

'On Tuesday August 26th 2014, around 6.45 pm, a blue Louis Vuitton briefcase containing cash and high-end jewelry with a value of approximately one million euro has been stolen from the lobby of a hotel in Amsterdam. The briefcase was part of the luggage of a family from the Middle-East who staid in the hotel. On images from the security cameras it can be seen how a couple manages to walk out the hotel with the briefcase.' (Rozestraten, n.d.)

Jewellery and journey; it doesn't always seem to be such a good combination. On a very practical level, travelling with jewellery implies taking the risk of pieces being stolen, lost or damaged. There are different ways to deal with that. During the last two centuries it became for example quite common for the Western upper-class to wear cheap copies of their jewellery when travelling (Unger-de Boer, 2010, p. 71). Nowadays a number of tips and tricks on how to pack and secure jewellery while travelling can be found online. For example: linking a pair of earrings together by means of a button (figure 1) or using a plastic straw to prevent necklaces to entangle.



figure 1 - How to keep earrings together during a trip.

Why would one take jewellery on a trip at all? To answer that question we need a better understanding of both “travelling” and “jewellery” and their development over time. Back in prehistory mankind used to be nomads, travelling from one place to the other in search for food. As everything needed to be carried, the hunter-gatherers had little possessions, among which amulets and talismans made out of shells, bones, teeth and ivory (Unger-de Boer, 2010, p. 135). It is only 10.000 years ago that the development of horticulture and the domestication of animals enabled humans to settle in one place. Archeological findings show that each settlement had its own style of jewellery, building a group-identity and distinguishing themselves from others (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p. 443). This new way of living increased the amount of property leading on the one hand to the emergence of trade and on the other hand to jealousy and aggression. In this pre-monetary society jewellery turned out to be a good way to safely take valuables with you.



figure 2 - *Purse Jewel* by Kaya Aharon (upper right: design exploration)

Moreover it could be used in barter. *Purse Jewel* by Kaya Aharon (figure 2), reminds me of this practice.

During the times of the ancient Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Chinese civilization trade remained the dominant reason to travel. During the Middle Ages pilgrimages and crusades added religion as a drive to travel. Until current times Pilgrims on the famous Camino de Santiago wear a scallop (the symbol of apostle St. James the Great) around their neck or stitched on to their clothes or hat (figure 3). This not only functions as a talisman, but also identifies the wearer as a pilgrim. In ancient times this would give access to monasteries along the way providing them with free food and a place for the night.



figure 3 - Pilgrims cloak, 16th century, Saint-Paulien, Chateau de Rochelambert, Haute Loire

The great explorative journeys of people like Christopher Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci and Henry the Navigator might originate from commercial purposes, but adventure and curiosity must have been important drivers as well.

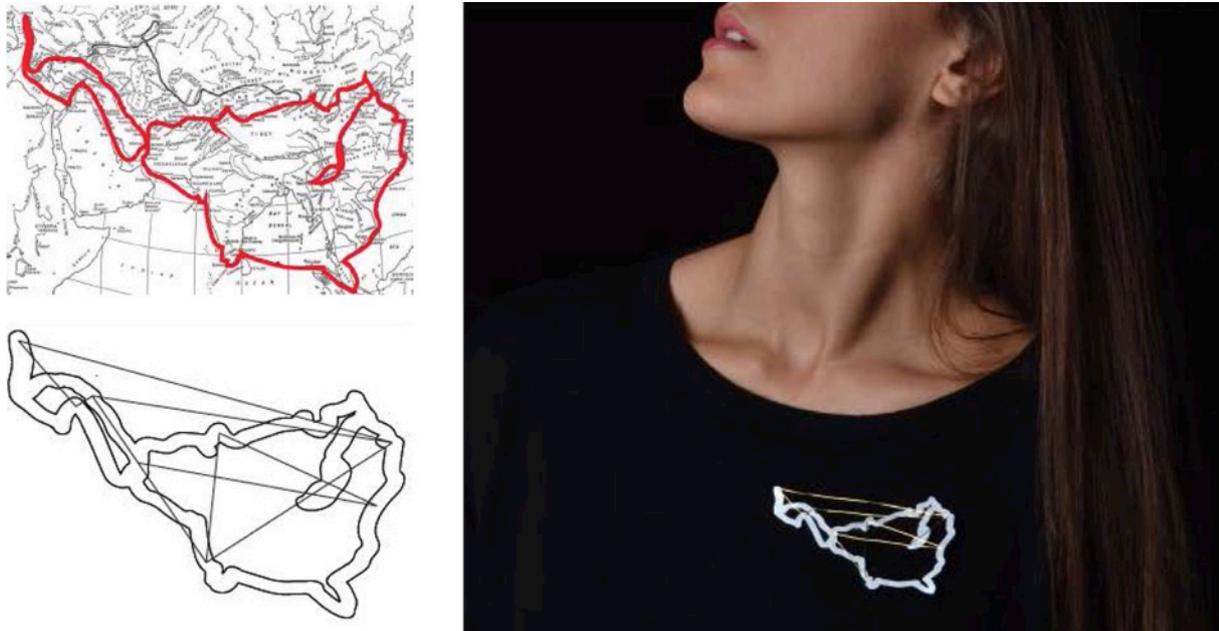


figure 4 - *Travel Shapes* (Marco Polo) by Isotta Scarpa (left: conceptualisation, right: final design)

