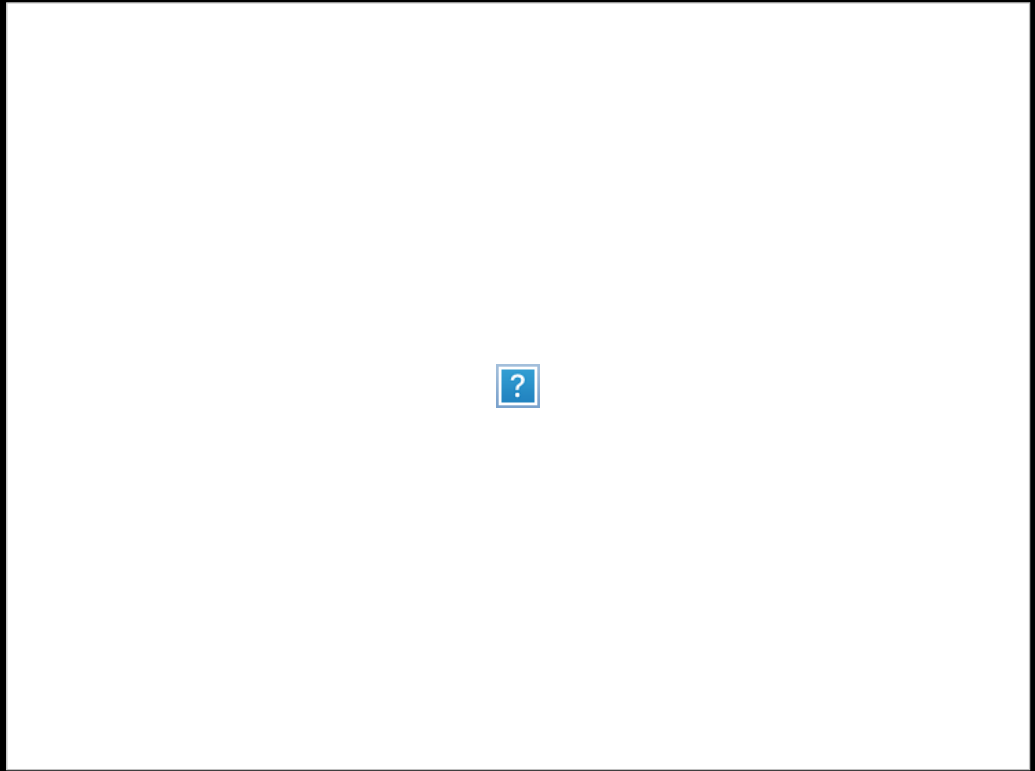
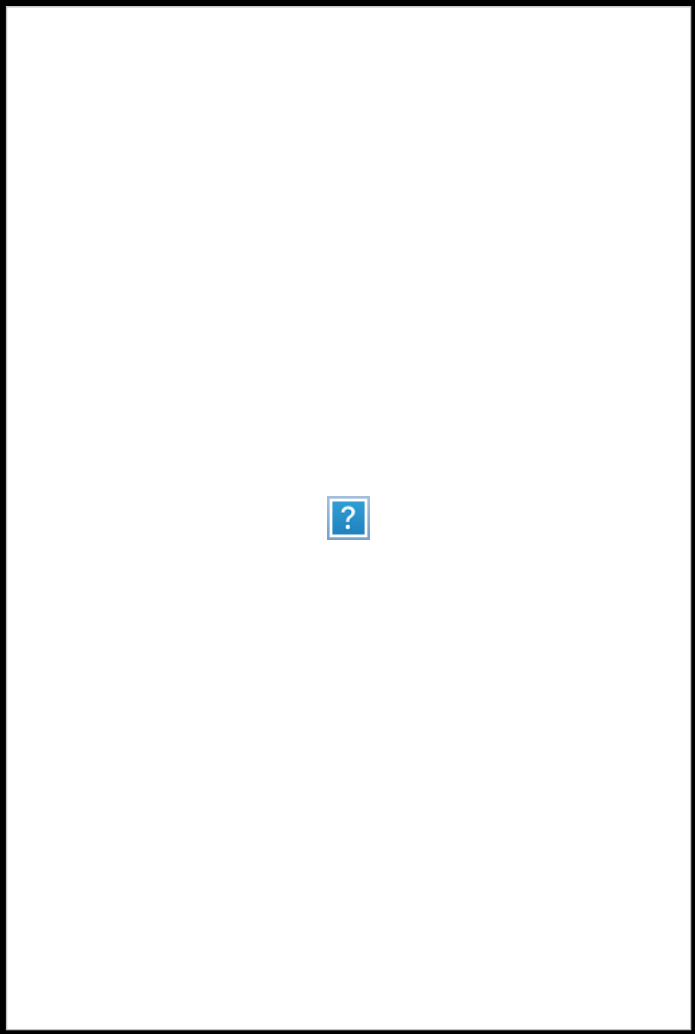
Sadly, the hand looming industry has largely given way to **machine-made textile** mills because demand for low-cost, fast fashion production. Only a few hand loom artisans remain in the world today, but Hearts is working to keep the tradition alive by creating products from hand loomed textiles. When ethical consumers like you purchase items made from hand loomed textiles, you get to take part in those ethnic traditions while keeping traditional fashion alive in vibrant communities.

