

# The Trusted Clothes Collection: Volume VII



Scott Douglas Jacobsen

# In-Sight Publishing

# The Trusted Clothes Collection: Volume VII

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## Acknowledgements

To the Schroecker family for the opportunity to work remotely and be, hopefully, useful, and productive for the Trusted Clothes team while it existed.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

## Foreword by Scott Douglas Jacobsen

All good love stories have a good ending. This is the last one in the Trusted Clothes series, focusing on the ethical and sustainable fashion industry. The central reason for participating in this industry on the independent journalism side is curiosity.

I had the opportunity to write for them, grow, learn, devour, and develop areas of more excellent knowledge. Indeed, we can find wool in the industry. However, I focus on the personalities, the industries, and the like.

The personalities were lovely. The businesses were quaint to severe. Most often, the businesses were run by women. The big takeaways are the plurality of forms that ethical and sustainable fashion businesses can take globally.

I was talking to people all over. I was fascinated by how they could produce such a large assortment of creative forms of harvesting for the fibres, whether animal or plant and the vast array of design and manufacturing methodologies.

It is essential to comprehend the crazy endeavour of many individuals within these industries. First off, they are coming from a situation of little wealth. Most have a severely limited amount of capital.

Fashion, especially for the big players, is a capital-intensive industry. The most prominent fashion brands are Nike, Louis Vuitton, Hermes, and Gucci. This is a severe corporate-level, international-scale industry, and advertising. These people know fashion.

These people know outreach and sales, and it shows in the numbers. For small and medium businesses to compete ethically and sustainably in the industry, it's like going against the Death Star with a single X-Wing or fighting Voldemort without a wand.

However, I do not take a confrontational view of these industries as particularly productive. I take the perspective(s) of integration into the larger structures to change the manufacturing patterns. Eventually, the technology will emerge out of necessity to scale up more sustainable fabrics than polyester-based ones.

Plastic pollution will become too much of a concern for more pampered nations and citizens with higher living standards and disposable cash. Also, as with alternative energy sources, the prices will drop too.

There will be bottom-up and top-down pressures for all fashion production lines to make more sustainable choices and even more ethical choices in how workers are treated, what types of fibres are harvested, and how those fibres are harvested.

It will be a multimodal formulation of change and will not happen overnight. However, the future of fashion will likely tend towards ethical and sustainable fashion, even though the dominant fashion form now will be polyester and worker maltreatment.

So, why the bed in the end? The cover is ode to a turning of a chapter, a bedtime past its time as a past-time. I am grateful the entire opportunity to grow with this family at a time when needed.

January 26, 2024

Scott Douglas Jacobsen



# Trusted Clothes

## An Interview with Joyce Hu of Wildlife Works

January 25, 2017

Wildlife Works' objective is to advance economic and social solutions for communities where both wildlife survival and forest preservation is threatened.

**Tell us about family background – geography, culture, language, and religion.**

California native. Chinese descent. My grandparents have many war stories from China. They finally settled in Taiwan, where I spent some time in my childhood.

**Tell us about your story – education, prior work, and so on?**

Studied sociology at UCLA. I always wanted to get into fashion but knew I had to find my way through a non-traditional path. I started my career in consumer marketing and always worked with small business, so I picked up an entrepreneurial perspective and work ethic. On a fluke, I started modeling and styling on the side. It started to pick up and I quit my full-time job to pursue modeling, styling, and creative fashion production full time. It paid off. Not only was I modeling, but I also became art director for a couple small fashion magazines, as well as doing marketing for small startup fashion brands.

**How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

In New York, I was recruited to do global marketing for a boutique fashion brand based in Hong Kong. I moved with one month's notice. I was ready for the adventure. But the work environment turned out to be completely soul sucking and unfulfilling. I quit, moved home in search of something that gave back to the world. I met the founder of wildlife works years ago and got back in touch and it was perfect time.

**What seems like the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?**

They are important as “proof of concept.” To create a consumer movement that pressures the big companies to produce more ethically.

**What seems like the importance of fair trade?**

Fair Trade is an important bar of measurement for all production to measure against. Are the producers at the end of the supply chain getting a fair and sustainable wage? And certification is important for transparency.

**What seems like the importance of a (relative to the country) living wage?**

It's the only way people can sustain their livelihood on a job.

### **What makes slow fashion better than fast fashion?**

More thoughtful, less volume, less is more – promotes longer use and sustainable production practices.

### **How can ethical and sustainable fashion contribute to the long-term sustainable future for the atmosphere, the biosphere, and the environment?**

Continue to move production towards sustainable means, as well as train consumers to not demand fast fashion – but this would require a huge industry and paradigm shift. I am hopeful we'll get there or be forced to get there when we finally deplete our natural resources.

The wildlife works factory in Kenya produces quality made garments that support the local rural population and protect wildlife and trees. Their workers get paid a Fair Trade 'premium' for every certified order. This money helps to further local empowerment and economic development and has made a big impact on the lives of our workers in rural Kenya.

**The Sustainable Apparel Coalition invented [The Higg Index](#). It assesses some products' sustainability throughout the products' lifecycle. The European Outdoor Group and the Outdoor Industry Association developed an index of products' impacts on the environment throughout their lifecycle, the [Eco Index](#). Large regions with serious attempts to implement standards and quantitative analysis of sustainability of products throughout their lifecycle. What seem like the importance of quality tests, or metrics, such as these and others?**

Metrics to measure movement on a scale is necessary to have all parties speaking the same language so that the goal is clearly defined.

**Certifications, or standards and labelling, remain important, which associate with analysis. These include [Fairtrade International](#), [MADE-BY](#), the [Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code](#), the [Soil Association label](#) and the [EKOlabel](#), the [Okotex standard 100 mark](#), and the [European Eco-Label for Textile Products](#), and more. There's many. Do these help systematize and clarify, or obfuscate and confuse?**

It's definitely confusing to the end user, when it's supposed to do the opposite. The danger with too many levels of labeling with different standards, consumers are still left with the confusion of which labels are truly legitimate, i.e. organic food label has started to lose consumer trust, but it's better than nothing or the standard conventional.

**[The Ethical Fashion Forum](#) developed the [Ethical Policy Framework](#). An ethical policy framework tool for those devoted to enactment of ethical and sustainable purchases, production, and business decisions. What do services such as these perform for the public, consumers, producers, and businesspeople?**

These organizations are great to help consumers sift through the labeling overload.

**Who are personal heroes, or heroines, within the ethical and sustainable fashion world for you?**

Safia Minney of People Tree.

**What is Wildlife Works?**

Conservation company that protects forests and wildlife by providing sustainable jobs in rural areas with human-wildlife conflict. On our Kenyan conservation site, we have the world's only carbon neutral Fair-Trade factory that protects wildlife.

**What inspired the title of the organization?**

The founder's, Mike's, basic idea is that if you want wildlife, you have to make sure it works for local communities.

**What are some of its feature products?**

Our own brand: organic, easy to wear.

Our main business is producing for other brands. Our customers include Puma, Uniform, Raven and Lily, Greater Good, and Lalesso.

**What are the main fibres and fabrics used in the products?**

For our own brand: organic cotton.

**Who grows, harvests, designs, and manufactures the products of Wildlife Works?**

For our own brand: Chetna in India grows cotton, Rajlaskshmi Mills, we design and cut and sew.

**What topics most interest you?**

Inspiring as many people as possible to consume less and more consciously in all areas of life.

**Why should ethical and sustainable (and other) fashion designers and companies include the Triple Bottom Line analysis in individual and business performance?**

Considers and sustains the health of our planet!