Nowadays these journeys still appeal to the imagination as can be seen from the designs of Isotta Scarpa (figure 4) and Silvia Di Napoli (figure 5). The diverse patterns found along the Silk Road inspired Di Napoli's earrings. Scarpa's *Travel Shapes* touches upon more philosophical questions by contradicting former and current ways of travelling.



figure 5 - Earrings by Silvia di Napoli (left/middle: conceptualisation, right: final design)

Further on in this text we will have a closer look on how technology and new ways of transportation have changed the travelling-experience. Let's first continue the chronological development of motivations to travel. From the 18th to the 20th century the so-called Grand Tour became part of the upbringing of

European wealthy male adolescents. This trip, usually to Italy, aimed to experience the fruits of (classical) culture in real life. Moreover one could escape the oppressive etiquettes at home and explore his budding sexuality. From this trip exquisite souvenirs were taken home, like boxes and jewellery often depicting scenes of ancient architecture made out of micro mosaic (figure 6).



figure 6 (left) - Micromosaic brooch set in black glass, ca. 1875, depicting the Pantheon
 figure 7 (right) - *All roads lead to Rome* by Michael Berger

For the annual *düsselGOLD* exhibition 2013 with the theme ‘Italian Journey’ in the Goethe Museum Düsseldorf, Michael Berger designed *All roads lead to Rome* (figure 6). The shape reminds of a compass rose. Its dynamic pointer reads the palindrome Roma/Amor, like Goethe used in this ‘Roman Elegies’ (1788/90). A North-indicator is absent as ‘all roads lead to Rome’.

The industrial revolutions of the 19th and 20th century not only (literally) paved the way for modern kinds of transportation, but also raised the overall level of prosperity such that a larger amount of people had the time and financial resources to travel. Where in the past travelling was reserved for specific groups of people, be it salesmen, pilgrims or the upperclass, nowadays travelling has become a commodity for large groups of people looking for relaxation.

Based on this short history of travelling and jewellery we can draw an overview of motives to travel and jewellery related to that (Table 1)

	Motives to travel	Related jewellery
Hunter-gatherers	Food	Jewellery as amulet
Early civilizations	Trade	Jewellery as currency
Pilgrims and crusaders	Religion	Jewellery as identifier
Discoverers	Curiosity, adventure	
Adolescents on Grand Tour	Personal growth	Jewellery as souvenir
Tourists	Relaxation	

Table 1 Overview of motives to travel and related jewellery

Of course the overview is not complete, but it gives a frame of reference when taking a closer look at the relation between jewellery and journey in current society.

Much has changed since the early days. In the Western world we no longer have to travel for food. Actually the food is transported towards us; on the corner of the street I can buy oranges from Spain, French wine and Italian cheese. Together with the physical transportation of food and goods, an intangible financial market has created lively global trade. With cufflinks *Selfmade Man*, flat-packed in a business-cardholder, Brech anticipates on these businessmen travelling the world (figure 7).



figure 8 - *Selfmade Man* by Brech

The industrial revolutions have changed the pace and experience of travelling: trains, cars and airplanes catapult us from the one place into another without much connection to the environment one travels through. Brooch *Travel Shapes* by Isotta Scarpa (figure 4) impressively visualizes this development by juxtaposing the wayward routes of famous discoverers and the straight airplane routes. In relation to our modern society Belgian philosopher Lieven De Caeter writes about Capsular Civilization. Not only our means of transportation are anonymous capsules, we also withdraw in anonymous shopping malls, theme parks and transfer zones. Locking yourself in automatically implies putting up borders and excluding 'the other' (de Caeter, 1998).

In order to pass a border you need to be able to identify yourself. In 2013 Chp...? invited a number of international designers to create a piece of jewellery inspired by the theme 'Global Identity'. Both Dinie Besems and Studio Homunculus were inspired by the act of identifying oneself. The latter designed a clasp to be put around a passport in order to watch over your personal information (figure 9). Dinie Besems' brooch *I AM* is the most pure way of identifying oneself (figure 9).



figure 9 (left) - *Clasped ID* by Studio Homunculus
figure 10 (right) - *I'am* by Dinie Besems

Old Atlas Book by Michal Canfi (figure 11), challenges our understanding of borders. By interweaving old maps he created a pixelated images: do the pixels represent the capsules within society? Or should we look from a distance and see the individual pixels blur into a new map?



