

The Trusted  
Clothes  
Collection:  
Volume II

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

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Scott

## **Sustainable Fibres: What is Cotton?**

**July 1, 2016**

Back again to talk a little bit about, and in a little bit of a roundabout way for you, natural fibres! Again, natural fibres are much unlike the synthetic fibres. Natural fibres are divided into three categorizations known as minerals fibres, animal fibres, and plant fibres. Mineral fibres come in in only one form as far as I know, and that form is asbestos. Asbestos is used in many cases throughout homes as insulation for a good thing, but, unfortunately, the bad thing is that it is highly correlated as a carcinogenic material, probably and one might argue conclusively, correlated or causing for human beings.

Cotton is a natural fibre, and sustainable, ethical, and by the lights of Trusted Clothes much more fashionable. Ethical is sexy.

There are many kinds of outputs for this particular fibre, but this will be our look into its production and trade, design and manufacturing, and general uses. Cotton is cultivated as a fibre for textile utilization. The average cotton yield is about 800 kilograms per hectare. But it is almost purely cellulose and with a high level of both breathability and softness, which means that it is a popular natural fibre. Its length can be anywhere from 65 to 10 millimeters.

Its diameter can be anywhere from 11 to 22 microns. It is highly absorbent of moisture and is a comfortable clothing in hot weather. Given that it has a high tensile strength; it is easy to wash with a variety of soaps. It is such a popular production as a natural fibre throughout the world that 80 countries are cultivating it. There are approximately 10 million small farmers that depend on this cultivation of cotton for their basic income. This means their livelihood.

So, the production and trade of cotton produces approximately 25 million tonnes throughout the world per annum, I think. The major producers are Brazil, China, India, Pakistan, the United States of America, and Uzbekistan, which accounts for approximately four-fifths of the world's total exports of cotton via its production by the aforementioned 10 million farmers. In terms of raw cotton, China has been the major importer, and takes in approximately three to four million tonnes of cotton – circa estimations from 2006, but the main exporter has and continues to be the United States of America.

In terms of the uses of cotton, about 60% of cotton fibre is used for yarn and thread through a wide variety or range of clothing, which means jeans, t-shirts, and even shirts in general, but this can even include underwear and coats. It is used in home furnishings including bedspreads and window blinds, and even washcloths. As noted with multiple other natural fibres in this series on sustainable fibres, the main benefit of things such as cotton is for clothing and other uses in the daily life, in industrial manufacturing, or the fact that they can decompose and have a natural cycle, which I have turned the natural fibre life cycle. That's all for now!

## Sustainability 101 – Lights and Laundry

July 1, 2016

Let's take a look today at sustainability tips. Two sustainability tips seem relevant to me. These relate to the overall sustainable and ethical fashion culture, but in your home. You can use different lights. You can wash your clothes more efficiently. These are aspects of keeping one's carbon output low and pollution low.

Another aspect of keeping things like those low is the home. The ways in which we keep our homes low in energy cost, but still with comfort. I think that some of the aspects of sustainability regarding fashion relate very deeply to one's home. Aside from one's clothing, the home is the next most intimate aspect of our own lives. The home is a reflection of self. A home is a reflection of style. Home is also a reflection of conscientiousness.

Conscientiousness regarding the environment. Conscientiousness regarding pollution. And conscientiousness regarding environmental concerns over the next few decades for climate change.

What I want to share in this series are some tips for keeping sustainability are your own contributions to the improvement of the environment. The reduction of harm to the environment. Let's look at two examples. There are lights. Lights in households. There are laundry machines. The lights tend to be incandescent or CFI bulbs – inefficient bulbs.

Laundry machines can be old, outdated, and so inefficient. Efficiency as in the cost per load of laundry for washing and drying based on electrical usage. We live in a very privileged time. Living in a wonderfully privileged society. That's not necessarily a bad thing. But, to me, responsibility comes with some level of a better life, within reason. Better life can imply

taking away the quality of life of people that is here now and other places of the world. Or, another set of people not yet born are just coming into this world. All these things matter. All these people matter. Our actions have consequences. Climate change is one example, and lights and laundry are great examples, I think. And they're easy fixes!

What about deeper? Sure. You can see this extend into the realm of the home and clothing under the rubric of sustainability. If you look at the incandescent and CFL bulbs, they are typically not very sustainable because they are inefficient, and so environmentally irresponsible. If you refit your house with LED lights as opposed to CFL lights, you can have another, and increase efficiency of about 90%. That's a great, great increase in efficiency. It is also environmentally responsible. No harmful gases, better and more efficient lights, and lights that apparently can live up to or last long as 20 years. That's a good thing I think.

The second thing that can be done is changing laundry settings. This is closer to the textile and natural fibre industry, and to sustainability. If you need to heat water, you need to input energy into cold water or room temperature water. That would warm the water and imparts energy. When using laundry, a cold wash might be of use for some types of clothing or some loads of clothing. That can be more efficient. That can be environmentally responsible.

Some other options to do with laundry might be less desirable, but can help. For instance, we can wear clothes longer. We can wash clothes by hand. But, personally, I wouldn't want my clothes washed by hand. Why? I like the 21st century. Some other aspects can include the use of clothes lines to dry clothes by the sun and wind. That seems a little more reasonable to me, right? It depends on your level of investment. If a heavy effort, you can go full-throttle on throwing clothes on the line and doing a cold wash of laundry. (Depends on the surrounding

area's weather, though.) If light investment, you can do the cold washing of laundry alone and switch some lightbulbs to the LED bulbs. I think that's enough to get us started.

## **Zimbabwe and Fashion**

**July 4, 2016**

I want to talk a little bit today about a topic close to the hearts of many people, but with a little bit of background via provision of context. And it is something of interest to me, too, with respect to the African Diaspora. It's about an individual nation within the African Diaspora. I want to talk about Zimbabwe and its fashion industry. Zimbabwe is a country in Southern Africa that is landlocked. Some notable areas of the country are the Zambezi River and Victoria Falls in addition to the Patoka Gorge.

The capital is Harare, and the current president of Zimbabwe is Robert Mugabe. He runs the country with a population totaling 14.15 million people. In fact, he's been President since 1980. That's a long time. The accepted currencies are the US dollar, the Euro, the Botswana Pula, the Pound Sterling, and the South African Rand. The official languages are English, Ndebele, and Shona. Zimbabwe has a rich, and varied history including a Precolonial Era, the Colonial Era, the Unilateral Declaration of Independence and the Civil War, and the Independence Era.

The climate is tropical. Some of the flora and fauna of the region include evergreen and hardwood forests, and extends to over 350 species of mammals that can be found there, and even 500 species of bird and over 130 fish species. In addition to this, there are some international human rights concerns in terms of the organization positions reports such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch examining violations of rights for food, freedom of assembly and movement, shelter, and even protection of the law.

One of the main points of strength in the country relates to the high adult literacy rate of Zimbabwe within the African Diaspora. According to 2013 reports, the literacy rate is the highest in the continent of Africa at about 90.7% for the adult population although, half of Zimbabwe's children have not progressed beyond primary school. In addition, some of the wealthier members of the population send their children to independent schools as opposed to some of the schools run by the government. So, with that in mind and in terms of providing a context for some of the culture, not necessarily in terms of pluses and minuses, this, rather, gives a context and complement to the presentation of fashion in Zimbabwe.

This is an interesting topic to me. I believe that it might be of interest to others. Sustainability is a challenge for the entire world. Fashion is a core aspect of her culture. To begin with some of the aspects of Zimbabwean fashion and culture, we can look at some of the historic precedents in the long history of the culture for instance, the traditional fashion and culture.

You can also show marital status with a married woman traditionally wearing a blanket over the shoulders with thick beaded hoops of grass, grass that is twisted. This can also include copper rings or brass rings around the neck, legs, or arms. The colors can range from blues, greens, reds, yellows, and browns. It is an important note that the head covering is an external sign of respect for the husbands. Little girls might wear beaded aprons or beaded skirts. Men can also wear animal skin headbands and ankle bands.

Of course, as influence from West and the Western world through colonialization occurred, the current European and Western set of apparels can bleed into the culture and affect the current generations for the future generations with respect to their choice of clothing. This sense of style can then change over time. This, then, changes the future culture. In other

words, the more indigenous and more traditional aspects of them in the Zimbabwean culture has been influenced by the European or western culture, especially in regard to some of the context given before about the Colonial Era. Duly noted, there was a separation between the Precolonial Era and the Colonial Era. In addition, you can note the Independence Day is celebrated by the culture.

Now, with respect to the modern fashion culture of Zimbabwe, many of the citizens and individuals in the country wear, apparently, modern and Western-style clothing as the usual outfit. In other words, very few people will wear the traditional clothing on a regular basis within the country. It's important to keep in mind stereotypes that might be in one's mind and then contrast that with the reality. Sometimes true, sometimes false, or at times partially or even mostly true; it depends. Of course, there are the major fashion icons within the country that can then therefore produce aspects of the traditional culture within the fashion culture. Of course, this can also come into direct contact with the mixing and matching culture that seems to me like a large part of the international fashion culture. That's all for now, thanks!

## Dishing Washing Insight and Recycling

July 5, 2016

I had an experience. And I thought it might be relevant to you. It has to do with when I was doing the dishes just this late afternoon. I was doing the dishes and it occurred to me: if I'm putting the hot water into a sink, and then the soap, and then mixing it with the soap and throwing in the dishes and all the other junk, and then washing it away, where's all this going?

It occurred to me that this is probably a very pervasive feeling and thought for other people. But this can be applied to other areas. What do I mean by that? Well, I mean the fact that individuals that use things will tend to be using them thoughtlessly, and I am no different than most of others, or others that aren't even in this kind of movement.

I missed the very obvious fact that anything that I use will tend to be used in other areas by other people and they themselves will not necessarily know where it goes, why it's used, and what happens to it. How mindful are we in using and consuming resources that the planet provides?

So here are ways we can recycle water at home:

### 1. Use a Shower Bucket

The shower bucket is probably the simplest way to recycle water at home. When you turn on the tap for your shower, the water that comes out takes some time to heat up to a comfortable

temperature. Next time you're warming up the shower, stick a bucket under the running tap until you're ready to get in. You'll be surprised at how much water you collect!

## 2. Install a Rain Barrel

Skip that whole municipal water system for watering your garden and collect rainwater instead. Rain barrel setups can be super simple or more complicated, depending on how much time you can invest and how handy you are. The best collection method that I've found is setting up the barrel underneath your gutter's downspout, so it collects the most water when it rains.

## 3. Create a Rain Garden

Rain gardens take advantage of land's natural water runoff to nourish the plants that live there. Unlike a regular garden that needs watering, a rain garden is constructed so that it reuses water that would otherwise run off into the sewage systems. The bonus is that by diverting that water from the storm drain, you're giving your city's overtaxed sewage system a break.

## 4. Save that Pasta Water

Next time you're making a pot of pasta, don't dump all of that precious water down the drain! Instead, set your colander over another large pot to collect all of that precious H<sub>2</sub>O. Once the water has cooled, you can use it on your garden or to water your house plants.

### 5. Save Water from Washing Veggies

Just like when you're boiling pasta, washing veggies uses water that's totally re-usable. Place your colander over a large pot to collect the water while you're washing. You can use your collected water on the garden or for flushing the toilet.

### 6. Install a Gray Water System

Gray water is waste water that doesn't contain sewage. Think the water that goes down the drain when you wash your hands or do laundry. A gray water system diverts that water, so it doesn't go to waste. A good example might be diverting water from your shower drain for flushing the toilet. Grey water systems can get pretty complicated, and just like any plumbing setup, they do require maintenance.

### 7. Collect the Overflow from Watering Plants

When you water your potted plants, have you noticed that extra water usually runs out of those drainage holes at the bottom of the pot? Don't let that water go to waste! Place your plants in deep trays to collect that water. You can use the runoff from your larger plants to water the smaller ones.

### 8. Reuse Excess Drinking Water

Got an almost-empty water glass that's been sitting out too long to drink? Feed it to a thirsty house plant instead! You can also use unsweet tea on your plants. If the drink that's been

sitting is sweetened, you can pour it on plants in the garden, but don't use it on house plants unless you like ants!

