

# Atelier: bespoke storybooks for Gen Alpha

CASE STUDY | 18 Feb 2022

With the power to capture imaginations, preserve legacy, and communicate values, books are seeing a rejuvenation in the digital age. Atelier creates bespoke, handcrafted books for children and their families to share that speak to a growing desire for tactility and personal connection.

## AUTHORS

India Doyle

## LOCATIONS:

**GENERATIONS:**  
GEN ALPHA (BORN  
2011-PRESENT)

**SECTORS:**  
MEDIA AND ENTERTAIN-  
MENT  
LUXURY



## EXPERTS

Julia Brizi della Rosa

## HIGHLIGHTS

- 01** While mass digitisation has meant that many kids are spending time in front of their screens, Atellier has sought to capture adult and children's imaginations with bespoke books that tell unique stories
- 02** Parents are looking for meaningful ways to connect with their children, and share positive memories
- 03** With ultra-rich audiences growing, there are opportunities for unique luxury products that meet the need of today's UHNW and HNW parents

## DATA

- **33%** of Gen Alphas and Gen Zers don't see themselves in the books that they read
- **25%** of parents say they struggle to accommodate learning and play with their child into everyday routines
- More than **one in five** children in the UK have felt anxious during pandemic lockdowns

## SCOPE

How do you tell your family story? Generations of families treasure the myths and narratives that they feel bind and define them. For Atellier, such an appetite for owning and sharing a family legacy offered the perfect opportunity to innovate the children's books market, while also tapping into a growing appetite for meaningful, personalised luxury products. The company gives parents a route to celebrate their child and plant a creative legacy that children can return to again and again. "My principle in Atellier is that everything starts with childhood," explains the founder of Atellier, Julia Brizi della Rosa. "Childhood is fundamental for shaping what you will do when you're older." [1]

Also offering products for adults, Atellier sits at the luxury end of an expanding category around personalised book creation. The brand starts each process by spending time with the family, talking to the parents and children about the project and gaining an understanding of their personal worlds. "I ask them about their favourite superhero, character, specific cartoon, as well as relationships with the family," explains della Rosa. These personal touches will be brought into the final product, the children and their loved ones feature as main or supporting characters, while treasured locations and objects form the backdrop of the story. In placing the child and their personal experience at the heart of the narrative, della Rosa notes that the books are "not just physically luxurious, but something meaningful for people." [1]

While each object is centred around personal and emotional connections, the final delivery of Atellier is luxurious – a couture product against mass-market offerings. One-of-a-kind books are crafted by a select team of artists,

illustrators, bookbinders, and even paper experts who all feed into the final execution, making sure that every element reflects the core family values and identity. From the rich colourways and textural feel of the book to the unique narrative elements – pop-up pages, or unique inserts – the product celebrates the craftsmanship of the book creation process. With research finding that 33% of Gen Alphas and Gen Zers don't see themselves in the books that they read, Atellier's bespoke approach allows for a readjustment of representation within the luxury space. [2]



How do Atellier books capture imaginations and preserve family legacies?

Atellier (2022)

## CONTEXT

### CONNECTING ACROSS GENERATIONS

Stories have long been a source of connection between parent and child. But books – the traditional format for this – now have to compete with digital entertainment. An nScreenMedia survey found that 75% of parents watch videos with their children more than several times a week. [3] That said, during lockdown, books saw a surge in interest. In the UK alone, £1.82 billion was spent on books in 2021, which is the most that has been spent since records began. [4] While gaming and TV are being used more by parents as shared leisure time, the tactility of a book, and the option for children to return to it again and again is something that della Rosa has noticed children – as well as parents – really valuing. "That's the magic," she says. [1] With 25% of parents saying they struggle to accommodate learning and play with their child into everyday routines, moments that facilitate ongoing creative exploration offer real value for the family. [5]

### PARENTS WANT CHILDREN'S STORIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGING TOPICS

Parents are having to speak to their children about big and challenging topics. In 2020, 66% of US parents said that they had spoken about the Black Lives Matter movement, and police brutality, to their kids. [6] From anti-racism and representation to breaking down gender binaries and the climate crisis, parents are looking to business to help

guide these conversations and support their children's learnings on complex topics. In response to the intersectional challenges that are defining the 2020s, children's books are becoming more rooted – some explicitly, and some simply through the world's that these stories are told in – in the realities of now. The Proudest Blue is a picture book about a young girl wearing her hijab to school for the first time, Vitamina T for Tacos helps children explore multi-ethnic America, and the UK's Something Special was created to improve representation in kids shows for children with learning difficulties.