figure 11 - *Old Atlas Book* by Michal Canfi

Travellers are no longer adventurers, yet they have become tourists. Or, in the words of Welten: 'Travellers of the Grand Tour [...] were adventurers, not so much so because they lacked asphalted roads and travel-insurances [...], but because they pushed their own frame of reference. Modern tourists seldom encounter true adventures that force them to relate to the unknown. For modern tourists unfamiliar situations are acceptable within a certain comfort zone. True adventures are covered by a travel-insurance. [...] Well-educated tourists nevertheless like to distinguish themselves from mass-tourism, using terms like 'culture', 'cultural heritage' and 'Bildung'.' (Welten, 2013, pp. 65–66)

Tourism has become a true industry, both for the tour operators and for the places that receive tourists. Every self-respecting town has a 'City marketing'-department. This leads to generic travelling experiences, which is wonderfully illustrated in the series *Photo Opportunities* by Corinne Vionnet. On social media she collected numerous snapshots of touristic hotspots – Eiffel Tower, Colosseum, Thaj Mahal, etc. – and merged them together into almost impressionistic images (figure 12).



figure 12 - *Photo Opportunities* (Rome) by Corinne Vionnet

Also digital technology has largely changed the travelling experience. Goethe documented his Grand Tour (1786-7) in sketches, commissioned paintings and a diary (that was later published as letters home in *Reise in Italien*). (Cavaliero, 2005, p. 61) *Travel Notes*, a bracelet with integrated notebook, designed by Bhawna Bhatia D'Anella (figure 13) aims to keep this way of documenting alive. Whereas it seems more common nowadays to take tons of pictures that are instantly shared on social media. Even abroad we are constantly 'online' and never far away from home. We create so many digital images, that it gets harder if not impossible to curate them, which results in hard disks full of images. These potentially are cues to valuable memories, but in fact they are hardly ever looked at. Luke Noothout (figure 13) developed a radical solution: '*Leth* is a harddrive that can be worn as a pendant. When storing data on *Leth* the files are consciously corrupted and become

unreadable. The only trace a file leaves in the digital world is a dot on the milky-way-like interface of the uploading software on the computer. This way the meaning of the digital files is supposed to be passed on to the physical object, which becomes an abstract container of cherished memories.’ (Versteeg, van den Hoven, & Hummels, 2016)



figure 13 (left) - *Travel Notes* by Bhawna Bhatia D'Anella
figure 14 (right) - *Leth* by Luke Noothout

There is another aspect to digital technology and the internet: it makes the whole world accessible from behind the computer. You don't have to travel to study cultural heritage. De Botton notices that, when travelling, our curiosity is directed by 'superficial geographical logic', meaning that we visit whatever can be seen on that specific site. When in Madrid we go straight from the 18th century Palacio Real in Rococo-style to the Centre de Arte Reina Sofia to see Picasso's *Guernica* and other highlights of 20th century art. Content-wise it would make more sense to skip the museum and instead visit the palaces of Prague and Saint-Petersburg. (de Botton, 2009, p. 128)



figure 15 (left) - *Reflecto* by Alessio Lu



figure 16 (right) - *Mirror Mirror* by Bertjan Pot for CHP '13 - Global Identity

So, why are we still travelling? To be superficially entertained? To enjoy better weather? To be confronted with a totally different environment? I think it is none of that. *Reflecto* by Alessio Lu (figure 15) and *Mirror Mirror* by Bertjan Pot (figure 15) might be the best representations of what I think travelling is all about. The more I travel, the more I doubt whether the value of travelling is in geographical locations. For me travelling is a state of mind, not a place. You are travelling whenever you manage to open up all your senses and truly perceive the world around you. Going to an unknown place and escape the daily rush might help to achieve that mindset, as could jewellery.

Ad quae noscenda iter ingredi, transmittere mare solemus, ea sub oculis posita negligimus, seu quia ita natura comparatum, ut proximorum incuriosi longinqua sectemur, seu quod omnium rerum cupido languescit, cum facilis occasio, seu quod differimus tamquam saepe visuri, quod datur videre quotiens velis cernere.

Those works of art or nature which are usually the motives of our travels by land or sea, are often overlooked and neglected if they lie within our reach.

Plinius de Jongere, Epistolae 8, 20

This essay was written in the context of the 5th edition of Next Jeneration Jewellery Talent Contest organized by Fiera di Vicenz S.p.A., focusing on the theme 'Jewellery and the Journey'. A summary of this text has been published in the contests catalogue, which also features all nominees.

The author, Maarten Versteeg, is a Dutch designer, teacher, scholar and wearer of jewellery. He has a background in Industrial Design Engineering (TU Delft) and goldsmithing. This technical background is reflected in his collection Brech. He worked as lecturer for TU/e (Eindhoven) and Polimi (Milan). In 2016 Maarten started a double PhD-project at TU/e (Eindhoven) and UTS (Sydney) on digital jewellery. He published several academic papers on the combination of jewellery and technology.

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