Our consumption patterns relate to one another in very different ways, but the consumption patterns can be unsustainable. So, it was a moment that actually made me pause and stop washing the damn cutting knife (no cuts!), but, even so, this can hopefully be a little bit of a cutting insight.

## **An Interview with Kestrel Jenkins**

**July 11, 2016**

**Tell us about yourself – family background, personal story, education, and previous professional capacities.**

I grew up in a small town in Wisconsin along the Mississippi River. For my family, being outside and enjoying the natural world was huge. Hiking and biking were our most common pastimes whenever we had a break from helping out at my parents' restaurant and hotel. I spent a lot of days working with my family – serving customers, cleaning rooms, and connecting with travelers on their way through.

At university, I studied Global Studies, Women's Studies, and International Journalism. Once I learned about the way that products, ideas and people move around the world, supply chains and their intricacies became hugely interesting to me. Post undergraduate studies, I secured an internship with fair trade fashion pioneer People Tree in London. This experience was my turning point – once I had this glimpse of the industry, I was hooked and all in.

I was humbled to receive a Fulbright Scholarship to teach English in Madrid, Spain for a year. Following this experience, I moved to New York City to work with Inhabitat & Ecouterre. From there, I've worked with several publications and companies in the space – including the GreenShows, EcoSalon, Fashioning Change and FashionMeGreen. Today, I also serve on the board of the nonprofit 1to1 Movement, which works to help each person find their own way to change the world.

**What is the importance of ethical fashion?**

Fashion's impact on people globally is massive. The garment industry employs around 40 million people globally, 85% of them being women. As some of the lowest paid workers in the world, people working along the global garment supply chain regularly face violations of human rights. It's not a question of the importance of ethical fashion, it's the question of how we can all support a better fashion industry that respects the people that work to make the clothes we wear.

### **What is the importance of sustainable fashion?**

The waste that's associated with the textile industry is mind blowing. Today, the average American generates 82 pounds of textile waste per year. The big bummer about it is a lot of that waste could be recycled.

It's all connected. In today's world, buying organic food has become a somewhat mainstream concept. When it comes to clothing, we are still disconnected from the stories. What we wear has the potential to also be a reflection of our values. Farming does not only yield food products; fiber comes from the field as well. The more we can understand these overlapping realities, the more we can be connected to not only what we put in our bodies, but also what we put on our bodies.

### **What is AWEAR World?**

AWEAR World is a platform that inspires us to think about where our clothes are made, what they are made of, and who made them. Through features of real people, their stories and the

stories behind their clothes, AWEAR World gives us opportunities to learn more, in a community-oriented way, where we can help each other along the journey.

### **What makes AWEAR World unique?**

AWEAR World empowers us to celebrate the positive ways we can all do something to affect the future of our planet and the humans who live here. Little things matter. While the realities of the fashion industry can be overwhelming and disturbing, we each have the ability to make small choices that can gradually, when tackled together, contribute to big change.

What other work are you involved in at this point in time?

I host the podcast Conscious Chatter which has a focus on fashion and the players in the garment supply chain. We trended on iTunes for two+ months and were featured on the iTunes homepage.

Past guests have included TV host Tim Gunn (HEMP), designer Mara Hoffman (MARA HOFFMAN + MINDFULNESS), cofounder of Fashion Revolution Orsola de Castro (FASHION REVOLUTION), winner of Project Runway Season 8 Gretchen Jones (DESIGNER DILEMMA), Founder of Project 333 Courtney Carver (TINY WARDROBE), author Elizabeth Cline (WASTE), Director of Social Consciousness at Eileen Fisher Amy Hall (SUPPLY CHAINS), organic farmer LaRhea Pepper (COTTON) and more.

### **What meaning or personal fulfillment does this work bring for you?**

Being part of the sustainable / ethical fashion conversation is my life. As cliché as it sounds, helping tell stories about the fashion industry and how we can all play a positive role in its

future is literally who I am. It's something that's become part of my soul and how I find purpose in my life.

**With regard to organizations/companies, and so on, like Trusted Clothes and AWEAR World, what's the importance of them to you?**

Knowledge is power. The more access to information we have – in an easily digestible way – the more we all have the opportunity to make positive choices that can influence change in the fashion industry and beyond.

## **An Interview with Kai Jonas**

**July 12, 2016**

**Tell us about yourself – family background, personal story, education, and previous professional capacities.**

Hello everyone! My name is Kai Jonas and I am a co-founder of Brighton-based fashion brand, Lite Apparel. We launched just over three weeks ago with our 06.16 Collection and we are very grateful of the amazing welcome into the Fashion world!

I along with other members in the team are University students, I'm personally an International Business student (quite fittingly) though we are made up of an Economics student, Arts and Media students – so a good mix.

All of us were brought up in Brighton & Hove which is a small town (technically city) on the South Coast of the UK, and became friends at a very young age through our love of football. Our journey into the fashion world perhaps wouldn't be deemed conventional, in that we weren't the types to be hand crafting garments, though we all had a gauge on popular or mainstream fashion and appreciated high quality garments.

**What is the importance of ethical fashion?**

Ethical Fashion covers a range of issues such as working conditions, exploitation, fair trade, the environment, and animal welfare. Unfortunately, these issues although being addressed more and more are still existent.

To date, 250 million 5-14 year olds are being exploited in hundreds of thousands of sweat shops around the world.

It's important to highlight that these sweatshops are not just based in third world or underdeveloped countries – they can be found much closer to home than you would expect!

I was lucky enough to have some experience with manufacturing and production through a recent internship in China and learnt the importance of not cutting corners when it comes to producing products. Along with this, and having exhausted hundreds of pages on Google Search, I have become more aware of the true implications of what would be considered fast fashion and it was one of the main reasons why we decided to launch an Ethical centered brand in Lite Apparel.

### **What is the importance of sustainable fashion?**

Sustainable fashion in our view should be, and widely is, considered as important as that of ethical fashion.

This more so involves the physical processes of creating products, and more precisely relating to the effect production has on the environment.

One worrying statistic that I feel could do with some more circulation is that 25% of chemicals produced worldwide are used for textiles. With this, the fashion industry as a whole is widely branded as number 2 in the rankings of the highest polluters of clean water, just after agriculture!

This is an extremely alarming statistic that has been shown to lead to extremely detrimental effects on the environment.

Perhaps more relative to us as buyers – 16 out of 27 luxury fashion products, (59%) tested positive for one or more hazardous chemicals.

Its crucial to be conscious and take care when purchasing any type of product as you never know what effect it has had on the environment, or eventually the effect it may have on yourself!

### **What is LiteApparel?**

Lite Apparel is a Brighton-based fashion brand trying to raise and share the importance of ethical & sustainable fashion whilst offering some pretty kick-ass high quality products (well at least we and our customers think so).

We have grown to understand that there is a need for a movement in the Fashion industry and we hope to inspire it.

### **What makes Lite Apparel unique?**

So this is a question we needed to, and wanted to, raise right at the beginning when formulating the brand.

A lot of new start-ups in Fashion tend to innovate through design, which is awesome!

Though, none of us really had any experience in fashion design so truthfully we shied away from delving into that approach.

Instead, we wanted to innovate through the processes and procedures that would eventually make up our products.

We were very lucky to discover and partner up with The Fair Wear Foundation who helped significantly with the creation of our 06.16 collection – ensuring that all materials and products were ethically sourced and imperatively personified with award-winning energy efficient sustainable methods of production.

**It's meant to offer innovative, high quality, sustainably manufactured, and environmentally friendly products, and affiliated with fair wear foundation group.**

**What is the importance of the relationship with fair wear foundation group?**

Like mentioned in the previous question, partnering up with Fair Wear was essential and largely the reason why we have found success with this initial collection.

Not only did they provide superb resources through the creation process they also offered incredible support that I'm sure all of us will cherish forever.

**What other work are you involved in at this point in time?**

We all agreed to solely focus on Lite over the Summer and it is seemingly paying off.

We are all pretty keen on sports, particular football, so most of us are continuing with coaching younger children and communities around Sussex which is very fun & fulfilling.

**What meaning or personal fulfillment does this work bring for you?**

For us we are just very honored to be in a position to be able to contribute to the Fashion industry in hopefully a positive way. We all understand and believe that there is a need for a change from both the creator and consumers perspective and we hope to contribute to this as much as we can.

**With regard to ethical and sustainable fashion companies, what's the importance of them to you?**

We had the opportunity to meet with members from our absolute inspiration ethical-brands Patagonia and Braintree which was incredible! Both of whom provided unbelievable support and provided even more inspiration to keep on going with Lite.

Particularly with Patagonia what is extremely inspiring for us is the fact that they are now becoming extreme heavy-weights in urban streetwear which is really where we hope to position our brand in the future. It just shows that you don't need to produce cheaply in order to get into the mainstream.

Overall its just great to see so many doing so well and it supports that consumers are becoming more conscious and there is a market for Ethical & Sustainable fashion.

**Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?**

I would just like to remind all the consumers out there, including myself, that we have the power!

Although ethical or sustainably produced products tend to be a little more expensive, the reason generally speaking is because you are paying for a better quality product – and most importantly a wage of which the individual who produced it can, to put it bluntly, survive.

Be conscious people!

## **An Interview with Connie Pillon**

**July 13, 2016**

**Tell us about yourself – family background, personal story, education, and previous professional capacities.**

My childhood experiences compelled me to look for deeper meaning in life, starting at a very young age. However, I was fortunate enough to have experienced an authentic kind of love from my mother early on, which gave me a strong foundation to work with. I was always very interested in the spiritual realm, and have had my share of paranormal experiences.

I was strongly influenced by a few books, such as *The Prophet*, *The Road Less Travelled*, *The Spirits Book*, *Mastery of Love*, and *The Power of Now*. I found the work of Carl Jung to be very informative as well, since I personally believe our highest purpose in life is to heal our own shadow.

When I graduated from high school, I felt a strong calling to choose a career that involved helping others, and I enrolled in nursing at the University of Windsor. Although, nursing was not my true passion at the time, I was more interested in creative writing and visual arts. Unfortunately, I was misguided, and believed nursing would be a more meaningful profession, since I would be directly helping others. This was a mistake. I would later drop out of nursing after realising I had made the wrong choice. It wasn't until much later in life that I realized that I could help others best by following my own passion and purpose, which would have allowed me to tap into an unlimited amount of inspiration.

After dropping out of university, I worked as a housekeeper in the special care section (lock up area) of a nursing home, and then later in a shelter for abused women. I witnessed a lot of death and suffering, and it changed my perspective on life.

I went back to college, although still misguided about what path to pursue. A few life coaching sessions might have been life changing at that point, to help set me in the right direction. However, I ended up eventually graduating from a Business – Accounting program, where I studied economics, accounting, marketing and organizational behaviour.

I went on to work in finance and administration at a non-profit organization called Inspire Health, which planted a powerful seed in me about the importance of incorporating the ‘body, mind, spirit’ connection into the workplace.

I left after having a child, and later went on to work in public practice for several years. After doing bookkeeping for more than fifty companies, where I had to record every transaction that went in and out of businesses, I gained deep insight into how companies operate. A bookkeeper truly sees all. I suffered a lot of workplace bullying and exploitation. This was hard, as I was already highly sensitive, like a lobster walking around with no shell. Equality and ethical business practices became a strong priority for me, and I recognized the need to spread the word about corporate social responsibility. With so many business leaders operating unconsciously, I decided to set up a facebook page called Corporate Conscience to help educate people.

While working in payroll and human resources for different companies, my eyes were wide open to the fact that employee wellness = company wellness. Unfortunately, the leadership

styles I witnessed were often damaging to employee morale. I took time to study various types of leadership, and gained a strong interest in coaching. I enrolled in a coaching program at Coaching Cognition, and obtained a life coaching certificate. Coaches are considered to be on the same level as the client, I value the equality in that. They also believe that the client has all the answers within themselves, the coach just has to ask the right questions.

Each of us has a unique set of strengths, I have always been very sensitive to energy, and felt very empathic toward others. I believe intuition is the language of the soul. Life coaching has allowed me to use these gifts to help others.

### **What is the importance of ethical fashion?**

The fashion industry is influencing our youth, and setting the standard for body-image and appearance. It is a great responsibility for fashion designers and clothing companies. May their message be one of self-respect.

Clothing is a necessity, and can be a creative form of self-expression, but it is hard to feel good about wearing clothes made by children forced into slave labour, in a developing country. These clothes might as well be blood-stained from the suffering endured in sweatshops.