**There have been large tragedies such as the [Rana Plaza collapse](#), which was the largest garment factory accident in history with over 1,000 dead and more than 2,500 injured. Others were the [Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire \(1911\)](#) and the [Pakistan Garment Factory Fires \(2012\)](#). How do tragedies shed light on work conditions in garment factories?**

Helped to ignite consumer outrage, awareness, and demand for better working conditions.

**What is the importance of the status of women in the ethical and sustainable fashion world too?**

They make up the majority of the global fashion work force.

**What seem like some of the explicit and implicit forms observed in personal and professional life to you?**

This says a lot.; P

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

## Brand Feature: Good Cloth

January 31, 2017

**Good Cloth** specializes in ethical fashion—clothing, accessories, and home goods—that are designed with consideration for workers, the planet, and consumers. The shop curates’ products that are made with ethically sourced materials and have a transparent supply chain. Style, workers’ rights, and the environment are the heart of Good Cloth. The company includes product journeys for each item, so that consumers can read how products are made, from beginning to end. How clothing is made shouldn’t be a mystery. Read about how creator Stephanie started her ethical fashion journey.

### **Tell us about yourself in brief, how you got involved in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

The steps that lead me to dive headfirst into founding an ethical fashion business had been long in the making. All the signs pointed to an intersection that I just hadn’t yet discovered. By the time I launched [Good Cloth](#), I had been writing about fashion and human rights, separately, for years. Before my ‘aha’ moment, they seemed entirely disparate loves. On one hand, I wrote about fashion and makeup. On the other I wrote about human rights. It wasn’t until I wrote *[Human Trafficking Around the World: Hidden in Plain Sight](#)* (it was published—courtesy of Columbia University Press—in 2013) that the intersection between the two became clear.

When I began to research human trafficking, I learned about factories’ operations and forced labor worldwide. As I found out more about human trafficking and exploitation in the fashion industry, it shaped and changed the way I shopped. An avid lover of fashion, I was shocked to learn how garment workers are treated and how many are forced to pay recruitment fees that put them in debt bondage. Lack of transparency and convoluted supply chains—where nominal onus is placed on companies—creates opportunity for unscrupulous people to step in and take advantage. Even the best-intentioned companies have a hard time with transparency when they have convoluted supply chains. That’s part of the reason why Good Cloth curates’ designers that work with small supply chains. The other reason is that we want to give a helping hand to companies that are doing tremendous work but don’t have ample funds and, thereby, need more support.

Even when debt bondage isn’t an issue, garment workers don’t earn a living wage in the nations where most of our clothing in the U.S. is made. Garment workers don’t earn enough to satisfy their basic needs, including, clothing. As consumers we expect a dress to cost \$9.99, yet the person who made the dress doesn’t earn enough to buy clothes for themselves and their family.

All of this information weighed heavy on me during my research. I began to change my personal shopping patterns and conversed with friends and family about convoluted supply chains and lack of transparency across the fashion industry. As Project Runway’s Tim Gunn told me when I interviewed him for [Huffington Post](#), “Designers and brands have a responsibility to provide transparency information to consumers,” Gunn said. “Otherwise, it’s just a lying deceptive shell game.” I wanted to support brands that ethically sourced and gave transparency from seed to

shelf. It wasn't until I began speaking to readers that I realized all the research I had done for myself could be an excellent tool for those who want an easy way to shop responsibly, where the research and vetting has already been done for them.

I began doing presentations on my book and human trafficking in May 2013; it was less than a month after the Rana Plaza collapse and readers approached me on how they could shop ethically. Meaning, they wanted to make sure that what they purchased wasn't tied to exploitative or dangerous conditions. What once seemed remote was no longer. They got it and so too did the media, at least momentarily. As consumers our memory is short and our patience shorter. We want instant gratification when it comes to purchasing, but the sustainable fashion movement is asking people to slow down and think about how to spend their money consciously. That requires ease. Meaning, people need to have easily accessible ways to shop responsibly.

These conversations—with friends, family, and readers—showed me how powerful it is when people realize they can make a difference. Exploitation, human trafficking, poverty, and marginalization are all words that invoke feelings of hopelessness. They also seem remote to people—problems happening elsewhere to people far away. That isn't accurate, but in order to clarify this misunderstanding people have to be engaged and open to dialogue. Fashion is an ideal conduit. It's light and fun, but when a person purchases a garment, they like and it has an attached social good, it makes the person feel good—he/she walks away feeling that he/she is an active part of positive change. I founded Good Cloth, in part, because there is a stark difference in animation when a person talks about human trafficking generally versus what he/she can do as an individual to be part of the solution. I launched the store online, instead of at a brick-and-mortar location, because I want it to be accessible no matter where the customer is located.

Running the store satisfies me on multiple levels. Good Cloth is the perfect intersection between two of my loves—fashion and human rights—and it feels good to do good by creating an easy-to-access space for consumers to shop responsibly.

### **With ethical and sustainable fashion, what is its importance in theory?**

When I hear the word sustainability, it is hard for me to compartmentalize into fashion alone. It is a way of living. When I think about sustainable, I think about life and how even in daily life, particularly in the US, there are so many 'unsustainables'. I may have made up a new word. **(Laugh)** We live our lives in warp speed. Rush in the morning, rush during work to meet deadlines, rush off to whatever happens after the workday is done—in my world that is picking up the kids, homework time, bedtime, sleep and then doing it all again, in a hurry. I don't think the constant rushing lifestyle is healthy or sustainable. There are so many moving parts that I haven't figured out how to change it, but I make moderations where I can, slowing down where I can. That includes etching out time for relaxation with my kids and alone.

What's also not sustainable is the marginalization of women worldwide. This is part of the reason founding Good Cloth was important to me. Human trafficking and exploitation are a serious problem in the fashion industry and the vast majority of garment workers worldwide are women and girls. That means the vast majority of people detrimented in the fashion industry are

women and girls. That's why Good Cloth solely includes designers that make products that ethically source materials and consider workers—by going above and beyond the bar set by labor laws—and the planet along the entire supply chain.

It's also essential to me that Good Cloth is a space for women entrepreneurs. There is a significant gender gap in leadership positions in the US, due to explicit and implicit bias, and I want to do my part to support women leaders in business. I want to help improve and sustain women in leadership positions. So, as you can see, sustainability isn't theory for me, it's a mission.

[Shop Good Cloth online](#)



## An Interview with Sarah Zentz of Sarah Jewelry

February 6, 2017

Sarah earned a BFA in New media and Metalsmithing from Millersville University. She studied under Christina Miller, who is the co-founder of Ethical Metalsmiths. Sarah founded Sarah Zentz Jewelry. Here is her story.

### **How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

In 2008, I received a BFA in New Media and Metalsmithing from Millersville University in Pennsylvania. I studied Metalsmithing under Christina Miller, Co-Founder of Ethical Metalsmiths, a non-profit organization leading jewelers and consumers in becoming informed activists for responsible mining, sustainable economic development and verified, ethical sources of materials used in making jewelry. Therefore, I have chosen to only work with ethically sourced materials. All of my jewelry is made with recycled metals, reclaimed wood, and ethically sourced diamonds.

### **What seems like the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?**

The commitment from jewelers to become activists for responsible mining, sustainable and ethical sources for gold, silver, and diamonds could lead to responsible mining and supply chain transparency. It is of utmost importance for jewelry designers and companies to transform the mining and jewelry industries for the protection of the earth, its peoples, and cultures.

### **How can ethical and sustainable fashion contribute to the long-term sustainable future for the atmosphere, the biosphere, and the environment?**

The mining industry has a devastating impact on ecosystems from poised waters to solid toxic waste. According to No Dirty Gold, “producing gold for one wedding ring alone generates 20 tons of waste.” Most people probably don’t know this, but metal mining was the number one toxic polluter in the United States in 2010 releasing arsenic, mercury, and lead into the environment. According to Ethical Metalsmiths, “Large open-pit mines operated by multi-national corporations consume wilderness areas, destroy ecosystems, and violate human rights. Artisanal mining in impoverished nations exploit labor, poison communities and ravage environments.” Ethical jewelers can help reduce the ecological and human footprint of mining by using sustainable materials and recycled metals.