## HNWI PARENTING

The new paradigms of parenting are happening as high net worth and ultra-high net worth individuals are getting richer – and there's more of them than ever before. In 2021, the more than 60,000 UHNW individuals globally held a total of \$22 trillion – a 9% rise from 2015. [7] This ultra-rich demographic is looking for truly original experiences and products, which is where craftsmanship and quality of product offer a real USP. Atelier's approach meets the expectations of these parents, but other categories are also seizing on this opportunity. Chantecaille Bébé is an organic body care brand elevating beauty for babies, while e-commerce platform Ssense has launched a series of capsule kids collections to tap into the appetite for luxury childrenswear.



Atelier's offerings are highly personal and provide a true sense of uniqueness

Atelier (2022)

## INSIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

### PERSONALISED CREATIVE IP

With world-building and play central to a child's development, the bespoke IP generated by Atelier offers a huge variety of opportunities for creativity beyond the book. Illustrations, for example, can be replicated around other areas in the house such as wallpaper or on pyjamas, generating a personalised experience that extends beyond the page. This ownership over the individualised world created by Atelier sits in contrast to mass-market personalisation products

such as Wonderbly, which offer a degree of customisation for readers without a true sense of uniqueness. As della Rosa explains, when the child develops it becomes obvious with a mass-market product that it's working off a template and that the story "is not completely yours." [1] Atellier's approach counters that realisation, creating artefacts that can be uniquely shared between parent and child for generations and offer feelings of psychological ownership.

## HELPING PROCESS GRIEF, LOSS, AND CHANGE

More than one in five children in the UK have felt anxious during pandemic lockdowns, and with stress rising among young people, parents are looking for support in helping to communicate and explain stressful events to their kids. [8] This may be at a social or cultural level, but also around personal events that a child experiences. The bespoke stories are one way that parents help support their children during complex life events. "I've had briefs where parents need some support to pass on the message that you can change countries, change locations," says della Rosa. "But you will always end up with friends and the adventure will be fun." [1] Similarly, these bespoke stories help children to navigate grief and loss, creating a route to remembering loved ones in an accessible way. In understanding the need to support young people in grief, apps like Apart of Me have also gained traction – speaking to the ongoing opportunity around supporting children in challenging times.

## NEW LEGACY OBJECTS REFLECT ALTERNATIVE LUXURY VALUES

"Where once it was all about status, logos, and exclusivity, luxury brands are now actors in social conversations, driven by a renewed sense of purpose and responsibility," says Bain & Company partner, Claudia D'Arpizio, writer of Bain's 2021 luxury report. [9] With its emphasis on slow, personalised, and handcrafted products, Atellier's approach directly values and understands this shift in HNWI attitudes to luxury. Della Rosa explains that it's "not just money... but that you've thought about them and want to pass on specific messages." [1] While the level of personalisation may not be replicable for all business models, the understanding of putting values at the heart luxury children's products, and taking the time to explain the creative process around them, is something that can be actioned on a wider scale. For example, Barbie and Balmain partnered to create a series of NFTs that see Barbie modelling genderless fashion – a limited edition product that helps the brand move past its gendered history.



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## SOURCES

1. Interview with Julia Brizi della Rosa conducted by the author
3. nScreenMedia (December 2020)
5. Ipsos Mori (February 2020)
7. Spears (August 2021)
9. Bain & Company (November 2021)

2. National Literacy Trust (December 2020)
4. The Guardian (January 2022)
6. The American Family Survey (September 2020)
8. Metro (January 2022)

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