### **What is the importance of sustainable fashion?**

If we can bring environmental sustainability into the fashion industry, we will have solved a major crisis, since fast fashion is the second largest polluter next to big oil. Every company should be measuring its carbon footprint.

Companies who are exhausting people and the planet will only experience short-term profits, and also risk getting a lot of negative publicity on social media. Individuals, and other companies are also less likely to invest in businesses with a reputation for having unethical business practices.

### **What about fair trade?**

There are thousands of products that carry the fair trade mark, which ensures that people at the end of the chain, e.g. farmers, are not being exploited.

Consumers can help improve lives in developing countries by purchasing fair trade products. Fairtrade also encourages farmers to use environmentally sustainable practices.

Textile manufacturers are beginning to sign up to the new Fairtrade Textile Standard, which focuses on workers' rights and working conditions. Factories participating in the program are also offered training on environmental management, social concerns, and health & safety.

**You self-define as a life coach, writer, and activist for ethical fashion. In fact, you have some musings, and spoken word and poetry on the website as well. What is ethical economy?**

An ethical economy represents a win for all, including consumers, companies, employees, communities, and the environment.

### **Why these self-definitions?**

My intention is to inspire people to become the highest version of themselves both personally and professionally. I hope to make a meaningful contribution to the world through writing and life coaching. I took an excellent program to learn a coaching style of communication, which I find empowers people to find their own inner truth. The secret lies in asking powerful questions. The coaching process can help take people from where they are now, to where they want to be.

I also have a passion for spoken word, it is an excellent way for people to express themselves, particularly our youth.

**You run the Facebook page entitled Corporate Conscience. What is the importance of corporate social responsibility – or a corporate conscience (as they are defined legally as immortal persons, by implication of the law)?**

Yes, we have all seen how giving a corporation the rights of “personhood”, while at the same time having no personal liability and accountability, can create a psychopathic ‘entity’. However, a corporation can be created by ethical business leaders, and have a system that is built on integrity.

Consumer influence is vital. Thanks to social media, corporations are frequently challenged by the public now. Recently, there have been stories of CEOs taking pay cuts to raise wages for workers, there is an exciting movement toward conscious capitalism.

**What other work are you involved in at this point in time?**

By day, I work in accounting and administration to make ends meet, it is a practical way to support my family for now, and takes up a great deal of my time. In my own personal journey, it somehow makes sense to work with numbers in order to earn money. I work hard, and it keeps me humble.

It is not part of my spiritual path to make money from spiritual/life coaching, nor from advocating for corporate social responsibility. I would accept donations for life and business coaching under certain circumstances, although it hasn't happened yet. Money and career success is not the purpose behind it.

**What meaning or personal fulfillment does this work bring for you?**

All the writing and coaching I have done until now has been voluntary, in the hopes that I am making a positive contribution to the world. This is all I want.

I have worked to plant seeds of empathy and ethics in my everyday life for twenty years now, both personally and professionally. I try to be a living example of the things I write about, and I have made a lot of people irritated in my lifetime as a result. Yet I have also had some

very meaningful experiences. I will continue to speak my truth wherever I go, even if it means I am labelled as a trouble-maker once in awhile, for challenging the status quo.

**With regard to ethical and sustainable fashion companies, what's the importance of them to you?**

Ethical and sustainable companies can act as role models to business leaders who may later follow in their footsteps. They demonstrate how sustainable business practices are vital for 'longterm' success.

**Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?**

Just want to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my story.

I feel fortunate to have been able to make a contribution to the Trusted Clothes blog. It is an amazing organization, that is paving the way for mindful business practices in the fashion industry.

## **An Interview with Stylianee**

**July 14, 2016**

**Before diving into the main conversation, what's some of your background – personal, educational, professional, and so on? Tell us about yourself.**

I grew up in Greece, studied cinema, theatre and cultural management and lived in England and France until I ended up in Luxembourg. I've worked mostly in content creation and film/theatre reviewing, then switched to fashion design; that was the moment I realised how creation is something divine. Literally. You are out in the streets and you bump on a girl wearing a dress you have designed. It's the best feeling ever. That's why after some time in corporate administration, and after being haunted by this creative quest, and animating upcycling workshops in Luxembourg, I decided to combine purposefully creation and ethics for my startup WHAT.EVE.WEARS.

**You have self-defined as an “ethical fashion evangelist” with a passion for “all things sustainable, ethical and conscious” in addition to “raising awareness and advocating on upcycling, recycling, swapping, [and] mending.” What defines each title and activity?**

I always loved the environment; already at school I was part of the environmental group, where we were learning about composting waste and going tree-planting. I believe a certain awareness was always in me, but it took a while to make the connection between Fast Fashion and environment and realise that the fashion industry pollutes the environment to such a degree, only second to the oil industry. Not to mention the unjust work practices involved i.e. child labour and all the rest.

### **What brings these self-definitions together?**

All of the above are one thing in essence: trying to buy less, buy better, produce less waste and be conscious to the whole production chain behind the garments and all the products we buy for that sake. Sustainability is all about that. Making sure that the way we are doing things is the right one and does not replenish resources, whether they are natural or human.

These connect to your brand as well. You founded and developed WHAT.EVE.WEARS.

You have a blog by the same name. What was the original inspiration for this brand?

The idea behind, as I said, is to create the alternative to fast fashion collections. My love for natural fibres and sustainability took this idea further, and my need to help my home country, made me decide I would like to produce the collection there. Greece, and especially the area of Thessaloniki has a track record in fashion production, even if due to cheap labour in the Balkan area and due to the economic crisis the fashion industry now is not blooming like before.

### **What about its name?**

I was lucky with the name; many people get it and love it! The Biblical Eve, back in the Garden of Eden before eating the apple, was walking around naked. She had no need for clothes, not even for the fig leaf actually; that's the painters' invention. I come and make a hypothesis: if Eve would need to wear some clothes back in the Garden of Eden, what type of clothes would they be? And I'm coming up with an answer: Eve would wear ethical and

sustainable fashion, garments that are not harming the environment, the animals or the workers involved in their production. It makes sense, don't you think?

**The Spring/Summer 2016 collection is coming up. What is the theme for this particular collection?**

It is a capsule collection, no more than 6 – 7 pieces. The theme was innocence with some vintage elements. I've chosen earth colours, romantic lace, which gave some sweet, girly pieces. I also love unisex fashion, so I do have two pieces that I wear most of the time, much more neutral and can be literally worn by girls or boys alike.

**You gave a talk entitled Ethical Fashion at Ideas from Europe. What is ethical fashion?**

**What is sustainable fashion?**

Ethical and sustainable fashion is what we call Slow Fashion and call it this way because it's the opposite to Fast Fashion. It encompasses countless elements, but the goal is to create a system, which can be supported indefinitely in terms of human impact on the environment and social responsibility (and yes, that is from Wikipedia). This can be translated in so many ways: produce locally, support artisans, create vegan or cruelty-free, upcycle, reuse and repurpose last season stock, buy vintage clothing, work with no-waste patterns, timeless design, polymorphic clothes and there's so much room for experiment when it comes to using sustainable textiles. It's a totally new field and a very exciting one!

Exclusive Shot from the upcoming capsule collection: Vegan top made from 100% Organic Cotton, lace and wooden buttons.

**What is their importance with salient examples?**

The importance of sustainable fashion is quite clear: we are creating a better, more just world of fashion, just for all parties involved. We are aiming for transparency together with the Fashion Revolution movement, because transparency is the only way we can convince corporations to be accountable for their production lines. We encourage customers to ask corporations #WhoMadeMyClothes and we, new designers dedicated to ethical fashion are ready to answer #ImadeYourClothes and show the good working conditions and give every single detail related to ethically sourced materials and the like. The end customer who wears our products can make sure he is not 'carrying' the pain of others in his shoulders.

**WHAT.EVE.WEARS is on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?**

We will launch the full website very soon. We are also ready to deliver corporate wear like aprons or t-shirts, all from organic cotton and produced ethically in Greece. Also, our story is well-documented on Social Media, so whoever is interested in ethical and sustainable fashion would find it useful to follow us.

## **An Interview with Dara Ambriz**

**July 15, 2016**

**Tell us about yourself – family background, personal story, education, and previous professional capacities.**

I am a native New Mexican, born and raised in the Land of Enchantment. I come from a tightly knit family full of artists. Living here you can't help not be one with the rich landscapes, the diversity of the people, the beautiful sunsets and magically star filled skies.

As a girl I was introduced to the opportunity of fashion design as a career, through the gift of Fashion Plates. This gift set was my creative outlet for design, and mixing colors, patterns and textiles on paper. I spent endless hours designing through this medium. I took the next step into actually creating my own clothing after my parents divorced while I was in the fifth grade. When that life event occurred, I spent countless summers with my maternal grandparents. That's when my grandmother taught me to sew. It was a wonderful bonding experience and helped me to continue my love for fashion and design. This occurred during my early teenage years, in middle school.

Middle School, I feel, is that awkward time, when you are trying to find your own identity while still trying to fit in with your peers. For girls, acceptance and self-esteem play a huge role in your life at this time and for me without a clothing allowance, creating my own clothing was the way for me to create my own style. As I went on to high school, I was serious about following a path in fashion design. My junior year I signed up for the fashion course and club, only to be disappointed when the class was canceled due to budget cuts and the club disbanded due to lack of interest.

Because I didn't want to leave the state of New Mexico and the lack of design schools locally, I followed my second love: studying people through psychology and communications. This led me to work in the field of Human Resources and Community Relations. Through this work, I was able to engage and empower employees to assist them develop their leadership skills and impact the community through non-profit volunteer work.

While I wasn't working in the fashion sector, it was never too far away for me. This role ended in 2013 and that's when a ticket to New York Fashion Week brought me back to my first love.

Seeing designers bring their creations to life on the world's stage inspired me to invest into an independent retailer and learn about the business. I learned that I had a keen eye for fashion, buying and styling. I bought out of the Los Angeles market, so I began to appreciate slow fashion, lines that used ecofriendly materials and products that were made domestically or through sustainable manufacturing processes. I loved working one-on-one with customers to help them find the right look. It was incredible to see their transformation, feeling confident and empowered with my assistance. I had built a clientele base, helping people with their shopping and styling needs, and one afternoon I had a conversation with someone who asked me, "Why aren't you designing?" I thought it was an odd question because he didn't know that this was a childhood dream, so I responded, asking him, "Why do you say that? You've never seen anything I've created." He stated matter-of-factly, "You have an eye for it. You'd make a killing."

A few months later, I started designing and creating for myself. Being in small business, in order to market the company, I attended many social and networking events (there are countless numbers of them in Albuquerque, NM). Evening wear can get expensive and especially when it's something you don't wear over and over again. I started making outfits for these events. It was great because I was truly unique in what I wore and received a number of compliments from friends. However, I was never quite sure if they were being just being kind or truly being honest.

Then shop closed. I was devastated and I wasn't sure I wanted to move forward in this space. I had a conversation with a friend who challenged me. She said, "I'm not going to let you give up on this dream. I want to commission you to create two outfits for upcoming events." I did and was with her at one of the events when she was stopped over and over again to be told how gorgeous her dress was. It was the perfect market research. That's when Hopeless + Cause Atelier was launched. It's a social wear line with a social conscious.

There are three tenants of the line. I want it to be a transformative experience for the wearer by helping them to feel empowered, confident, comfortable while making an impact on the scene (this comes from my background in psychology and communications and I see fashion through that lens). I want people to know who made their clothes and use sustainable textiles and recycled/upcycled materials in the process. One of the companies, I collaborate with is Batiks for Life. The founder, Sara Corry (who also writes for Trusted Clothes), created this company to provide economic empowerment to women in Ghana, Africa while the sales of the batik medical scrubs support health care access to people in that country. I purchase custom batik from her to create my Caprice line. Finally, giving back is hugely important to

me. I believe in the work that non-profits do to change the world for the better, so 10% of the sales of each piece benefit a non-profit.

Since its inception, Hopeless + Cause Atelier has grown through word of mouth marketing and it's moving at the right speed for me. I've hosted a couple of runway shows for the local New Mexico market. For the first time this October, the line will be showing outside of New Mexico during FWLA's (Fashion Week Los Angeles) Spring/Summer 2017 Discovery Session. I'm excited to work with FWLA and out of the Los Angeles market because it will put me closer to more options for domestic manufacturing and sourcing of eco-friendly and sustainable textiles.