Quick Facts: Hand Looming Textile Industry

- **400 million m/month from India’s hand loomed textile industry:** Textiles are hand loomed all over the world, from Asia, Africa, Latin America. India is the biggest, producing about 400 million meters per month^[i] in household-based systems where the entire family contributes to the work.^[ii]
- **132 million tons coal consumed by textile machines:** Hand looming requires no fossil fuel energy and consumes little to no water. The commercial textile industry consumes 132 million tons of coal and 2.3 trillion gallons of water to produce 60 billion kg (132 billion pounds) of fabric per year.^[iii]
- **4.6 million hand loomers remain in the world:** 3.9 million of those people hand loom in India.^[iv]
- **74% increase in interest in hand loomed textiles:** The US purchase of hand loomed textiles from India increased by 74% from 2010-2011 to 2011-2012.^[v]
- **Knock-offs a problem for hand loom textile industry:** Imitation hand loom designs and false labeling of machine-made products as hand loomed stunt growth for the genuine hand loom textile industry. ^[vi] Governments are starting to pass legislations to protect hand loomers by allowing them to patent and certify their designs.
- **Recognize genuine hand loomed from machine made:** While hand loomed textiles should more or less have the same pattern on both sides of the fabric, the machine made textiles are often too smooth or too perfect. To identify true hand loomed textiles, you can also look for the selvaige cords and the lazy lines or the joints that result from the discontinuities in the weaving as the weaver moves from one portion of fabric to the next.^[vii]

Take Action! Support Hand Looming and Other Traditional Methods

1. **Purchase Handloom Mark labels woven fashion:** Support the hand looming industry by purchasing genuine hand loomed fabric with the **Handloom Mark** as a sign of authenticity. There are plenty of garments, shawls, silk fabric, and cotton fabric from which to choose.
2. **Have hand loomed textiles custom made:** Support rural artisans by commissioning custom-made hand loomed textiles in the pattern and colors of your choosing. There are plenty of weaving practitioners that are members of the **American Tapestry Alliance**. You can get in touch with them and ask for a list of hand looming artisans with whom you can collaborate.
3. **Take a hand looming class:** You’ll appreciate the artistry, effort, and quality of hand loomed textiles much more by trying your hand at the technique yourself! Different class types for varying levels are available so you can start from the beginning if you’ve never sat at a loom before in your life. Check out classes from **Loop of the Loom** in New York and **The Mannings** in Pennsylvania, or search online for classes offered in your own community.
4. **Invest in a hand looming social enterprise:** Support the hand looming industry by funding start-up businesses through crowdfunding websites. Here’s a great example from **Kickstarter.com**. **Weft of Center Weavers** wants to restore 12 hand looms from the early 20th century, pay for yarn for their first fashion collection, and will send you a gift your support. Other crowdfunding sites such as **Indiegogo** and **Crowdrise** have similar projects.



Dig Deeper: Exporting Hand Loomed Textiles

- To find out more about the Indian hand loom industry, you can view this report from [All India Artisans and Craftworkers Welfare Association \(AIACWA\)](#).
- The [Ministry of Textiles in India](#) is proposing the implementation of the Handloom Mark that will inform consumers that a particular fabric has been certified as being hand loomed. Find out more about this proposal and how it can help the industry and consumers.
- Familiarize yourself with the [US Agency for International Development's \(USAID\)](#) process of obtaining Category 9 certification for the Export of Handloomed Textiles and Folkloric Articles to the US.

Images By: [mckaysavage](#) and [Dan Ruth & Ellie Roscher](#).

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