### **What is Sarah Zentz Jewelry?**

Sarah Zentz Jewelry is an ethical jewelry production company. I design contemporary pieces of adornment that are minimal, geometric, and ethically made where the ocean meets the redwood forest in Big Sur, California. My handmade ethical jewelry is inspired by and created for the nature loving adventurer and traveler.

**What are some of its feature products?**

My newest ethical jewelry line is made from reclaimed redwood and Argentium silver. The redwood species contains the largest and tallest trees in the world. These majestic trees can live thousands of years. Redwood forests once covered large parts of Europe, Asia, and North America, but changing climates spared only three small areas of these majestic trees – the Coast of California is one of these three places. Due to habitat losses from fire, logging, drought, and air pollution they are endangered. In my jewelry production, I only use fallen old growth redwood from California. The redwood is not treated and remains fully biodegradable. My hope is that my jewelry will be a part of the conservation efforts to preserve the remaining redwood forests by bringing awareness to the threats the largest and tallest trees in the world are facing. Additionally, Argentium Silver is considered an “environmentally responsible” metal. All Argentium is made from 100% recycled silver and fully traceable, ethically sourced, raw silver.

**What is the customer base – the demographics?**

Although, I consider many of my wood jewelry designs unisex, my main customer base is 25-34-year-old women.

**What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?**

Since the first time I saw the Pacific Ocean and magnanimous redwood trees, I was inspired to live and create work in the beautiful place I now call home in Big Sur, California. I love creating pieces of adornment that have a story and connect people to a space. To be able to create jewelry using fully traceable, sustainable, and ethical materials gives me the most incredible fulfillment and purpose. I am so blessed to be a part of the movement of ethical jewelry and ethical fashion.

**Any recommended means of contacting, even becoming involved with, you?**

The best way to get in touch with me is through my website:

<https://www.sarahzentsjewelry.com>

You can also keep up to date with me on the following social media platforms:

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/sarahzentsjewelry>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SarahZentzJewelry/>

Twitter: [https://www.twitter.com/sarah\\_zentz](https://www.twitter.com/sarah_zentz)

**Thank you for your time, Sarah Zentz.**

## An Interview with Angelina Rennell of Beklina

February 10, 2017

Angelina Rennell is a mother of two that founded and runs Beklina. Beklina was founded in 2006 and sells ethical fashion with collections places as diverse as Bolivia, Nepal, Peru, and USA.

**Tell us about yourself – familial/personal story, education, and prior work.**

I'm a mother with two daughters. I design as well as run my own shop online. I wear many hats!

**Who is a personal hero or heroine within the ethical and sustainable fashion world for you?**

Women who are masters of vintage and thrift shopping.

**What is Beklina?**

For over 10 years Beklina has curated a tight edit of beautiful and thoughtful fashion and objects, with what we like to call a native-modern vibe. We hope to connect unique perspectives that attracts those of similar passions.

More than a shop, Beklina also produces an ongoing collection, from knits, swimsuits, pants, pillows, rugs, art, jewelry, housewares, textiles, to random objects and handmade clogs. The Beklina collection is produced ethically, mostly in the USA, Nepal, Peru, and Bolivia.

**What are some of its feature products?**

[Homeware items](#), [rugs](#), and [cashmere socks](#).

**What topics most interest you?**

Textiles and local co-ops that are able to grow the health of their communities/lifestyle through their work.

**How did you first become interested in ethical fashion and what made you decide to open your own store?**

I've always eaten organically, shopped in health food stores and so on. But I didn't really know about organic cotton and ethical fashion until I had my first daughter. I started reading and exploring about healthy, sustainable options for baby clothing, and eventually I came across some brands that made high-quality baby clothing from organic cotton. I wanted to find the same amazing quality of textiles in women's wear, but I quickly realised that there was very little out there. That's how it always starts, isn't it? You can't find something and so you have to make it yourself.

In the very beginning, Beklina was just a hobby for me. I sold a small selection of women's organic cotton and hemp clothing. Now it's been 10 years, and we stock fashion from a wider range of brands that fit our philosophy, both smaller just-starting-out designers to established runway brands.

**How do you select new brands? In other words, how do you decide whether a brand fits Beklina's values and is "ethical"?**

My motto for selecting lines is "Style first". I don't bother exploring designers if I don't love what they're doing visually. If I love something I, then think about whether it is a good fit for our customer base: individual and artistic women who care about ethics and sustainability and enjoy a native-modern aesthetic.

When there is a fit aesthetically, I dig in and take a look at the types of textiles the brand uses, where they produce (local is best) and what the work environments are like. It's amazing how many designers are paying attention to these things nowadays and participate in green and/or ethical wares and production.

**What is the business of selling ethical fashion like? Are there any special challenges that come with the territory of selling ethical fashion?**

When I first started Beklina, ten years ago, ethical fashion was considered unusual and standout, and some had a negative bias towards it. They would stay away from eco fashion because they thought it wasn't "high fashion" enough. I still come across people like this, but only very occasionally. Ethical fashion is mainstream, almost "normal" now, and the label "ethical" is considered a plus these days.

One tough part of selling ethical fashion is when you love something and then find out that it isn't ethical, at least not from both an environmental and a social perspective.

"The bottom line is that people are drawn to eco fashion for a variety of reasons and at different levels." Ideally, a garment would consist of organic materials AND have been produced ethically. But some people (both customers and brands) don't see the full picture and only care about one or the other. For example, many customers support ethical brands because they are against unfair labour. But pieces made from non-organic materials aren't technically fully "ethical", even if they were ethically produced. On the other hand, there are also a lot of people who only care about the materials, because they are very sensitive to chemicals and need untreated fabrics for example.

I would say that our approach to buying is very all-encompassing. We know people are learning and growing, both the designers and the customers. That's why we are comfortable picking up lines at different stages of their growth in eco fashion, in order to support the entire upward movement.

**What does your own wardrobe look like? Do you exclusively wear ethical labels? What about beauty products?**

I mainly wear my own line [Lina Rennell](#) and other pieces from our shop, mixed with a bit of vintage. I am a very basic simple dresser, rotating through a handful of outfits. I live in vintage Levis, and my knit sweater tops. I'm all over the place with beauty products. Mostly I'm trying out new lines that people send me. I don't have a big beauty routine, other than I love a hot bath. I've always been minimal and "hippy" about beauty products. [This](#) is the deodorant I wear for example.

**Ethical fashion labels can be expensive. What would you recommend to someone who is on a tight budget but wants to build a more ethical closet?**

The first thing that comes to mind is that online the sale seasons are endless. If you like a shop's curation, get on their mailing list! And don't worry about building up an entire ethical wardrobe from scratch. Buy one or two pieces that you really love a season and mix in vintage. No matter the budget, vintage is warm, original, and precious.

## An Interview with Elisabeth Delahunty of Elisabethan

February 13, 2017

Elisabeth was raised in New England to an Irish Catholic Family. She graduated from Dartmouth college in 1993 with a major in studio art. She had numerous costuming jobs before she founded ELISABETHAN. Here is Elisabeth's story.

**Tell us about family background – geography, culture, language, and religion.**

I grew up in New England, in an Irish Catholic family.

**Tell us about your story – education, prior work, and so on?**

Graduated from Dartmouth College in 1993. Major in Studio Art. Took costuming classes in the Drama Dept. Had costuming jobs in college & after graduation that helped me get sewing & designing “chops”.