You have background in psychology and communications. There are aspects of having a designer's eye from the story told by you. If someone has a designer's eye, and if they're dealing with people a lot of the time, what is the intersection between those two? Between knowing what will look good with a particular individual and for the individual to understand that.

I think you have to understand your clients comfort zone and what they are willing to try. I then push them out, just a bit. I had a customer visit me who I did a stylist session with. She told me she loved black and wasn't a fan of too much color. Listening to her I pulled a couple of black options. However, looking at her skin and hair coloring I also pulled some earthy tone colors and asked her to try them on just for fun. She did and she was amazed of how good they looked on her. She and I have become good friends and always teases me, saying to herself on the days we get together, "I'm seeing Dara today. I better step up my look today."

I had another customer send me a wonderful thank you note. It stated, “Thank you again for the beautiful dress. I felt like a movie star and received so many compliments on the dress!!” You can bring your personality through in whatever you wear and it doesn’t have to be drastic. The way that you can carry yourself because of your armor, because of what you’re wearing, has a profound effect on the way you arrive on the scene for an event or a job interview. I am happy that I can provide that kind of service.

Those are important points. When individuals go into an interview and don’t feel comfortable in their own skin, by which I mean the clothes they’re wearing at the moment, it can detract from the full focus of the interview at the moment. If it is some important job interview, it matters.

Yes! I’ve been blessed with countless stories of men and women who have told me how I helped them their look. One woman in particular came back and said, “I got the job. I wouldn’t have done it if you wouldn’t have spent the time with me.”

**With regard to organizations/companies, and so on, like Trusted Clothes and Production Mode, what’s the importance of them to you?**

These types of companies are helping the general public better understand where clothing is coming from and who’s making it. There’s such a movement around sourcing organic and local foods (the importance of what we put in our bodies). I love that I’m starting to see that happen in what we put on our bodies. Companies like Trusted Clothes, helps create and highlight transparency. I am continuing to learn and comprehend all of it. From fast fashion,

like Zara, H&M and Forever21. If that shirt costs \$5. How much is the person who is making that shirt being paid? Looking at supply chain.

I'm also looking at the other side. I love high end designers, but if you are charging \$300 for a shirt that uses man-made materials and is manufactured in Bangladesh or China. I always wonder, "how much are you making off the garment?" I have a hard time with that. Through Hopeless + Cause Atelier I hope to create price points that people who believe in the slow fashion movement can afford: liveable wages, sustainable practices and investing back into the community.

**One of the big things is to your earlier point about transparency. Many people don't know the supply chain, the production line, and the working conditions for the people that make their garments, especially when it comes to decent pay for them to have a decent life. It comes down to varying considerations. What do you consider valuable? How much do you put on each variable in the eventual calculation? To close, what places would you like to take your company?**

I would love to be able manufacture in New Mexico. I would like to slowly grow the line into more customizable, ready-to-wear pieces. There are a couple of manufacturing options and one I found a non-profit organization working with women to transition them out of homelessness. I want to be thoughtful in the growth of the company to make sure it is sustainable. A company that can meet the demands and continues with the tenets of the company set out by me. I am hoping by showing in LA later this year that I can grow in nearby markets like LA, Denver and Phoenix who appreciate the slow fashion movement.

**Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?**

I think by continuing the conversation with writers like you, Scott, Sara Corry and the entire team at Trusted Clothes, slow fashion won't be a niche market, but instead the norm.

## **An Interview with Karen Warner**

**July 16, 2016**

**Tell us about yourself – family background, personal story, education, and previous professional capacities.**

I was born in Edinburgh, in 1969, but grew up in the Scottish Highlands, one of the most rugged and beautiful parts of the UK.

I studied journalism in Edinburgh, then moved to the Shetland Islands, in the far north of the country, for my first job. I intended to stay about a year, thinking I'd move back to the city, but somehow I've never really left. I worked at a local newspaper then was one of the founding members of a news agency, writing daily articles for the UK press. A lot of our stories were about the North Sea oil industry, and following the Braer Oilspill, which hit the islands in 1993, I co-wrote a book, *Innocent Passage, The wreck of the tanker Braer*, with my work partner Jonathan Wills.

In my early 20s I left for three months backpacking in China after booking a flight on a whim one wet, dark January. It was my first time out of Europe and I remember arriving in Beijing with no plan, being bundled into a rickshaw and being cycled down the backstreets of the city for about an hour, with no clue where I was being taken. The light, the smells, the different sounds were all so new to me, it was utterly thrilling and I have continued to love travelling on my own.

Within a year of that first visit I had taken a year's job at China daily, as a "polisher", editing the stories written by Chinese journalists. I worked there again a few years later, but that time

with my husband Pete and son Leo along with me. Living in Beijing in the late 1990s was an amazing time for us; we explored as much as we could, walking and cycling for hours around the old hutongs, the courtyard houses; taking trains, buses and horses and carts to remote towns and villages, often chosen based on a random recommendation or by sticking a pin in a map.

When I was pregnant with my second son Cosmo we returned home to Shetland via a few months in New Zealand. When the kids were small, I decided to retrain as a teacher, which is a job I still do today.

We headed East again as a family in 2008, backpacking across China, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and India for several months. Friends thought we were a bit mad taking our kids (aged 7 and 11 at the time) out of school for so long, but they were up for it and I was pretty sure we'd have some life-changing adventures together. (We did...from being trapped in a car by a swollen river in a deadly flood, to our youngest son dislocating his neck playing football... but mostly our experiences and the people we met were fantastic.)

When the money for travelling ran out, we took jobs in an international school in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong. It was set in a botanical garden, but close to China's massive factory belt, producer of a vast percentage of the world's manufactured goods. In contrast to these huge factory complexes driven by Western desires for cheaper, quicker goods, we often took trips to small towns and villages where traditional skills were still used to create beautiful fabrics, art, furniture...even simple kitchen utensils, carved from bamboo or a twisted root. Around this time the seed of an idea to find an organic source of exquisite Chinese silk was forming.

We returned to Europe, spending three years teaching in Berlin, where I was again involved in curriculum development within an International Baccalaureate (IB) school, before finally making it back home to our tiny 400-year-old croft house by the Atlantic Ocean last August. Leo has now left to go to university in Glasgow, but Pete, Cosmo and I live here with our rescue cat and two ducks.

### **What is the importance of ethical fashion?**

When I was growing up, ethics and fashion weren't really ever connected. We bought stuff in Oxfam and other charity shops, but that was more to do with having no money, rather than concerns about the fashion industry. Now, having seen and met so many people on my travels without the advantages we've grown up with, and who daily face more challenges than most of us encounter in a lifetime, I have no excuses not to be as ethical as I can as a consumer and producer. Watching an old lady sitting on the street, struggling to sew zips on a pile of jeans, you can't help but wonder, 'what if that was my granny?' We have to try to do the right thing by people, wherever they happen to have been born.

### **What is the importance of sustainable fashion?**

I really applaud the whole "30 wears" idea put forward by Livia Firth here in the UK to encourage people to buy smarter and hold onto clothes for longer. In reality I suspect most people out with the fashion industry and unfazed by trends have many pieces they've worn on and off for decades. If something is made well, to last, then it has sustainability built in. If

it passes through a second hand shop at least once in its life, then that's sustainable. Fast fashion never makes it that far.

For me, sustainable fashion is about two or three things. It is about using natural resources carefully, avoiding the use of damaging products and practices as far as possible and it is about having a sustainable workforce of skilled, fairly paid people, who can feel proud of their day's work. It is up to industry leaders to make sure this happens and consumers to keep the pressure on.

**You are married and have sons. How does being married and having sons change perspectives over time?**

I have no idea! But they're all great people, and I'm sure that rubs off on me!

**You spend a great deal of time gardening. What is the personal salience of gardening to you?**

I find it calming and meditative to be outside, not speaking to anyone, just digging or weeding. I'm an all-weather gardener now I have my own boilersuit and oilskins.

As a teacher, I know how important it is to include gardening, sustainability and the environment in every curriculum. I've read worrying reports this year on the vast numbers of young people in the UK who have never experienced being in nature. Studies from Scandinavia are now backing up what seems like an obvious connection between time spent

in nature and better communities and lower crime. I never regret a moment spent outside in my garden.

**What is your favourite part of gardening?**

I love the harvest...going out with a big bowl and scissors and snipping off leaves, herbs and flowers for a gorgeous salad. I've also just made my second batch of rhubarb wine and my neighbour Eddie, who is my go-to expert, has just given me his grapevine prunings to turn into Folly wine. Home-grown food and wine with friends, in the garden. Nothing nicer!

**What about favourite kind of gardening?**

Here in Shetland I love trying to beat the wild weather, like the regular hurricane-force winds that liven up the long, dark, winter, so we can really enjoy the garden during the almost constant summer daylight (we're above 61 degrees north here...in line with Anchorage and St Petersburg). When we lived in Berlin, my gardening was confined to a balcony, although I did manage to squeeze a few pots onto the street below. Berlin was where I first encountered guerrilla gardening and I like to think, were I to live in a city again, I'd be out there, secretly creating little oases among the urban sprawl.

**What other work are you involved in at this point in time?**

Alongside developing Susurrus, my organic silk pillowcase business, I continue to teach. I've just finished a contract in a two-teacher rural primary school, where I taught primary 1, 2 and

3. After the summer holidays I start a new job teaching communication skills to young adults in a local college.

**With regard to ethical and sustainable fashion companies, what's the importance of them to you?**

I have a lot of respect for the many ethical and sustainable companies who are now working within the fashion industry, especially those who started out long before the current trend, like People Tree. These companies are creating monitoring systems, standards, markets and expectations that ease the way for the rest of us.

When I set up Susurrus it took me many months to find a source of certified-organic silk in China. That was crucial for me...I wasn't going to set up this company using silk from just any Chinese producer, even though that would have been simple and a lot cheaper. Part of my idea was to show that good, ethical, sustainable materials and products can come from China.

**Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?**

If only shopping and manufacturing habits could change as quickly as catwalk trends, all fashion would soon be ethical and sustainable. Imagine that...this season's must-have accessory ... a clear conscience.

## **An Interview with Adrien Taylor**

**July 17, 2016**

**Tell us about yourself – family background, personal story, education, and previous professional capacities.**

I'll keep it brief. (Laughs) Because I'm not that interesting! I'm from New Zealand. I'm 26. I studied here all through high school and university. I'm half-French. I have lived in France for a few years growing up. Basically, my background is in journalism. I was in TV journalism for 4 years, until I decided to quit about a year ago. I pursued my passion for business, sustainable business in particular.

I decided to quit the career job in TV journalism and attempt to make my own thing, and grow it from nothing.

**What is the importance of ethical fashion?**

It's extremely important to me. These days it's unacceptable to claim ignorance on any product that you buy because we are more connected, more glued up, than ever before. We know how clothes in general are made in developing countries. We know the working conditions in general are not great. We know making clothing is incredibly resource intensive.

We know that waste is a huge issue. We know all of these things. You have to be blind to not see it shared on Facebook. The knowledge is out there and claiming ignorance is not cool

anymore. Having said all of that, the next logical step is to make the moral decision to consume better. I think we're seeing more and more people who are demanding that.

So, that's fantastic. It is something that I am very passionate about, and not just for clothing, but for coffee – anything. Any resource or product, it is incredibly important to think about where it comes from, how it's made, and what is the social and environmental impact of that product, of you buying that product.

So, that's, basically, what ethical fashion means to me. It's another part of wanting to be a better consumer and wanting better products in a more just, environmentally friendly way than products have been up to now.

### **What is the importance of sustainable fashion?**

Sustainability is crucial in the 21st century. Absolutely everything that I do, and everything that we should all be demanding from businesses, because we've only got one planet. We aren't taking good care of it. We can't afford to not take care of it. As far as we know, it is the only planet we can live in at the moment.

So, all businesses in the 21st century need to be economically sustainable and environmentally sustainable. The two need to go hand-in-hand these days. So, the garment industry is incredibly resource intensive, e.g. producing cotton. We are in an age where there's throw away fashion. People want tomorrow's fashion yesterday.

