

Do You Like It? I Did It Myself, Darling

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of their lives in any way they can."

Faith Popcorn, the consumer trends oracle, said that, "In the aftermath of 9/11, people want to feel resourceful."

This may be particularly true, she added, of "people who think they can't do anything real — who are completely baffled if their clothes dryer doesn't work and who don't even think to check that it's plugged in."

"This is not about saving money," Ms. Popcorn said. "For people, especially those who have been used to having things done for them, it's about being in control of your situation."

None of which is news to Ms. McEvoy, who sees as her mission the lifting of the Martha Stewart vision to an exalted plane. But Ms. McEvoy, who has spent months decorating the shell-pink walls of her country house with large pressed leaves that she scavenged from some nearby brush, concedes that "sometimes I feel like Marie Antoinette-goes-hunting-for-pine cones."

A few socialites and celebrities have taken to flaunting achievements that in other times would have marked them as dowdy. Taking a cue, perhaps, from Marlene Dietrich, who famously baked birthday cakes for her celebrated friends, Julia Roberts announces in print that she cleans her own house, cooks and knits. Nicole Kidman describes blending her own irragrance from a private stash of essential oils. And Carolyn Roehm, the fashion designer who reinvented herself as a decorating maven, has turned her hand to pine-cone chandeliers.

Ms. McEvoy recently assigned Ms. Roehm to write a monthly column in *House Beautiful*. Let Martha tell her readers how to make a fetching slip-cover; Ms. Roehm gives do-it-yourself chic a distinct patrician spin, urging subscribers to do what the high-end decorators do: collect fabric swatches to pin on storyboards that would put Billy Baldwin to shame.

Ms. Roehm says the amateur movement stems at least in part from the desire of a nervous monied class to live a simpler, more authentic life. "I think when you are challenged and threatened, you tend to pull in, do your nest and stay at home," she said. "To some degree this trend is also about taking time for yourself, and reclaiming your creativity."

A hybrid of amateurism and its close cousin, customization, do-it-yourself's new upmarket status has spawned its own mini-marketing trend. Among its chief proponents is the British perfumer Jo Malone. In her stores and in her literature, Ms. Malone encourages customers to blend their own scents, adapting formulas from the company's elaborate fragrance charts.

"Creating a perfume gives people charge and a sense of connoisseurship," Ms. Malone said. "It allows the individual a chance to be an



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artist, but in a very controlled way." Her upscale American customers have responded eagerly, queuing up for a chance to play chemist at Ms. Malone's shop in Bergdorf Goodman and at her new Manhattan flagship on Park Avenue South.

In the world of high-end fashion, the Japanese designer Issey Miyake has entered the field with *A Piece Of Cloth* (known by its acronym A-POC), a collection of men's and women's clothing designed to be altered by the wearer at home. The line will be in Mr. Miyake's new *TriBeCa* store late this month.

Publications that cater to the affluent hip are infused with the new upscale can-do spirit. In its current issue, *Jalouse*, a style primer for the fashion vanguard, follows a feature on Jennifer Lopez's showgirl hair with a spread that tells readers how to achieve J-Lo's highlights at home. *Spruce*, the fashion spinoff of *Wallpaper*, the strenuously trendy design magazine, has taken a similar tack, providing sewing patterns for trousers, a skirt and a cap in its premier issue in September.

Home sewing and the needle arts are thriving in these jittery times. As Susan Brandt, director of communications at the Hobby Industry Association, said in an interview on

Wednesday: "We are an industry people go to in times of trouble. They take solace in staying busy and doing things with their hands."

Alluding to the collapse of the dot-com economy, Lauren Goodman writes in the November *Jalouse*, "If technology won't take care of me,

Affluent people want to feel resourceful, says Faith Popcorn, the trends oracle. And in control.

I'm going straight to the hearth of the domestic arts to nurture myself into a more fecund new age." Ms. Goodman implies in the article that she plans to take up knitting.

"In the wake of 9/11," Ms. Meyrich said, "people are beginning to re-examine themselves. They are re-assessing what is important to them, what was important to their grandparents, and which traditions they are going to bring forward to the next generation. "After all," she pointed out, "what are you going to pass down to your daughter? A cell phone?"

A visitor to the Web site of a Manhattan sewing school, Sew Fast Sew Easy, confided late last month that needlework had helped her cope since the World Trade Center attack. The woman, identified only as Vanessa, said, "After making myself sew this week (I made two skirts), I felt so much better and find the pain easier to deal with."

Elissa K. Meyrich, who runs Sew Fast Sew Easy's classes, said her

needle crafts, noted that classes in her Nantucket and Madison Avenue stores have not been so crowded

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