**How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

Little by little started with a love of fashion as a kid, an interest in sewing and making things. Started finding “raw” materials in thrift stores, either remaking existing garments, or buying garments for the fabric... the farther I got into to it, the more I realized how much waste there is in the fashion industry.

**What seems like the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?**

If clothing manufacturing really is the 2<sup>nd</sup> biggest polluter it's pretty obvious what the importance of ethical & sustainable designers & companies are— to save the world! i.e. we have to keep raising awareness fast fashion is helping to kill our planet.

**What makes slow fashion better than fast fashion?**

It's a different approach to a timeless desire ever since the proverbial fig leaf, there has been a fashion industry. Humans care about how they look. Clothes and fashion are a way to communicate with the world something about us...BUT AT WHAT PRICE. Are your self-expression worth people working in enslaved conditions? We need to take the long view invest in yourself and your self-expression thru fashion & clothing, buy clothing for the long haul; buy pieces you know you will wear and love for a long time.

AND in doing so, honor the people who are making the products.

**Climate change represents one of the biggest medium- to long-term threats to human survival in reasonable forms. The [Government of Canada](#), [NASA](#), the [David Suzuki Foundation](#), [The Royal Society](#), [The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#), and**

**numerous others discuss this. Ethical and sustainable fashion relates to it. The reductions in hydrocarbon production from sustainable materials seem imperative sustain the further deterioration of the atmosphere, the biosphere, and the environment. What seems like the responsibilities of ethical and sustainable fashion companies in the prevention of climate catastrophe?**

It's such a daunting topic climate change—some days I can't get out of bed for thinking about it... the tricky part is to tell people to buy LESS but pay MORE for it... because otherwise all of the costs of manufacturing aren't being factored in. We have to keep telling people the real story of fast fashion and hope they care enough to change their buying habits.

**The Brundtland Commission Report described the need for sustainability. In that, we, the human species, need to meet the “needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” for long-term sustainability. Does this seem correct to you?**

YES, and YES and YES

**What is Elisabethan?**

Elisabethan is an eco-fashion house that encourages people to express themselves thru what they buy, wear, create & share.

**What inspired the title of the organization?**

Based on my name, Elisabeth Delehaunty, and a reference to the Elizabethan era in England when the arts flourished under a female monarch.

**What are some of its feature products?**

Women's tunics & tops, skirts, girls' dresses, fingerless gloves.

**What are the main fibres and fabrics used in the products?**

All of our raw materials are reclaimed/upcycled. We use post-consumer reclaimed fabric, i.e. second-hand clothing, entirely as our raw materials... t-shirts and cashmere sweaters mostly.

**Who grows, harvests, designs, and manufactures the products of Elisabethan?**

Our raw materials are upcycled/reclaimed. We cut and “combine” all of our pieces in house, then have or sewing done either by a woman-owned facility in Denver, CO, 250 miles from where we are located, or from a small crew of at home stitchers who live in our community.

**Will the fibres and fabrics for the products from the company biodegrade?**

They should – we use cottons, wools, and cashmere; all naturally derived.

### **What topics most interest you?**

Less stuff. How much do we really need, and how to address that with the economy of growth that is the accepted approach to business for most of the world?

**The Triple Bottom Line** defines three performance dimensions: the social, environmental, and commercial/financial. In contradistinction to the standard commercial/financial analysis alone, the Triple Bottom Line incorporates environmental and social performance too. Why should ethical and sustainable (and other) fashion designers and companies include the Triple Bottom Line analysis in individual and business performance?

Because money alone is overrated. To be fully rewarded in what we do, we need to consider all the factors and impacts of our entrepreneurial efforts. Anything less and we are just fooling ourselves.

**How can individuals, designers, fashion industries, and consumers begin to work to implement those rights so that these vulnerable populations, women, and children, in many countries of the world have better quality of life?**

Stop buying cheap crap—it's not worth it and it's not really cheap—SOMEONE is paying the cost.

### **Any other work at this time?**

We are working on an off shoot called “notion” —making kit versions of our designs and other items give people the opportunity to make it for themselves!

### **Any recommended authors or fashionistas (or fashionistos)?**

eko-logic.

### **Any recommended means of contacting, even becoming involved with, you?**

Email at [duds@elisabethan.com](mailto:duds@elisabethan.com), or FB is our most active social media outlet—we love to hear from other folks fighting the good fashion fight.

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



## An Interview with Miriam Agat of Simple Animal

February 15, 2017

‘Simple Animal’ is a young fashion label that specialises in trendy, organic and fair, vegan fashion for animal lovers. Created by Miriam Agat, Simple Animal loves otherness and embraces all things different. They love vegans, the LGBT scene and everyone who’s a little quirky and open-minded.

**Tell us about family background – geography, culture, language, and religion.**

I was born in a small town in Germany, Bad Nauheim, near Frankfurt and lived in Friedberg for six years until my family decided to re-locate to Israel. My father is Israeli, and his dad lived there, but when the first Gulf War broke out and my mum lost her best friend in a lorry crash, we all went back to Germany. Another picturesque, but very dull area in the Rheinland Palatinate. There was not much space for creative minds. It was all very close-minded and depressing. I also had a hard time, because I was confronted with racism and had to learn to read and write German. At 17, I decided to move to the next bigger town (Mainz), where I took vocal lessons and did a gap year at the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union.

**What is your personal story – education, prior work, and so on?**

I then began to train as an admin, was kicked out after three months and started working in a call-centre for a mail ordering business, where I stayed for two and a half years, before they went bankrupt. I found a leaflet that advertised adult college and so decided to get my German baccalaureate and found myself studying full time for it for the next three years.

I was now qualified to study and so I applied for a union-funded scholarship, which amazingly fully paid for my degree of British studies and sent me to London to study abroad for a year. I never returned! I was immersed in the world of music in London and fell in love with the cultural melting pot that this city is. Six years later I am still in London. I am not sure how Brexit will affect things, but I can’t be certain that I will spend the next six years in London.

I graduated from uni in 2013 and since have been working in events as a freelancer, which I had already started during my uni time in Germany. After graduating, I decided it was time to create my own business.

**How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

I am vegan and wandered about at a vegan fair one day, when it struck me that most of the t-shirts that were sold had oil-based ink on them and were not fairly traded. I thought this is not right. If we’re vegan, we must surely also think about the consequences for the environment and the people involved in the process of producing the clothing, too. This was the moment *Simple Animal* was born. On my way back home, I got all excited and drafted the idea of the brand in my head.

### **How did your educational/professional experience inform fashion work?**

I am not sure my education informed a lot of my fashion work. It was more helpful in terms of organising things and actually believing in what I do and executing it. Drafting an idea in my mind and pulling through with it.

### **What is the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?**

I believe ethical and sustainable fashion designers are part of the future. It is sad that capitalism rules the world and everything that seems to count is profit.

In times of Donald Trump, it is hard to believe that us sustainable designers will have much of a say, but I believe that we have to be a countermovement to all the horrible stuff that's out there. If we don't believe in it, who will? There needs to be an intelligence that stands up for the important things and keeps up hope in times where stupidity seems to rule.

### **What is the importance of fair trade?**

Fair trade should really be the standard, but it is difficult to monitor. Everyone should be paid fairly for their work, and it is sad that there are factories out there who have children slave away for the production of cheap clothes and that people are slaving away under inhumane conditions for very little money.

Fair-trade is important and it should be advertised and communicated how important it is. People go and buy the cheapest coffee, clothes, etc. without thinking that step ahead. They need to be reminded of the process that stands behind producing their everyday goods. They don't just appear on the shelves; someone puts a lot of labour in for those goods to be enjoyed/consumed

### **What is Simple Animal?**

*Simple Animal* is an ethical fashion label that screen prints original designs of happy animals onto ethically sourced and fairly traded t-shirts and totes. The designs feature real life, happy animals from different parts of the world. Apart from the ant design I have personally met and photographed all of those animals and some of them were my much-loved pets.