People only holding onto clothes for a very short amount of time. It is not acceptable, not cool. It is an incredibly unsustainable way to consume. We need to consume less. That applies to our clothes.

What we're trying to do with Offcut is consume more efficiently. So, basically, taking something that would otherwise end up in the landfill and not generating any new fabric, it's using the bits that are leftover to create a valuable product.

It's a very small step, a very small part, of a larger issue, but I think it is something that we should be demanding from all clothing manufacturers that we buy from.

**What is Offcut for those that don't know? What makes it unique?**

Offcut is a cap company at the moment. I could extend into other things. Basically, it started from a very simple premise. My father, who is retired now, used to be in the curtain industry. I went to his warehouse last year here in New Zealand.

I asked dad, "What do you do if these bits of perfectly brand new fabric are too small to be made into curtains?" He said, "We pay someone to come pick them up a couple of times a year and bring them out to the landfill." Then it really started from there.

I thought it was a ridiculous thing to be doing in the 21st century to be throwing out a perfectly brand new resource. I looked at a lot of curtain fabrics that weren't really my cup of tea as curtains, but thought they'd make really good caps.

And the good thing about caps is that the panels, the individual panels, are very, very small, and so we could use bits of Offcut fabrics from a variety of different suppliers in the garment industry, curtain industry, upholsters, and a whole bunch of industries.

That's where the idea started 7 or 8 months ago. Basically, it has grown from there. We make 5 panel caps from Offcut and discarded fabrics destined for the landfill. We plant a tree with every cap sold in partnership with Trees for the Future.

### **What is Trees for the Future?**

Trees for the future is a great American-based non-profit, which works with farmers in sub-Saharan African countries to grow and plant trees with them, for them. Fruit trees, it's the awesome benefits of offsetting carbon dioxide, sequestering carbon dioxide, but they also provide fruit and income for families in developing countries in Africa.

It's a fantastic partnership. It's a fantastic charity. We're very proud and pleased to be working with them to make the small step of sponsoring a tree for every cap sold.

### **Now, you have a co-founder and a dog. What's their relation to the theme of Offcut Caps?**

Yea! We've got a co-founder who's a dog. He's the CEO. He's Pedro the dog. We believe he is the world's first dog CEO. We're very proud of him. We're an equal opportunities employer. The three of us founded Offcut last year.

Matt is my best mate. He lives in Dubai. Pedro is another good mate of ours. The three of us got together and thought it was a good idea. We decided Pedro would be the best, not person, but dog to lead us. He became CEO.

I love hearing these individual stories. It's not only the company, the logo, and the advertising. There tends to be a narrative for each company.

Yea, that's right. I think we're trying to create a strong story. Obviously, we are trying not to take ourselves too seriously. We take what we do seriously, but we don't take ourselves seriously. We are not planning to change the world with caps. It's just caps, but Offcut could be an example of what a company can be in the 21st century.

We are building a financially viable business from other peoples' waste. The hope is that we can serve as an example for people much smarter than myself that can make real differences with renewable energy or electric cars. Other sustainable initiatives. We think that's fantastic. That's the whole point and the Offcut business model.

That's why the CEO is the dog.

**Let's get to the denouement, with respect to other projects, what other work are you involved in at this point in time?**

I do freelance journalism work. I co-directed a film, a climate documentary, last year. It was called 30 Million. We filmed in Bangladesh. It was four of us. We were funded by the UN.

I'm still involved in environmental and climate change communications as part of my passion, raising awareness around climate change.

I run another company that I founded as well last year called [Bamtino.com](http://Bamtino.com), which is a custom furniture procurement platform. That's about it. I'm busy with three or four different things at the same time.

**With regard to ethical and sustainable fashion companies, what's the importance of them to you?**

I can only speak for Offcut. What's important for me with Offcut? It is to be a genuine brand. I think, unfortunately, there's a lot of greenwashing these days. People can see right through it, especially if you don't practice what you preach. People can tear you apart.

You have to be a genuine brand that stands by what you say you stand by. It is something that I really conscious of with Offcut. With Offcut, I don't want it to be known as an environmentally sustainable brand. I don't want people to buy our caps because they like the sustainability side of it.

I don't think that stands up on its own two feet. I want people to buy our caps because they are the best caps on the scene, or the coolest. The rarest and most limited edition five-panel caps that people have ever seen because they are contributing something positive to the environment. At least, they are not contributing to garments that are costing the planet or people a lot.

So, that's how I'd summarize it, as to what's important to me.

**Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?**

We covered everything to be honest. Again, I suppose it is what I was saying before. We are not claiming to change the world with caps, but hopefully people can get inspired by the business model and realize that in every single industry there are resources that we need to be seeing as classified as waste because we're incredibly inefficient. Most industries can maximize using resources to their full potential.

I do hope to pay myself a salary from this, but, also, to have people look at everything they do in their industry and take steps by saying, "Wait, is there anything that we can do in our industry?" We can, ultimately, maximize our revenues streams. To maximize resources, it doesn't only make environmental sense. It makes economic sense as well. I think there's an incredible scope for businesses to flourish if they can appreciate that and maximize resources.

## **An Interview with Fiona Armstrong-Gibbs**

**July 18, 2016**

Fiona Armstrong-Gibbs has worked in the fashion and footwear industry for nearly 20 years. She is a fashion lecturer, writer, currently researching social enterprise in the fashion industry and is involved with Oka-B footwear as their UK distributor. Her co-authored book *Marketing Fashion Footwear: The Business of Shoes* is due for publication later in 2016

**Tell us about yourself – family background, personal story, education, and previous professional capacities.**

Born near Liverpool in the early 1970s, not a particularly prosperous time in the north west of England but my parents were hard workers and wanted a better future for themselves and us, at the age of 4 we moved to the Middle East where my dad worked in computers in the oil industry – a new and innovative sector which paid well for expats at the time. Returned to the UK at 11-year-old. While prospects in the North West weren't much better, the UK in general had a better economic outlook particularly in the south. Our family stayed in the NW but dad worked down south during the week for several years, after which worked in Spain and recently retired from a job in Switzerland.

I always wanted to work in the fashion industry, made dolls clothes, my own clothes and reworked and styled clothes for school friends. Was never a question that I was going to do anything else. I made the assumption I was going to be a fashion designer because I didn't know there were any other jobs that you could do in fashion. I never knew anyone that had worked in it. Through school I did ok but although it was a good school it did not nurture my type of creativity or entrepreneurialism, it was a traditional academic girls' grammar school and I was quite unique in my ambitions, even setting up a bespoke accessories company that

recycled classmates' jeans into drawstring backpacks – from what I remember they were quite popular!

I went on to a general arts pre degree foundation course but soon realised that I was better at talking about fashion than I was actually creating it. My undergraduate degree is in History of Art and Design with Fashion history and theory and my masters, of which I was one of the first to study in the late 1990s is in fashion marketing and promotion. Although marketing was not necessarily a new role in the industry it was being recognised as a growing area to study. I completed that course in 1998 and moved to London. London in the late 1990s was booming in the fashion industry. It was an incredibly exciting time in terms of the industry's creative and commercial growth. Commercially many trends were quite minimalist but it was the era of the mega brand, Gucci revival, Prada Sport and real innovators like Alexander McQueen and John Galliano were being globally recognised in couture and high end fashion. Fashion was a cool industry and wasn't something that stayed out on the edge for quirky misfits. This growth coincided with the real democratisation of fashion. First Zara who managed to appropriate key trends from the catwalk and produce them quicker than the brands themselves could – it was literally magic in front of our eyes and not only that, we could afford to buy these things too. There was also much more access to counterfeit goods. The internet was not widely used to buy fashion so there was a certain exoticness and desirability about being able to get a knock off LV monogrammed bag from a friend of a friend who had managed a quick dash to Canal Street NYC during a business trip to the US. So for the first time a regular consumer could dress like a well off designer fashionista and I don't think anyone really cared where the goods came from – or though that people were being harmed – so long as we could emulate a look from the growing legion of celebrities...

One of my first jobs was assisting the wholesale manager at the newly established ready to wear company Jimmy Choo. This was a typical example of the democratisation of fashion. Jimmy Choo was and still is a bespoke craftsman with a small team who would make bespoke personal orders for royalty, celebrities and very special occasions – weddings etc. A way to bring this to the masses if you like was to mass produce it. Which is what they did – albeit to the highest quality and made in Italy it was still RTW, meaning that anyone with a couple of 100 pounds could by shoes that were also worn by Princess Diana.

We were all pretty consumed by this desire for fashion and some now say that it is the marketers that have ruined true creativity in fashion, in the quest to have lifestyle brands and so everyone can have everything we've taken the soul out of true craftsmanship and are forcing people to make and buy things that they don't need. There is no real value in it anymore.

### **What is the importance of ethical fashion?**

Ethical fashion style or ethical fashion business?

On a basic level I guess you mean clothes etc made in a fair way with materials that do not harm the environment? I think one of the problems with the term ethical is that it means different things to different people and ultimately it boils down to personal ethics and there is nothing more personal than our individual view on what is fashion – so you have a double anomaly which will be as unique as it is individual – what is ethical fashion style for me may be very different for you.

We'll never pin this down because it's too big.

I worry that it is still being seen as a niche or subsection of fashion for a certain person that puts personal values ahead of personal style.

For me I'm interested in businesses that are run in an ethical way, fashionability and style will follow. But this is about the core of a business and what is its purpose. The vast majority of businesses exist to make money for the people that have taken the risk in setting it up. They will look for a return on their investment of time and money so unless the person who has set it up or is in charge prioritises ethical behaviour and can convince shareholders and customers to measure that as a success I think we are a while off.

### **What is the importance of sustainable fashion?**

For me 'sustainable fashion' is about a product or service that can make enough money to fulfil its objectives in a fair way over the long term without harming people or planet in the process. This should be the way that every new product and business in the fashion industry approaches innovation, development and change – and if not we are not going to have an industry that lasts much longer.

### **You have been in the fashion and footwear industry for about 20 years. What are the major lessons that can be passed on to people new to that industry?**

Know what are your values and beliefs when you enter into the industry. Make sure you take full advantage of the knowledge that is offered to you in internships, university etc – this is your chance to build your ethical foundations. If you say you are anti-fur and then take a

design internship at a company that uses fur in their collections, then ask yourself are you really anti-fur? How much do you know and understand your values? Most people are appalled at the working conditions in factories in places such as Bangladesh but as a junior designers or PR for a fast fashion company do you really know how transparent your supply chain is. If you are too scared to ask the question for fear of being sacked – a) is this really the career you want and b) – imagine how scared a machinist in Bangladesh is? She can't afford to ask the same uncomfortable questions and probably has much more to lose than you –so, ask the question.

**You lecture and write on fashion. What is the general content of the written and spoken work?**

I write about the business of fashion particularly from an educational perspective. As an academic I do try to keep my own personal bias and beliefs about ethics to one side but prompt students to think for themselves, offering facts and issues for them to explore themselves. I see huge potential in the next generation to make a change, many students know that there is so much in the fashion industry that is wrong but are overwhelmed and don't know where to start. Hence the know your own values above.

**You research social enterprise in the fashion industry. What is the specific content and purpose of this research?**

The term 'social enterprises' is very broad and in various forms they have been around for years – such as co-ops. For the most part they are a type of business that has a dual return on investment – meaning that the time and money invested must return benefits that are both

financial (i.e. it should be sustainable) and social – so people must also benefit in a wider sense. My current research is based in the UK and looks specifically at a new legal structure called a Community Interest Company. There are now over 12,000 CICs registered in the UK representing a variety of sectors from music production and childcare to arts organisations and housing providers, all agreeing with the fundamental principle of asset locking any financial surpluses and using them to benefit their community rather than paying out to shareholders or personal investors. I am exploring the role that this type of business model could take in the Creative sector and hope to focus on new and existing fashion companies who want to use this structure.

**You are involved with Oka-B footwear as well. What tasks and responsibilities come with this collaboration?**

I really believe that you should practice what you preach and the fashion industry is changing so rapidly that sometimes the only way to do this is to continue to work in the industry as it evolves. My company imports and re sells Oka-B in the UK. We are responsible for the brands distribution and marketing here. I talk to my customers both retail and wholesale and am involved with all the day to day challenges this brings. It has been a brilliant experience – as someone who started out communicating with clients via fax and phone seeing the shift to email and then online sales and now social media – there is no better way to learn than by doing it. How customers engage with social media and the amount of quantitative data about customers is at the touch of a button now – years ago you would be lucky to see it updated and faxed on a weekly basis. It's hard work and I have a huge empathy for any fashion start-up today, even though we are based in the UK we are subject to so many global challenges.

