



ORIGIN & MISSION

Pokuasi is a venture built out of an interest in international development and the realization of many of the problems related to it – a reliance on fundraising in the West for overseas programs is just one of them. Pokuasi is also a reaction to mainstream fashion in which the producer is entirely divorced from the consumer, and where there is little to no overlap between the two roles.

We are aligned with “trade not aid” while still questioning the effectiveness of the invisible hand. We support the fundamental mentality behind fair-trade, although we believe that fair-trade products should be purchased based on high quality materials and design and not based on pity or solely “doing good.”

We definitely do not believe that customers deserve a dopamine dose of good feelings when simply making a purchase, a phenomenon that is growing with the “Buy One, Give One” business model. We believe in questioning every action and embracing, documenting, and discussing the complexities of living in a world in which there is not one clear “best practice” towards development or optimum way of consumption.

Our mission is two-fold:

The first half relates to alternatives to mainstream production – Producing, designing, and purchasing objects will always exist, and therefore we believe that there must be more options for the production of higher quality, longer lasting products, made by workers who are treated as equals to the customers who purchase their work.

The second half relates to creating a platform for discussion – Instead of simplifying what we do and what we support into taglines, we would like to embrace the complexity of labor and production in a globalized world, and open up the conversation.

POKUASI DISCUSSION PLATFORM

In September we will be launching Pokuasi's discussion platform, which will feature curated content from writers around the world.

The platform will present two types of content. One type will be longer form entries, including articles or photo essays, written by people within the alternative fashion and development spheres.

The second format is a type of Q&A titled *Debate Club*, which will include one prompt with four responses from different people, modeled after The Columnists in *WSJ Magazine*. The purpose of these posts is to curate diverse opinions on a specific question that will spur discussions beyond the post.

A key feature of *Debate Club* is that the content is not directly related to Pokuasi as a brand of jewelry. We understand the predicaments of publishing critical content alongside a luxury product, which is why the platform will not contain links to our products or journal, so that we can continue to question the industries of which we are a part.

Below are a few sample prompts for *Debate Club*, although on the site, visitors will be able to submit their own questions that they would like to see answered.

The most influential donors and actors in development in Africa are foreign governments and large multi-lateral NGOs based in Europe or the United States. These agencies plan development programs, giving money, materials, advice, and oftentimes strict guidelines as to the use of these donations. Why are they, as "outsiders," assumed to know what is best for a country? What would development look like if in the hands of local agencies and governments?

What do you think are the most useful forms of donations? Is it better to give financial donations or material donations, and how does each affect the long-term survival of the recipient?

How can we begin to consider (eco)fashion as not simply a citadel of bourgeois "personal choice," luxury, and even decadence, but as a process of radical self-making, which people across geographic and socioeconomic borders can participate actively in?



Mockup of the Pokuasi Tumblr page, which will feature *Debate Club* posts, articles, and photo essays. "Scaling the Convo" is an example of one Debate Club prompt that is answered by four different people.

We are currently reaching out to leaders, activists, strong writers, and well-spoken tastemakers to launch our discussion platform with strong, engaging content. If you (or someone you know) would like to join us and voice your opinions on complex global issues, please email us for the current prompts and become a part of the initial group of writers who will inspire others to also engage.

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subject line: Blog Prompts