### **What inspired the title of the organization?**

Now, the title *Simple Animal* was actually inspired by a Foo Fighters song. There's a line in a song that goes: 'Such a simple animal, sterilised with alcohol, I could hardly feel me anymore' (Come Alive).

I don't actually drink, but I liked the line and I think it boils down to the following: we are all simple animals in a way. We are all more or less the same and in extreme situations we will all just follow our instincts.

Non-human animals and human animals are not that different at all, and I wish people would see that, when they tuck into their chicken, or their ham sandwiches. It pains me a lot that animals have to suffer for the pleasure of peoples' taste buds or for stupid pom poms on hats that are made of real fur.

I get so upset in the winter, when I walk around and see how many people just don't care at all. They don't waste a single thought on what they're wearing.

### **What are some of its feature products?**

The most popular products at the moment are indeed the ants who come in a wraparound design and the cat frontin' design. I transformed the image of one ant into a line of ants that crawls up the t-shirt and then walks down the back. People are either freaked out, or in love! It's great to see their reactions. The cat frontin' is a little feline I met in my granny's village in Germany. She was super friendly and very cute. Most people are drawn to her, and she reminds them of their own cat, so she's definitely a best seller.

### **What are the main fibres and fabrics used in the products?**

I work with organic cotton, lyocell and bamboo.

### **Who grows, harvests, designs, and manufactures the products of Simple Animal?**

I buy the t-shirts and totes from a supplier called Continental and Earth Positive. They are certified organic and fair trade.

### **What is your customer base – the demographics?**

Most of my customers are from the UK, but Simple Animal also has a large fan-base in Italy. But there are also people in Germany, Austria, France, Switzerland, the US, Canada, and South Africa wearing Simple Animal.

### **What topics most interest you?**

Veganism is a topic very close to my heart. I've been an ethical vegan for the last 6 years and that has also opened my eyes to other environmental issues and fair labour conditions for people.

### **What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?**

It is good to know that *Simple Animal* doesn't contribute to mass production. We have a zero-waste policy. No t-shirt goes to waste. The flawed ones get sold for less money in the 'Imperfectionist' section on the website or at vegan fairs. It also makes me happy to see that people like the designs and materials and that they get excited about the concept. Simple Animal is very inclusive. We invite all genders to pick whatever t-shirt style they want to pick. Whether you're straight, gay, lesbian, a-sexual, gender-fluid, green, white, black, yellow, or rainbow

coloured, thin, big, wobbly, or lean, you are welcome to wear our t-shirts. I hope this comes across and just hope that people like it.

**Any recommended means of contacting, even becoming involved with, Simple Animal?**

By all means. We're on social media (Twitter: SimpleAnimalTS, Insta: SimpleAnimal, and Facebook: SimpleAnimal) and you can reach us via email on [info@simpleanimal.de](mailto:info@simpleanimal.de). Simple Animal is a small business, so there are no funds to pay for a role within the company, hence: there are no roles. I wouldn't feel comfortable not paying people for their work.

**Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion based on the conversation today?**

Thank you for the interview; it was good to reflect on the brand that Simple Animal has become and to remind myself and others that every contribution, no matter how small, can actually matter. Instead of shifting responsibility, each and every one of us should aim to improve a little something within their power. I think that if we aim to help each other and give a little of our time and thought to others and not just think about our own day-to-day struggles, we can make this world a nicer place to live in for humans and animals alike. I am a big fan of effective altruism, google it!

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

## Interview with Shivan Punjya of Behno

February 18, 2017

### **Tell us about family background – geography, culture, language, and religion.**

I am from California, born and raised. I miss the constant source of reasonable weather all the time! I have two moms, two dads, a brother, and a sister. My moms are sisters married to a pair of brothers. I was brought up in a very cultural and culturally sensitive environment. Being American was important, but we were constantly encouraged to recognize our histories and where we came from. It was a super nurturing upbringing with all the love that surrounded us.

### **What is your personal story – education, prior work, and so on? How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

Well, I went to UC Berkeley for undergrad where I studied political economics and minored in global poverty, which led me to wanting to explore social entrepreneurship and global health. So, I matriculated at Duke to get my masters in global health. While I was doing my thesis research in India on women's health, I came across textile weavers. I started to learn about their lives, their families, and the beautiful fabrics they were weaving. I noticed a discrepancy between what they were earning and the craft but didn't think much of at the time.

Once I was back and writing my thesis, the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh collapsed, where 1100 garment workers died, and it hit a nerve for me. How was this possible?! I started talking to my family about it profusely and my father's told me: stop whining, either you jump in and do something about it or make peace with it. You'll be miserable otherwise. So, we jumped in and partnered with a large nonprofit and an industry veteran to build MSA Ethos, our version of a holistic garment factory that implements "The Behno Standard" to look after garment workers more intimately.

### **How did your educational/professional experience inform fashion work?**

Well, you know how it is; it's impossible to always attribute specific experiences to a skill, but I think the aggregate of my marketing experiences, global health knowledge, and liking for fashion generally definitely aided in crafting what I imagined Behno to be. I think there must be thousands of inspiration points that I cannot even put a finger on that must have impacted me tremendously. Life is fluid!

### **What is the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?**

The fact that ethics are often an afterthought has always been bothersome for me; it should be the way business is conducted and done. But in an industry like fashion, where there are literally so many human touchpoints that are neglected makes ethics even more important. We have to start eyeing the backend and looking at our contribution – if it's positive and great, keep it up and

share best practices. If it's suboptimal, no worries; let's figure out how we can change our practices. But we have to acknowledge, accept, and act.

### **What is the importance of fair trade?**

I think fair trade is so far removed for so many people because it seems distanced...Almost like a notion of a developing space. But if we look at our lives here – for example, in NYC, we want to ensure we're being paid well, responsibly, and logically. Fair trade isn't a concept that should be integrated in certain spaces.

### **Who is a personal hero or heroine within the ethical and sustainable fashion world for you?**

Julie Gilhart. She's such a powerful yet approachable force of knowledge and inspiration. She speaks on issues as they are, but always in the most encouraging tone. So, I am grateful to have had so many meaningful conversations with her.

### **What is Behno?**

Behno is a womenswear label designed in NYC, but ethically manufactured in Asia, predominantly India.

### **What inspired the title of the organization?**

Behno means 'sisters' in Hindi. In our partner garment factory, MSA Ethos, all the garment workers call female garment workers by their first names followed by the suffix of "behn", which means sister. The plural form of 'behn', or sister, is 'behno', or sisters. Garment factories are collectives of people sharing varied experiences in the most singular way; it's hard to describe.

### **What are some of its feature products?**

We do RTW but are focusing heavily now on our handbags, which are sold exclusively online. Our goal is to make luxurious products attainable, so we don't have a middleman for our bags.

### **What has been the greatest emotional struggle in business for you?**

My learning curve was super steep, and there were volatile times when I was on the brink of questioning everything. Why did I jump into an industry that I have absolutely no idea about?! But then there those individuals you've met provide that source of encouragement that you need, and it keeps you going. The volatility of the industry and the fact that every day is a mystery is sometimes challenging. But the impact the industry could have been monumental, so that's a driving force.

### **What has been the greatest emotional struggle in personal life for you?**

The people I've had the privilege of meeting and befriending. Seeing the most creative, wonderful, intelligent people interacting and finding massive common ground with the most business savvy, clever individuals is such a beautiful thing to witness unfold.