**You co-authored Marketing Fashion Footwear: The Business of Footwear. What is the argument and evidence for the narrative and content of the text?**

The footwear industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in apparel over the last 15 years or so, fuelled by fast fashion and our avaricious consumer appetite, students are now looking for specific texts about this sector and how it works. Footwear has responded to fashions cycles and trends but it is still a different industry in terms of its design, construction and manufacturing processes. How we consumer and use footwear is also different in terms of motivations and emotions. We hope that it will be a text that supports both students and new entrants to the footwear market and gives them confidence to find a fulfilling job in a very exciting industry.

**What other work are you involved in at this point in time?**

I love supporting and spreading the word about new ways of doing business and companies that challenge the status quo – always on the lookout for a new or better way of doing things in the fashion industry.

**What meaning or personal fulfilment does all of this work bring for you?**

I get huge satisfaction in seeing people connect and collaborate and prosper and if I can intervene to make that happen I will.

**With regard to ethical and sustainable fashion companies, what's the importance of them now?**

There is no future for the fashion industry as it is today if there is not a paradigm shift to a better way of doing things for everyone in the supply chain. China has an aging population and will run out of cheap labour, if it hasn't already. We can't keep 'racing to the bottom' of the labour pool and squeezing profit margins. The next generation of businesses have to believe that profit can be measured in other ways such as healthy people and a healthy environment. We have to be better and we all have a huge responsibility to create the confidence to do it.

**Any, feelings or thoughts in conclusion?**

Don't make ethical fashion niche – it should underpin every element of the industry and become the norm. To do this we need to keep raising the profile of what the good people do, find your allies and get on with it. Every single retweet, like and blog article discussion can add together to make a very loud noise.

## A Take on Sustainability

July 18, 2016

The truths on sustainability bear repetition.

It's the lifeblood of culture change. Truths need legs. I wanted to express more thoughts on why sustainability is important to me. Sustainability is important to me on one level (at least).

I consider ethical fashion and sustainable fashion connected to sustainability and important as well. I like the idea of sustainability. I find the people involved in this endeavor interesting. I like their stories and narratives. It is a really interesting, rich, and committed community of intellectuals and citizens. All throughout the world invested in one goal: sustainability.

I consider sustainability a straight engineering problem. But I also consider sustainability a crucial aspect of the 21st-century in daily life. We have billions of people on the earth. We have many medical and societal reasons to thank for that fact. That means sustainability on the individual level deals with people. People like myself. People like yourself.

Sustainability as an international goal is something that brings it down to the individual level for everyone, including me. I think about fashion. I think about laundry. I think about lights. I think about cars and buses and transportation in general. I think about the consumption patterns for food. I think about supply chains. I think about the production lines and modes.

All of this matters to me. All of this matters because the nature of sustainability impacts every area of human endeavor because every area of human endeavor has waste associated with it.

The question then becomes, “Do we want a sustainable future or not?” I think we do. At some level or another, even those that are most against it for monetary and economic reasons, or reasons of ease, they want the same. It’s a bit like a holdout situation, where everyone knows we need to alter at least a little bit in the end.

## **An Interview with Danica of Wild Tussah**

**July 19, 2016**

**Tell us about yourself – family background, personal story, education, and previous professional capacities.**

I grew up in the middle of nowhere Maryland, USA where I always had a passion for travel and learning about cultures different than my own. My Dad frequently went overseas for work, and brought back beautiful handicrafts, which sparked my interest to understand the meaning behind them and how they were created. I often found myself bringing these in for ‘show and tell’ – proud of his travels.

After high school, I made my way to George Mason University in Virginia where I studied Marketing. I had done a semester in Australia and fell absolutely in love with it, so moved here permanently after I finished my degree.

I still continued to dabble in Marketing professionally, but found my passion for working with weave artisans after I went on a 5-week trek through South East Asia, and made good friends with my Black Hmong tour guide in Sapa, Vietnam. She had explained to me that this ancient textile-making tradition was on the verge of going extinct. This triggered the idea to move to Vietnam for a year and work with these artisans directly.

**What is the importance of sustainable fashion?**

Sustainable fashion has the ability to solve bigger social issues in society, which I find so powerful! It can be a solution to poverty, bad working conditions, human trafficking, environmental-issues, loss of cultures and so much more.

**You are the founder of Wild Tussah. What is it?**

Wild Tussah preserves ancient weave cultures through incorporating artisan textiles in sustainable handbag designs. We also partner up with other designers who use our textiles, and tell our artisans' stories.

**What are your long-term goals for Wild Tussah?**

Long-term we plan to expand the weave communities we work with to other countries, and to track how Wild Tussah is making a difference in our artisans' lives.

**Your weavers are the Lu people, the Cham people, and the Hmong people. Who are the Lu people?**

The Lu people we work with are a unique, remote group who live in the northern mountains of Vietnam. They are known for their black teeth dyed with a black-honey shrub and benzoin resin paste. It can take them 3-6 months to make the vintage skirts we use in our handbag designs as it is both woven and embroidered.

**Who are the Cham people?**

The Cham people we work with live in Ninh Thuan Province. You can find quite a few beautiful Cham pagodas around Vietnam including Po Nager in Nha Trang. Often their textile motifs represent what they see around them – trees, animal footprints, fruit and vegetables.

### **Who are the Hmong people?**

The Hmong people we work with live in northern Vietnam, and are usually the trek guides you come across in Sapa. Frequently they are more fluent in English than Vietnamese as they often interact with travelers. Their textiles are made out of cotton and hemp.

### **Why did you select them as the weavers for Wild Tussah?**

I first selected the Lu after I came across this beautiful Lu weave in a local Saigon shop. No one there could tell me what ethnic group it belonged to, so after doing a lot of research and speaking to my Black Hmong friend, we were able to figure out who it was from. Lu weaves are stunning in person – very modern and elegant looking compared to other weaves.

Next I decided to work with the Cham as I had met a Cham weave storeowner who had a passion for her culture. Her enthusiasm for this traditional handicraft really lit a fire in my belly. Her son, Jaka, was also able to give me a tour around their local village and introduce me to other weavers in their community.

Lastly, I added Hmong weaves to my shop because they practice an amazingly intricate dyeing process for the hemp and cotton threads they use, which very few ethnic groups have been able to maintain.

**Mr. Viet does you leather work. What makes his productions of particular note for Wild Tussah?**

We decided to work with Mr. Viet after receiving handbag samples from approximately 7 other handbag makers. They didn't make their bags as well as Mr. Viet, so we ended up choosing him as our go-to handbag maker. Plus, he seemed quite interested to learn more about the textiles we use in our handbag designs.

**You have a love for culture, fashion and design, humanism, and sustainability. What makes these of particular interest to you?**

A lot of social issues I care about can be solved through understanding these, and can translate into real solutions to make a positive difference in the world.

**As an expatriate in Melbourne, Australia, does this affect professional work at all?**

Living in Melbourne has allowed me to grow Wild Tussah, connect with other like-minded designers, and stay a close flight away from my artisans in Vietnam. The city is full of culture and art to draw inspiration from!

**What other work are you involved in at this point in time?**

Besides Wild Tussah, I also work with other social businesses and help them with their marketing strategies.

**What meaning or personal fulfillment does this work bring for you?**

I absolutely love the opportunity I have to connect with people outside of my normal every day life, like my weave artisans, and getting the chance to meet other people who also value sustainable fashion.

Through creating these designs and getting them into the hands of people who care about culture preservation and alleviating poverty, together we are able to decrease human trafficking rates across the Chinese border and keep a beautiful ancient handicraft tradition alive.

## **An Interview with Tamara Stenn (Part One)**

**July 20, 2016**

**Tell us about yourself – family background, personal story, education, and previous professional capacities.**

I grew up in NY and come from a long line of entrepreneurs. I am a bi-lingual (Spanish/English) social entrepreneur, sustainability trainer, Fair Trade business owner, Fulbright scholar, author, and academic.

I founded the sustainable luxury brand, KUSIKUY, which has been knitting together opportunities and elegance in the Bolivian Andes since 1996. I teach sustainable, social enterprise development at both Mount Holyoke College and the SIT Graduate Institute – specializing in local-global entrepreneurship. I live in Vermont and mostly grow my own food.

**What is the importance of ethical fashion?**

We are a single species on a single finite planet. Being mindful of how our decisions impact others and our planet is important. The garment industry is one of the most polluting and destructive industries in the world – of both the environment and people.

Thousands die in sweatshop accidents each year, millions more are affected with poor health, disease and contamination from textile chemicals and pesticides, farmers commit suicide over low fiber prices. More info: <http://truecostmovie.com/>. Ethical and sustainable fashion is an alternative to this cycle of devastation and destruction.

**What is the importance of sustainable fashion?**

It respects the earth's resources and people's talents in carefully making quality clothing that lasts.

**What about fair trade?**

There are good resources that define the standards through principles on this, but some include:

It creates opportunity, builds capabilities, grows relationships, connections and improves wellbeing for all.

**What is KUSIKUY?**

It's a Quechua word – means “make yourself happy” and started as a post Peace Corps project for Grad School – 19 years later, still going strong!

**What makes KUSIKUY unique?**

I think the handmade nature of the product with knitting needles, and its Bolivian source of production. Its 100% alpaca yarn. It has been blessed with a ch'alla – ceremony and wishes. Finally, it is home based with independent production.

**KUSIKUY products are for men and women. What is your favorite design?**

Arm socks!

**You took a 7-year hiatus to earn a doctorate in economics, raise two children, and write a book about the experience, and become a university professor of sustainable development. What were the main lessons from these experiences?**

The importance of leadership, family and patience – things all work out and there is time for it all. Through their export work the knitters gained tremendous leadership, time management skills and confidence in themselves.

KUSIKUY has a [Kickstarter campaign](#) as well. There's a wonderful and informative video for those without the appropriate background on the narrative of the company and the work that it accomplishes. The campaign web page states:

Building on the heritage of Andean art and our 18 years of experience working in Bolivia, we created the world's finest glitten, a glove/mitten, hand stitched from the king's alpaca, that custom forms to your hand and is guaranteed for 5 years. Each glitten takes 12 hours and 2,000 stitches to make by hand with knitting needles, love and blessings.

**The aim is \$10,000. If you could have, say, \$20,000, what would be the expanded set of initiatives for KUSIKUY?**

Yes – our goal with the re-launch is to gain an audience and recognition for our next stage – the launching of our hand knit sweater for Fall 2017. Any extra earnings for the Kickstarter will be invested into the 2017 sweater development.

**You’ve known the workers in Bolivia for 18 years. How does this positively impact the production cycle?**

We have a long relationship with producers and are like family. This history makes it easier for us to enjoy working together and celebrate our successes together. It also makes for easy production and methods –we know how to work together.

**What about providing a human sensibility to the company and its exported image to the public?**

We work to build bridges between producers and users. Both are very curious about each other and would enjoy knowing who each other were – at least to say thank you. We work on building that personal experience.

**I noticed every Bolivian was a woman in the Kickstarter video. Same with yourself.**

**Many discussions abound on the international stage with respect to women’s rights and the relationship of sustainable and ethical fashion to the millions of workers in these countries that produce the garments for countries such as Canada (I’m by Vancouver) and the United States (You’re in Vermont). More exist on the local platforms, too. What is the importance of sustainable and ethical fashion, and fair trade, for international women’s rights?**

Women are the main workers in the textile industry and also the ones taking care of the family and of reproductive age. It is important for future generations that women are safe, healthy and well cared for – so the home environment is positive for the children and the women themselves enjoy a quality of life they deserve.

With respect to the Kickstarter campaign, there are some nuances.

With the Kickstarter, we are celebrating the heritage of the women we've been working with for 18 years. It is celebrating the work that the herdsman have done in preserving the fibres that they're working with, thousands of years ago the Incas, before them the Tiahuanacos. It took a long time to develop and build the absolute best Alpaca fibres in the world. Bolivia has preserved those herds.