## An Interview with Tansy Baigent of Lupe

February 20, 2017

Lupe is a company founded by ethical entrepreneurs Tansy Baigent & Dolly James. They personally source each unique, pre-loved diamond and precious gemstone piece. This is an innovative, forward-thinking business that is driven by a passion to reduce the environmental and humanitarian impact of buying luxury.

**Tell us about family background – geography, culture, language, and religion.**

My father was from New Zealand, my mother from England, and it was in the latter that I grew up. I spent my early years between West Sussex and Hampshire before moving to Bath. My father was an author specializing in ancient mysteries and mysticism and filled his time (and our minds) with intrigue and exploration. He encouraged us to follow our own spiritual paths, to question everything, to truly experience life, and to believe we could make a difference.

**Tell us about your story – education, prior work, and so on?**

I had a rather unconventional childhood; attending many different schools including public, state and alternative (founded by philosopher Krishnamurti). After multiple school changes as a child, I attended an alternative school founded by philosopher Krishnamurti. I boarded here for three years between the ages of 13 and 16, and it was here that I learnt the value of cooperation, consideration, and community. I learnt the value of mindfulness, of stillness and of alternative perspectives to the established view of the World. It was a greatly intuitive and informative part of my life.

As a young girl I had always wanted to ‘save’ the World (one of those!) and would write letters every year to Greenpeace asking how I could help. As I grew my motivations never changed despite often being told that I was an idealist, and that if I truly wanted to make a difference, I must follow a long course of education. So, I did.

I returned to state education at 16, attending a college in Bath before travelling for a year around the World to see new place and culture, after which I moved to Oxford to study Law with International Relations for my Undergraduate study. After these studies I volunteered for five months with a community and environmental charity before travelling once again to Africa and Eastern Europe. Upon my return I went back to university, in Canterbury, to study a Masters; gaining Distinction in International Environmental Law.

With my education complete I took a job selling jewellery, alongside volunteering as a content writer for a website, while I searched for an environmental job. The latter I eventually found, becoming Manager for an environmental charity. After a period, I moved on to work as a Regulatory Analyst for a sustainability consultancy and began a business in my free time selling antique jewellery due to my enduring interest and the sustainable aspect of second hand pieces.



However, after a move to London and a thorough insight into the public, private and not-for-profit sectors, my resolute belief that I could ‘save’ the World weakened. I used to say that I had been educated out of a belief in change. Unable to see a path for myself I decided to take a break from my environmental pursuits until I could develop a plan that I believed could work. Five years later I am writing a book on the environmental issues we face, have become a holistic healer, and have established a growing business selling sustainable luxury jewellery.

### **How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

Fashion has always surrounded me. My mother and both my sisters have all been involved in this trade. My mother designs and makes beautiful watches and bracelets from old pieces of jewellery and material and was an interior-design consultant. My eldest sister worked as a Fashion Stylist and featured in Vogue, Condé Naste Traveller, and Sky Magazine. My elder sister is a seamstress, designing gorgeous waistcoats, coats, and gypsy skirts. For me, my fashion streak came out in jewellery.

I had always loved the glamour and sparkle of diamonds and fine jewellery pieces, but my heart has always been focused on sustainability and being ethical. So, when it was my chance to step in to the world of fashion, I knew that it would have to be with a sustainable and ethical business. For many companies it is a hard compromise, how can you produce and encourage consumption whilst still being sustainable? In my mind the only way was to focus on re-use and recycling and thus I found myself drawn to the beauty and glamour of antique and preloved fine jewellery.

### **What is the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?**

Fashion designers and companies create the image and establish the precedent; if they are not ethical or showing the value of sustainability than buyers have no impetus to be so either. Thus, ethical, and sustainable fashion designers have an important role in encouraging a changing perception of fashion through ethical storytelling, and by offering a suitable and beautiful choice that is both fashionable and stylish, and ideally where the products actively contribute to a better World.

### **How can ethical and sustainable fashion contribute to the long-term sustainable future for the atmosphere, the biosphere, and the environment?**

The fashion industry is one of the most polluting and unethical industries on Earth and continues to be heralded as one of the most unsustainable due to its’ heavy reliance on new & fast production, long distance transportation and excessive waste. Thus, fashionable products that are sustainable (especially those which are renewable, recycled or second hand), and ethical, can contribute to the long-term sustainable future of the environment and atmosphere by offering consumers a choice away from harmful and carbon emitting production.

### **What is Lupe?**

Lupe (pronounced 'loop') is a sustainable jewellery brand founded by Tansy Baigent and Dolly James, sourcing preloved and antique diamond and precious gemstone pieces. This is an innovative, forward-thinking business with a truly ethical ethos. From donating a percentage of all profits to charity, incorporating recycled materials into our packaging, limiting all our waste, and ultimately ensuring long-term environmental sustainability through the responsible resale of beautiful luxury jewellery.

### **What inspired the title of the organization?**

The name LUPE was inspired by many aspects of our business. Foremost was the play on the word 'loop', as this relates to the circular nature of the business – the loop of reuse/recycling. We also have rotating stock, which further entrenches the meaning of loop to our business. A secondary aspect is the connection to the attributes of many of our products i.e. a ring. And finally, our name was inspired by a jeweler's small magnifying glass called a loupe (pronounced 'loop'), to help one see things clearly.

### **What are some of its feature products?**

We have a beautiful collection of antique and vintage gemstone engagement rings, earrings, and brooches, as well as beautiful gold and gemstone set pendants. Our products are all antique, vintage, and pre-loved which gives us a constantly changing selection of pieces. However, we are especially known for our collection of glass locket and gypsy rings.

### **What is the customer base – the demographics?**

Our customer base are predominantly men in their early to mid-thirties seeking sustainable jewellery gifts or affordable antique engagement rings. Our secondary demographic is women between the ages of 26 and 60 who are seeking gifts or rings for themselves. Clients are a mix of sustainable and non-sustainable shoppers who appreciate a company where you can speak directly with the owners.

### **Any means of contacting and getting to become involved with Lupe?**

Absolutely, personally I welcome anyone interested in collaborating; and commercially through Lupe we are always looking to extend our connections, to develop and collaborate. So please always feel free to contact me/us through: [tansy@lupeanthology.com](mailto:tansy@lupeanthology.com). We are also on facebook, instagram and twitter simply type in lupeanthology.

## An Interview with Talia of Ramnation

February 26, 2017

Launched in 2013, Ramnation knitwear focuses on ethical production and provenance. Read more about our interview with founder Talia Hussain.

### **How did you become involved in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

Like many people, especially women, I have always been interested in clothes and fashion. I don't think that's unusual. Also, I have a background in art and design. So, there's another interest there. I've taken some pattern constructing courses. I have a certification in that.

I had an interest in how those are made and constructed. Tying in with that, I grew up in the countryside with access to lakes, rivers, and holidays in the mountains. At some point, you realize that we can't keep throwing things away.

You can't keep using non-renewable resources. That applies to everything. If you read the paper and try to take an interest in the world, occasionally, these scandals pop up. For a lot of people, they register them, then they forget, but I didn't forget them.

I would learn about children working in factories in Bangladesh. I didn't forget. It made me think when I was shopping. I would remember those things I read in the paper. I remembered the companies.

People were shopping in the stores. I realized people didn't know where those clothes came from, those products. As I became more knowledgeable about making clothes for myself. I became more aware about different fabrics, different properties they have, and also where they come from – whether they are animal protein fibres, botanical plant fibres, or synthetic fibres.

Then thinking about the supply chain for them and thinking about the stories and what I was learning about the source of the materials, it kept adding up to, for me, a picture of an industry that was deeply in need of change and inflicting a lot of incredible damage to the environment, but out of view to most people.

Most people can't see it. They don't think about it. The story, the true story behind how those clothes end up in the mall or the high street is hidden behind glossy advertising, models, and beautiful photography and branding.

I became aware of the truth behind how these things got made was quite ugly. Eventually, I felt compelled to try and act on that knowledge.

### **In conversation with others, does this reflect their awakening to the reality of certain aspects of the fashion and garment industries?**

Different people come to it in different ways. When I am speaking to other people with similar ideas, they come to it in different ways. Some are interested in the labor issues. They want to resolve some of the labor issues that they see in different parts of the world.

Other people see it as a way to empower women in poor countries through cooperatives for them to make a living. Other people get interested in the environmental aspects of the dyeing or the tanning of leather, and the chemical usage.

Other people get interested in recycling and how to reuse fibres. For some reason, at the moment, there seems to be a big boost in people who are starting brands that make swimwear out of recycled ocean waste. There's a big trend for that at the moment. For them, it is a love of being in the water and so on.

Different people come to it from different ways. I think still other people come to it from veganism and vegetarianism. They start there. They realize that those same issues affect their clothes as well as their food.

I think there's different routes into it. For me, it was a route of reading, seeing, and tying the two things together by thinking about the loss of and devastation of the natural environment.

**Much of the damage to the environment – if you take the trillions of bits of microplastics in the oceans alone, it is devastating. At the same time, it seems institutional to me. In the sense that, people are looking for the profit on the managerial and business side and customers/consumers are looking for cheap products.**

**As you have noted on the website about externalities, which implies a lot of things, some of those would include the reduction in a living wage or the violation of rights – no oversight in terms of working conditions, and the fact that mostly women and children are involved in that. So, their rights are mostly being violated.**

**These sorts of things are more implied because of the institution of looking for profit on the business side – make money – and the consumer side – find cheap products – rather than something conscious.**

I totally agree. I would consider it something inherent in capitalism. The way neo-classical capitalist economists think about these things is that you've got supply and demand. As long as people are demanding, suppliers will come into the market to meet that demand. Then you would further say that sometimes the market fails, like with climate change because it is a massive externality with carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

So, you can correct for that by imposing a tax and artificially correcting the price, so supposedly that's all you need to do to fix the externalities, but the underlying idea is that supply should be maximized to meet demand as much as possible through the market. However, it totally ignores that you've got all of these problems, which snowball onto each other.

If you look at an example in Bangladesh, where there's a lot of poverty and low-wage workers vying for work in factories, it becomes a systemic and circular thing because those clothing factories are polluting the natural environment. The leather factories are dumping chrome and effluents into rivers and destroying the fisheries and the subsistence livelihoods of the people living there. So, they have to work in the factories.

You have this downward spiral of destroying the natural world and forcing people into seeking new kinds of livelihoods. To me, it seems a structural problem that capitalism isn't able to address in the way it is conceived right now. Obviously, it is an environmental and human rights problem for those people as well. You've got the two sides to it.

### **Ramnation itself, for those that don't know, what is it? What is its feature product?**

Ramnation is a concept label. I conceived and created it as an experiment as what happens when you try to make a fashion product that doesn't have or tries to reduce at every opportunity the harmful impacts of your consumption, which you see all the way up and down the supply chain.

I started by thinking what material you would use if you wanted to create something that was going to be fashionable, long-lasting, and biodegradable. Wool is a fantastic answer to the question. It's a great fibre. It's warm. Living in the UK, it's a local product and traditional industry. Wool was a good choice for using as a base material.

When I started using wool, it is subject a lot of the problems seen in other agricultural fields such as monoculture, factory farming, and so on, are present in the wool industry as well. I thought, "How do you find wool that isn't subject to those kinds of problems?" I was able to find a mill in the UK that sources fleeces from local flock owners, who specialize in the rare and traditional breeds of sheep.

Many of them are organic producers as well. That was a first step in finding a good material, then it was moving onto what type of garment can be made with this material. Then it was finding a factory in the UK that would help me find some samples and garments to produce.

Also, how do you get buttons, labels, and packaging to finish out this product, and try to pay attention to not using materials that either are going to be long-term persistent waste in the environment. Apparently, you can't get zippers that aren't polyester.

### **(Laugh)**

I don't have zippers on my garments. I might have to change that. It's interesting. There's a huge demand for non-polyester zippers, but they won't lie flat without the polyester in them. So, you won't get jeans without polyester zippers. That's one of the many, many things I learned when learning how to make a product. That's what I've been doing – researching and trying to follow through the concept as much as I could.

Obviously, the mill that I've been working with has been organically dyeing everything. They aren't dumping effluents. Everything is treated to the best standards that they can get. I found a button manufacturer that developed a collection of buttons that were developing a collection of physical techniques without chemical finishes, it's sanding finishes without chemicals.

I couldn't find labels without polyester in them. Many organic cotton labels are organic cotton thread woven onto a polyester base. So, I ended up finding organic ink and having labels silk-screened onto organic silk. I didn't want to let myself down at that last step. It has been interesting to follow the whole concept through to the final details.

In the end, the result is a small collection of jackets and accessories that use all organic fibres. I do use organic pocketing and linings in some of the garments. Most of the main material comes from main breed sheep, which are local in the UK. Everything else is done locally in the UK. The mill is here. The factory for the garments is here. It is a lovely factory run by a father and daughter. They have mandatory factory holiday 3 times per year when school comes out for when families can be with children – at the obvious times of the year, e.g. summer holidays and Christmas. It has been an interesting process of learning.

**Concept labels, by their nature, are experimental. Experiments come with trial and error. It can come with great successes and great failures at the same time. In the midst of developing Ramnation, what have been obvious mistakes and great successes in the development of the business?**

Something, less of a mistake and more of a misjudgment, if you get caught up in your own head, if you're interested in something, I thought that the market was further ahead than it was and that there would be more demand for this kind of organic product with story. I think with food and drink, there is that demand. If you look at what's happened in organic food and whole foods, that's taken off.

It's been a long time coming, but it's just massive. Then if you look at the rise in the past 10 years of craft beers, that's exploded. People are interested in those products. Here in the UK, the big thing is artisan gin and distilling. It has become absolutely massive. It seems like every time you go somewhere, then you meet some guy doing an artisan gin distillery.

**(Laugh)**

Seriously! I have met so many people. Some guys did vodka. There are tons of these things happening and they're taking off. People are interested in these little quirky labels and little quirky distilleries doing these small batches of experimental things in food and drink. The market has been developing for longer.

I misjudged the appetite for the similar thing in the garment industry. As I've talked around to other people who are doing similar types of things, they have the same sorts of problems. That concept of ingredients and sourcing – people haven't quite made the connection to clothes and other consumer goods.

I would say that was my biggest mistake or misjudgment. I am aware that awareness is growing. I guess that's where, maybe, some of my successes have been – by being able to be on the ground floor of this thing. I have met interesting people – not simply similar things, but working in related areas such as accessories, retail, etc. I even met the Prince of Wales (Prince Charles) who has been promoting the use of wool. That was a high point.

It has been a mix of success and learning. One of the things that I am definitely working on now is some project on “how do you start getting people to start thinking about these issues and other kinds of home wear type goods?” Because they come from the same place, the natural world. That's something that I am working on with other people now.

We have all of these products. They are amazing, interesting, beautiful, and have great stories. But how do we come together and take this idea into mainstream consumer culture and get them to think about it the way they've been thinking about food and drink?

**If you take those, and reflect on newer businesses, one just starting. Any recommendations for them?**

I think the biggest thing that I would say is to know what your story is, what your product is about and its story, and be prepared to be telling that story at every conceivable opportunity. Every channel that you possibly can because that's ultimately what people connect with, especially in fashion. There's so much product out there. Do they want this t-shirt or that t-shirt? There's so much out there.