In Peru, there were government programs that tried to differentiate colors. Things shifted in the herds and the fibre quality has gone down. Bolivia has maintained that tradition. What we wanted to do was recognize that, to give a shout out that this is something incredibly special, over the last 18 years of working with the people in Bolivia. I have seen more and more companies switch over to Alpaca mixed with acrylic.

Products that are knit on looms and losing that heritage tradition. I value the tradition so much with the knitting needle, the 'click, click, click,' and that Alpaca fibre that is not adulterated with acrylic, chemicals, or modified in different ways. That's what we're celebrating with our Kickstarter. We're giving people access to this amazing heritage with one of the last companies in the world with handmade gloves and knitting needles.

This lets the women pay attention to what they're doing. We realized this is taking 12 hours a glove. While they are making the gloves, they are thinking about who is going to be wearing them. Imagining that person's life, knowing from television that it is someone that is busy and running around in this fast-paced world of skyscrapers and subways, they are in the countryside in a timeless place. It is winds and mountains.

Tremendous skies above the tree lines, it is a different world. For them to be in that world and to be knitting those thoughts into those gloves as we move into our busy life in the Western hemisphere, it is an amazing transition. I wanted to preserve that story. What I've observed is as people buy KUSIKUY products, they tend to save them and use them for years. That's why we have the 5-year guarantee on the gloves. I find most people easily save their gloves for five years. They become favorite gloves.

I wanted to build that connection with people. My doctoral research brought that up on both ends. Consumers and producers want to know who each other are, that's what our Kickstarter is about. It is an opportunity to connect with the knitters and support them. We are hoping this will lead to us developing more connections via smart phones. We want to do sweaters next year. It is bringing that thoughtfulness and care to the public. You can't get that anywhere else.

### **Any advice for young entrepreneurs?**

Sure! So, I teach entrepreneurship. Constantly, I am working with young entrepreneurs. They are the most innovative and fun folks to work with. My advice to them is don't worry that

someone is going to steal your great idea because chances are someone is thinking of something you're thinking of and that's an ally.

That's going to be someone you can work together with. It will be a lot of work. Also, if you already have that idea, and someone else does it, they won't know it as well as you do. That's something my students ask me. They say, "If someone else has it, then someone else will do it, then they'll take it." Even patents, nowadays people aren't even worried about patents and trademarks. They go out and do it.

**Any advice for new mothers, or parents in general?**

Find a way that it all works together. My kids have always been a part of my business. So, they're right there with me in it. I have seen some parents keep their kids out of the business. I don't think that's good. I grew up in a long family of entrepreneurs.

We grew up talking business around the dinner table. That's what made it so easy to be drawn into entrepreneurship myself. I think having it as part of the family culture is great. When there's trips and trade shows, you can figure out a way to bring the kids along as well.

**What are some of the things that can be done on the international stage to improve the lot of women? You noted some of the things in the Kickstarter campaign video. Some things that are concrete.**

I think Bolivia has pulled ahead in that. They re-did their constitution in 2009. In the Spanish language, everything has a masculine and feminine with the adjective forms. Instead of

saying, “All People,” like in the United States with equal opportunity. In Bolivia, they spelled it out, “Men and women are equal.” Men and women, by doing that, they created a tremendous amount of recognition of the woman’s role. Now, they look at both.

In the USA, we haven’t had that happen, yet. I have been around working with mentorship groups. You probably know the criticism of Silicon Valley is the amount of men that are out there as entrepreneurs right now.

I think it’s not so intentional. Guys saying, “We are going to have a club and not invite women.” It needs to be mindful of needing women there. The mentorship group that I have been working with, Valley Mentorship. It is on their radar, where they are intentionally looking for ways to be more attractive and accessible to women.

I think that’s what Bolivia has been doing already within their constitution by being mindful of gender on both levels. I think that’s something that can be done, but it is being mindful of where are the women in the room. Or, do we have the same number of women as men in this conversation?

What is keeping the women away? We need a space for them because they can bring things into here. We don’t know.

**In America, there’s a lag time between law changes and cultural changes. One of the most prominent is the Emancipation proclamation. It takes a century for the Civil Rights movement to follow this law in the culture. The inertia of history is a factor. Blacks, Native Americans, women, and white men without property didn’t have the**

**right to vote for a long time. In a democratic system such as the American, that defines an individual, as a member of a collective (gender, ethnicity, and so on), as a non-citizen, or, more properly, a non-person. To your point about including men and women in the constitution of Bolivia, there seem to be lag times in America due to historical baggage in some ways. That might explain the “behind” part for America.**

Yea, it is still 2-to-1 men to women with new enterprises coming forward. For every woman, there's two men that have started that enterprise. That's current data. There's something that's keeping us out of the entrepreneurship. Having that diversity, right? There's the gender diversity, ethnic diversity.

With entrepreneurship, if you're starting a new business, it's easy to be thinking of yourself. I think looking for that diversity on the front sign is good at shaping a new business and bringing in creativity.

## **An Interview with Tamara Stenn (Part Two)**

**July 20, 2016**

### **What is social entrepreneurship?**

I am writing a book. I finished writing that introduction. (Laughs) Basically, I am defining it as a business that addresses a social need rather than a monetary one – keeping it really simple. The social need can be expressed in many different ways. It could be environmental. It could be human rights. It could be giving to a particular charity. It could be making goods accessible to a population that might not have access. It could be having worker ownership. There's many different ways worker ownership can be realized. The main thing is there is a piece of intentionality where the person isn't out there to make a profit. They are out there first to do some social good.

### **How can sustainability be built into the Social Entrepreneurship model?**

That's what I'm working on right now. I've developed it. I'm trying to make it comprehensible. It is the Sustainability Lens. It takes the work that I've done over the last 20 years. I've done a lot of work with Indigenous models through studying down in Latin American, where the United Nations is working on Indigenous models of governance and sustainability.

Also, looking at Circles of Sustainability, I am a fellow with that project with the United Nations. A lot of the people working with these models are political economists. They are not business people. The difference is I am a businessperson as well.

I am taking this model and seeing how this working different models. These common tools that everyone uses realize their companies. I find that once you put that lens on top. Everything pops into place for sustainability. Because you're a social enterprise doesn't mean you are a sustainable company.

Sustainability deals with growth, which is a huge issue right now in the area of social entrepreneurship. How do you deal with growth? What does that mean? Because, right now, the assumption is growth means success. That's not always the case. Our trees don't grow to the moon.

That's the same with business. Not every business needs to be gigantic, how do you know the right size for your business? That's a part of sustainability. Looking at energy and resources, how is that being used? What is being made? That's part of a sustainable enterprise and not part of social enterprise.

What are you spending your time and resources on? And why? There's nuances that come out there. How wisdom is sourced and given back to the community? It includes a lot more collaboration. This is what happens when sustainability as it impacts all of us because you can have the most wonderful, perfect business that is the epitome of green.

Next door, you'll have a big contaminating factory. The quality of life for the people in that region will not be good. They will not have a sustainable lifestyle. There's a pollution. There's the people that don't have enough, even though your business is perfect.

So, the idea of sustainability is breaking that down and working together in systems. You have a nice model for your business. But to be a sustainable business. You need to be integrated in your community. What are we doing to help mitigate and support this community to something more balanced?

That becomes exponential. You keep getting this circles that get bigger and bigger and bigger. You're looking at a state, then a country, and then a region. When everybody is on this sustainability mindset, you start making decisions that benefit all. That's the difference.

**What other work are you involved in at this point in time?**

I teach Social Entrepreneurship at the college and am currently authoring a book (academic text) on how Sustainability can be built into a Social Entrepreneurship model.

**What meaning or personal fulfillment does this work bring for you?**

It's been a great experience having this connection and sharing it with others. We have brought scores of people to Bolivia to meet the knitters and have brought the knitters here to the US too. These exchanges remind people of how much more similar we all are than they think and helps people to want to collaborate and cooperate more. I find this very satisfying.

**With regard to organizations/companies, and so on, like Trusted Clothes and KUSIKUY, what's the importance of them to you?**

We are all in this together – by all sharing information, educating others and having honest, open dialogues, we can collectively work to make our world a safer, just and happy place in which everyone can live.

**You have been interviewed as well. People can listen to this in a podcast. You have written for Trusted Clothes, too. Let's plumb more depths in academic work, especially the impressive Fulbright work. Your research on gender and sustainable development for the Fulbright Scholarly Exchange. It has been that since March, 2015. What is this comparative study on the impact of fair trade?**

Basically, it is looking at the impact of quinoa – farming and growing quinoa – on the rural people that live in the quinoa region.

**What are the findings so far?**

It is a 3-year study. Fulbright likes to pay you to do something that you know anything about. I went last year never having worked in quinoa. I was familiar with it. My mother grows quinoa. I know what it looks like.

We eat it here. I am near the region where it is grown, but I never specifically worked there. It was great. I got to know the people. Basically, there were a lot of different things going on. There was an educational revolution going on.

So, all of the people on the countryside became literate. That impacted their ability to negotiate contracts. Quinoa used to be a disadvantaged food. It was shunned. When the Spanish came and colonized Bolivia, they made quinoa growing illegal because they wanted to have their own crops grown – wheat.

They banished quinoa, but it still continued to exist. It was considered sacred crop given to the Andean people by the gods. It grows in remote areas. It is a national grain. People eat it almost every single day.

It was usually marginalized as ‘peasant folk’ food. With the push towards quinoa and the great discovery of ancient grains, quinoa became trendy and very popular. The Bolivians are pretty smart.

They realized that there was demand for the product. They valued it. They set their own prices. They are used to working collectively. They have these strong cooperatives. They did this all on their own. The government didn’t get involved.

Because they are literate, they can negotiate contracts. They created a rural area called Challapata. It became the quinoa Wall St., where they did all the pricing for world markets. They were developed there because Bolivia had the quinoa market.

They were the largest producer in the world and kind of the only producer. For years, they were really able to take advantage of this competitive advantage that they had. They’d raise their prices 20% every year because they could.

What happened was reverse migration because these were the poorest areas of Bolivia, people started coming back who had migrated to Argentina, to Buenos Aires, to Santiago, to Madrid in search of other work.

They are coming back now, farming land that was left fallow, and building parts of the village that are falling apart. They ended up earning more than the middle class in Bolivia. All of the money made was reinvested into real estate or vehicles. They didn't go into debt. After 3 or 4 years, the rest of the world caught up with them and started to look at ways for them to join the quinoa market because it was lucrative. Peru had a chemical program. An industrialized program supported by the government and working with USAID to do a non-traditional chemical quinoa production in their lands. Their desert.

Because it grows in desert environments. That was successful enough that I knocked out the market for the Bolivian quinoa. The prices completely crashed. So, I was there during the price crash. Now, the market has stabilized.

The Bolivians refuse to sell their quinoa at low prices. That drove the prices up again. Now, there's been a differentiation, where organic and fair trade are important. You can get higher price for it.

Bolivia – because of the constitution, people grow it anyway because that's, in a way, the law. They have a competitive advantage with that because the Peruvian quinoa is not organic or fair trade. There's consumer education, too. Consumers don't know the difference between the different quinoas.

**You noted the gods. According to the traditions and mythologies, what gods?**

There's a story about some women that came down, kidnapped some boys to this paradise. They got homesick and wanted to go home. They sent them with a sack full of seeds. That was the quinoa. They have multiple gods and god-like people.

I've seen some psychological studies, where in the development of children the animistic and spiritualist beliefs seem innate. Children are hardwired to see spirits in the world. They are innate animists in a way. The argument that has been by some is that if you leave children alone. They will invent some polytheist pantheon. It's some evolved framework for conceiving of the world. Anywho, Bolivia provides 45% of the world's quinoa.

They are producing more quinoa than ever. A lot of it is traded in the common market for everyone's use. Their export prices are much different than the in-country prices.

They produce tens of thousands of tons, according to the FAO.

They do. All by hand. (Laughs) They are really hardworking people.

**When I think about the first year-and-a-half of your study for the Fulbright Exchange, with the 3 years in total, what are the specifics predicted for the last year-and-a-half?**

I have no idea. That's the nice thing about it. It evolves. I chose a model called Circles of Sustainability that was created by the United Nations as a starting point. I've been a fellow on that project.

I'm having help guide me. It is a survey-based, participatory model. One of the nice things is I have all the cell phone numbers of all of the people that participated. I can go back and contact the people that took part in the study.

I am going to have them and redo the study. I am going to do it two ways. I am going to have them think about how it was back then a year-and-a-half ago. I will compare to how they think about the past and the way they reported it when it was happening.

So, that's something that one of my cohort's ideas. I am going to work with current groups of people to see the baseline of things now. I do ethnographic research. Some of it is participatory appraisals. It is being there, observation. It is seeing what comes up. I have the survey too.

### **Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?**

I want to thank people for joining in with KUSIKUY and helping to spread the word, every re-tweet, share, link, like, \$ donated... helps with educating people about the alternatives to the clothing industry, supporting the knitters, and growing the KUSIKUY message/example. There are good, ethical, safe, clothing options in the world.

## **An Interview with Rhea Hamlin**

**July 21, 2016**

**Tell us a little bit about your brief background, education-wise, personal, and how you ended up getting into this business.**

I took the 2 + 2 program, which is two years of college and two years of university. This program allows you to get a degree and a diploma in a certain program. At Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), I got my business administration diploma with a concentration in marketing. After NSCC, I transferred to Mount Saint Vincent in Halifax and completed my Bachelor of Business Administration with a major in marketing and a minor in management. During the summer months between my studies, I started working at a historical museum called Ross Farm Museum as a museum interpreter. It was through this job where I was introduced to flax and linen. I knew a little bit about flax and linen and a little bit of the history regarding it in Nova Scotia coming into my position.

After completing university, I was looking for work in my field. I came across this post on social media that someone shared. The post was for a small business in Port Williams who was looking for a marketing and communication specialist. I thought, "That's interesting." I did not see a closing date for the position. I decided to apply just in case they were looking for someone;

Luckily, they were, and I became part of the team in February of 2015. I find the experience fascinating. It ties my interest in natural fibers, as a knitter, into my education background into one position. It keeps me busy and keeps me on my toes, which is good.

With respect to the flax farming itself and for organic linen, you have written some articles for Trusted Clothes. For an overview, what is the process for farming flax and how that gets made into organic linen?

I grew up in a small town called New Ross, Nova Scotia.

Growing flax is quick. It only takes about 100 days to go from seed to harvest. Last year, we had one acre. This year we are increasing our production to 5 acres of flax with a few small test plots of new varieties. Our field is in the middle of the transition from conventional to organic. We are not using any spray. We are just growing. Once in bloom, the plant will have this lovely purple-blue flower on it. Once it has the flower, it will change its focus on growing tall to developing the seed. Once this occurs, we watch it carefully because once the bottom of the plant starts to change color and the leaves start to fall off, that's when we want to harvest it. Once it is harvest, dried, and is retted it is ready to process. Retting is a natural process that will allow the woody shive to be removed from the fibres. You can either dew rett or water rett.

At TapRoot Fibre Lab, we dew rett which can take about 3-6 weeks. We will test the flax it to make sure it is retted. When we test it, we take a couple of stems and bend it. What we're looking for is the ability to separate the fibres on the inside of the plant from the shive. So, when we bend it, we want to see the shive separate the fibres. So once corrected retted, we can start to process it.

The great thing about flax is that it is 100% bio-degradable. Even though we are processing for the long line linen fibres, we are developing products out of every by-product. For

example, the dust can be added to compost. We are working on developing a log out of the shive. Our short line linen will be used to produce raw fibres, 80% short line linen and 20% wool blend, roving and yarn. Our long line linen will be used to generate silver, yarn, raw fibres, and eventually fabric and clothing.

To begin processing, you start with the breaker, which breaks the stem of the plant – so you can separate and keep the integrity of the fibres intact. Once broken, the fibres are scutched to remove the shive. After the scutcher, the linen fibres are taken to the hackler where any remaining shive, knots, and tow (short line linen) is removed. After that, you have hackle long line, which will go to the intersect or to produce silver for the spinner. We're in the middle of designing of our six pieces of equipment that will take flax and turn it into organic linen. At the moment, we have the ripper, the breaker, and the sketcher, and we're working on building the hackle.

### **What meaning or personal fulfillment does this bring for you?**

I enjoy watching the project grow and blossom. We have come a long way in the year that I have been here, and it is interesting to see the responses that we have been getting from people.

Individuals who have been following our journey from the very beginning. We have a tiny but dedicated team, and it is nice to see that individuals in the industry have been following our journey and are looking forward to our journey. As a knitter, being able to use natural fibres that are locally produced and sold is critical to me. I love how my work at TapRoot Fibre Lab is promoting the production and use of natural fibre.

**TapRoot Fibres, how did that title originate for the company?**

Patricia Bishop and Josh Oulton own another business called TapRoot Farms. TapRoot Farms is Community Share Agriculture farm in Port Williams, Nova Scotia. Patricia always had a desire to not only grow food on her farm but also grow clothes. TapRoot Fibre Lab was developed out of this desired.

**With regard to companies like Trusted Clothes and TapRoot Fibres, what's the importance of them to you?**

They are important to me. I believe there is an educational awareness around the importance around choosing sustainable fibres. I think these organizations are doing a great job helping build a consumer base of educated and informed consumers. These customers will make an informed decision to buy clothing using sustainable fabric.

**Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?**

I am honored that Shannon approached me to guest blog for Trusted Clothes on behalf of TapRoot Fibre Lab and that she's interested in what we are doing farm here. We are a small team of six here on the farm working towards growing clothes on the farm. We may be small, but we're dedicated. I feel the honor to be included among the other guest bloggers.

Thank you for your time, Rhea.

## **An Interview with Daniela Degrassi of Annaborgia**

**July 21, 2016**

**To lay some groundwork, tell us about your background such as family – how your context came about, upbringing – how you came to be, education – where you gained expertise, and professional experiences – where and how you built a reputation.**

I could write a book about my life, but I'll give you the quick version! I come from a non-wealthy family living in a sea side village in Northern Italy. When I was growing up, my mom couldn't work full time as she had to take care of my sister with special needs. My mom was very giving, but also quite submissive. As a result, growing up I developed a strong sense of independence that made me want to seek building a life away from my small-town reality. I was fascinated by big cities that to me rhymed with independence. In my twenties, I moved to Milan and felt at home right away. That's where I met my ex-husband and together we moved to the United States after he received a dream job opportunity. We embarked on a great adventure in the country that is known to make dreams come true. Soon after, my sister followed me to the United States after both my parents died way too young. While playing mom to my sister, I explored my growing need to express my creativity and I stumbled into photography, which quickly unfolded like the perfect fit for my character and personal responsibilities. I briefly went to college to study the media and started my own freelance business focusing on lifestyle, portrait, and wedding photography. Fifteen magical years followed, filled with indelible memories and building strong friendships and relationships with many of my clients. In fact, one of my past clients is now my business partner at Annaborgia!

Due to my sister's health, we moved back to Italy in 2011, and with more time on my hands, I was hit by another creative strike. I fell in love with fashion to the point that I started researching how to start a fashion label. That takes us to the current days, where I divide my time flying back and forth between Italy and California to make yet another dream a fulfilling reality. In California, I have connected with San Francisco Sustainable Fashion Designers and together we are raising the awareness on Ethical Fashion locally and beyond.

**You are the Founder and Creative Director for Annaborgia. What was the inspiration for Annaborgia? What tasks and responsibilities come with the position of creative director?**

Working as a wedding photographer for over a decade had a clear impact on why I created Annaborgia and its particular market. Designing clothes is an amazing way to express my creativity, but I also want the whole project to be more meaningful, to be socially helpful. The Annaborgia line is ceremony friendly and gives brides and bridesmaids the great convenience to repurpose their looks after the wedding. The line is designed for women that are conscious about the impact of fast fashion on the environment. When I married, in 1994, there was not much talks about sustainability, but even then, I wasn't interested in purchasing a dress that I'd never wear again, so I opted for a cocktail dress that I was able to wear many times again. It was actually special to re-wear a dress that had so much meaning to me. I strongly feel the wedding fashion is in need of a big transformation if we want to make weddings more sustainable going into the future.

During the development stages and a year into our launch, Annaborgia was relying entirely on my decisions, from the designs (while listening carefully to the expert feedback of our

sample and product development team) to business operations. I am so thrilled to have welcomed Karen Canaan as my business partner this summer. She is an experienced lawyer and a true fashion expert and it's been way easier to share the fun and burdens of a start-up with her company.

### **Annaborgia is vegan couture. What is vegan couture?**

Our textiles are all vegan, meaning that no animal product or sub-product is used to create our designs. Remaining truthful to my vegan lifestyle, I opted to work with synthetic fibers, which I sourced carefully so that I could still offer the quality and feel of high-end textiles like silk. Our designs are hand or partially hand sewn to give them a couture touch. We're very proud of our signature Japanese satin poly that is used in most of our designs; it's a high-performance, non-wrinkle textile processed without toxic dyes.

### **What makes Annaborgia unique?**

Annaborgia is unique in its simplicity. Our minimalist lines and classic palette transition easily from day to evening, spring to fall, wedding day to resort.

Annaborgia is an ethical luxury brand – with an emphasis on cruelty-free and toxic-dyes-free fashion – for conscious fashionistas. What defines ethical luxury brands and conscious fashionistas?

For a business, use of the term “Ethical Fashion” includes many different ethical standards, including those affecting the environment, labor rights, and the avoidance of animal sufferings. At Annaborgia, we make our best efforts to follow all these ethical standards,

while creating a long-standing luxury garment. The “Conscious Fashionista” is our ideal buyer; someone who loves style, but with the same intensity cares for the environment, respects animals, and is concerned about labor rights and therefore, considers all these aspects when shopping.

One part of ethical fashion comes from luxe minimalist designs for each season. You have all women on staff. How does this inform the minimalist styles for each season?

We’re actually trying to veer away from the seasonal concept of fashion collections. Our concept is to build a capsule wardrobe collection (and keep adding to it) of essentials that will never go out of style, making Annaborgia the go-to brand for women that are not interested in following short lived trends. This is also a way to empower women to focus on more important issues within the fashion industry. Women are naturally nurturing and sensible, and so far, they have been the main force of the “Slow Fashion” movement.

**You have hopes to influence the wedding fashion industry as well – to make it sustainable. How might this extended plan of action work out in the next few years?**

It’s hard to break rules in the wedding industry. It’s a well-oiled machine and the mainstream bride dreams of a princess like wedding day. It’s only natural. We’re here to support a small (but growing) portion of the public that wants to integrate sustainability into their important day, and all the unconventional brides that are not in tune with the “classic wedding attire” concept. I think we need valuable alternatives for this minority, and by offering styles that can be easy to transition into everyday life, we’re actually adding more value to their investment. In a few years, I want to look back and see Annaborgia among the pioneers of the Wedding Fashion Revolution.

**The creativity begins in Italy with you. It is developed in the San Francisco Bay Area.**

**Why Italy and San Francisco? What are the operational steps in this developmental process?**

When I am in Italy caring for my sister, I find some time to design, and with the help of a pattern maker I study with, I make the first prototypes. Then I let my skilled Californian team develop the final patterns and samples. Our in-house team is equipped for small production runs and we rely on local manufacturers for larger orders. We love to support local businesses! Being close to our manufacturers also allows us to have better control on quality standards.

**What meaning or personal fulfillment does this creative work bring for you?**

Besides the excitement of seeing my ideas brought to life, I think the ethical aspect of offering a cruelty-free product is a major drive. As a Vegan, I have a way to show the world we can dress with style without having to harm animals for our own frivolous needs.

**With regard to companies like Annaborgia, what is its personal and professional importance to you?**

Vegan companies do not just offer cruelty-free clothes; they tend to promote an outlook on a cruelty-free lifestyle. It's like we have a moral responsibility that goes beyond simply selling clothes.

**Annaborgia has a blog, too. What is the content and purpose of the blog?**

I write about Annaborgia's designs and milestones, I share personal thoughts on ethical fashion related issues, and I feature interviews with wedding experts or vegan lifestyle influencers. At Annaborgia, we share with our readers why we are so passionate about a cruelty-free lifestyle and if we can inspire and influence them to incorporate cruelty-free choices into their lives, it'll be a small contribution to make us feel like we're going into the right direction. It's important to me to make a difference in this world, especially in these troubled times where humanity seems to have lost their way. With our Ethical Fashion we are simply saying "do no harm."

**Thank you for your time, Daniela.**

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