If you want to stand out, you want to have something that people can really connect to in a meaningful way. You need to be able to express that over and over, and over, again through as many channels as you possibly can. You need to keep telling the story of what your product is and how it came to me, and make sure that you're clear on that story.

**Any recommended ways for people to become involved with Ramnation?**

I must confess. I am not as wonderful as I would like to be about my story. I am on Twitter. I tweet from time-to-time. We have the website, where the products are available. We do some shows such as New York Fashion Show. We have been to Germany as well. I look forward to doing in the future, but no plans at the moment.

My big plan is hopefully to be working with other brands on a retail project, so we can be taking this idea of clothing and furnishing being part of an open conversation with consumers – about how they come from the same places as food and drink and are part of the same ethical and environmental concerns.

Hopefully, I will have some exciting news in the next year or so.

**Any thoughts or feelings in conclusion about what we've discussed today?**

I am always excited to talk to people about what I've been doing. I am excited that there's more and more people realizing that there's a problem. People have been making films about it. We have *True Cost* a couple of years ago. Recently, Alex James made a film as well. So, I am encouraged more and more people are beginning to take notice and understand what the issues are and to begin pushing for change.

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



## An Interview with Claudia of Falcieri Designs

February 28, 2017

Falcieri Designs is an independent UK handmade womenswear label created by Claudia Oliver. She specializes in day and evening wear using simple, flattering shapes for women who want the wow factor.

**Tell us about family background – geography, culture, language, and religion.**

I was born in Kent in the UK and have lived and worked in London, Buckinghamshire, and Lincoln. I've now been in Manchester for 2 years.

**Tell us about your story – education, prior work, and so on?**

I was a self-taught costume designer for 15 years whilst working in day jobs in London.

I never went to university to train for that but went late in life to make the transition from costume to fashion. I began setting up my business in my first summer break at university in 2010 and launched when I graduated in 2012.

**How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

I didn't realise the impact of fast fashion really until I started my own business. Through my studies at university, I began to realise that mass production was causing various problems for our environment and impacting business and people's lives. It's something you don't really know about as a customer unless you are really looking for it. The high street is very good at shielding you from the effects of the industry. And if you don't try looking for information it won't find you.

**What seems like the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?**

Ethical and sustainable designers are an important part of any country's culture. Small businesses can't be competitive against the fashion giants anyway and so it makes sense for them to focus on local production and ethical and sustainable practices to give them their selling point and ensure their survival. Big industry will never have what we have.

**What seems like the importance of fair trade?**

Fairtrade isn't something I know very much about but exploiting workers and their welfare for profit is just wrong in any industry.

**What seems like the importance of a (relative to the country) living wage?**

We all have a minimum living standard. Even inter-country it's an issue. A living wage is different in London than it is in Manchester. Whether it's in the UK where things are expensive or Bangladesh whereby comparison everything is simpler and cheaper. Wages should be relative to a country's economy but that doesn't mean taking advantage of the differences by cutting things even lower.

### **What makes slow fashion better than fast fashion?**

From a business point of view slow fashion is what sets us apart from the rest of the high street. But not everyone appreciates this and it's important to educate people as to why slow fashion is better and less damaging to the world and why a customer's choices are important.

### **What is Falcieri Designs?**

Falcieri Designs is a slow fashion womenswear label.

### **What inspired the title of the organization?**

My ancestry is Italian. 'Falcieri' is a surname from Venice which is where my family originally comes from, although we are 5<sup>th</sup> generation British now. I chose it because it's a rare name and there are none in the UK and I knew I wouldn't be confused with any other company and would stand out.

### **What are some of its feature products?**

I specialise in drape evening and day wear. My one-piece dresses are probably my feature product.

### **What are the main fibres and fabrics used in the products?**

I prefer sheer knit, jersey, and lycra blends because they hang perfectly on the body and work well with my design practices.

### **Who grows, harvests, designs, and manufactures the products of Falcieri Designs?**

Everything is conceived, pattern drafted, cut, machined, and finished by me in my studio in Ardwick in Manchester. My supply chain once I have purchased the fabric is entirely Manchester based right through to sale.

I source all my fabrics from end of roll and dead stock from 3 outlets in Manchester and Leicester. I do not buy wholesale or import. I know that a number of fabrics I buy are manufactured in Leicester and Manchester, but I don't know the origin of all the fabrics because many of them do not come with any labels or source coding. I do not manufacture on a large scale – each dress I make is a unique one off, so I have no need for bulk purchase. I usually make large purchase runs of 80 yards of fabric once or twice a year for my own in-house designs.

**Will the fibres and fabrics for the products from the company biodegrade?**

I use whatever fabrics catch my eye and are available when I visit my suppliers. My contribution to ethical and sustainable fashion in terms of fabric is to recycle unwanted factory stock. In the same way as I make and sell my dresses as a buy it once and wear it forever ethos, I buy and use my fabrics in the same way with minimal waste. I never intend for anything to be thrown away.

**What is the customer base – the demographics?**

I sell via my Etsy store and from my website. I have a mixed demographic between the UK and the USA. I sell worldwide so my designs aren't restricted to any one place.

**What topics most interest you?**

Made in Britain, UK grown industry, British based fashion. I am a champion of UK industry.

**What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?**

I am at my heart creative. I am not in this industry for the money. I am in it to have a quality of life that means I can enjoy my work. I want to remain small so I can stay in touch with what is at the heart of what I do and work with a clear conscience.

**Any other work at this time?**

I am also a writer and published author.

**Any recommended authors or fashionistas (or fashionistos)?**

I recommend Fashion Revolution. Lucy Siegle is my inspiration of hope for the future of fashion.

**Any recommended means of contacting, even becoming involved with, you?**

I am on Twitter and Instagram as @falcieridesigns My website is [www.falcieridesigns.co.uk](http://www.falcieridesigns.co.uk) and my email is falcieridesigns.co.uk

## An Interview with Melanie Vert on Her Travels to Uganda and Ethical Fashion

March 11, 2017

Melanie is originally from Hamilton. She recently graduated from Carroll College in Montana where she advocated for Fair Trade and hosted many events regarding ethical jewelry, chocolate etc. Through her advocacy, her university became one of the first in the area to become a Fair-Trade certified campus. She just got back from 3 months in Uganda where she interned for a fair-trade organization called Generate for Generations.

You've taken a trip to Uganda. In fact, you interned there. What was the original purpose for going to Uganda?

I have travelled to many countries throughout my life, but these trips were never longer than 3 weeks. After graduation, I wanted to know what it was like to live in a developing country for a longer period of time. Through my work with the fair-trade campaign at my university, I met a woman named Linda who founded Circle of Hands Uganda, an organization which sells various products from Uganda. I told Linda about my desire to live abroad, and she connected me with Lillian, the founder of the organization she bought products from. Through a few calls with Lillian, we both felt it was the perfect fit for my passions and skills to go to Uganda and help her organization on the ground.

What was the ethical organization's name, purpose, and reach?

The organization I interned for in Uganda was called Generate for Generations. From their website, their purpose and reach are as follows: "A social organization in Uganda working to empower 200 single mothers, victims of HIV/AIDS, widows, sexually abused girls, victims of rape/domestic violence/forced marriage, and teen mothers in the community with skills of self-dependency, independence, entrepreneurial skills, and staying in school. We train our artisans in recycled paper-bead jewelry and sustainable handcrafts to provide for their families and generate income for generations to come."

What were your activities there?

My activities there varied from week to week depending on what was going on with the organization at the time. My responsibilities included working on the blog/website/social media, sales/marketing, networking with similar organizations, daily operations, accounting, quality control, and overseeing production.

Any deep bonding moments while there too?

Definitely! One of my favourite parts of my work there was collecting stories of our producers. The women who make our products are so strong and have been through things I can't even imagine. You can read their stories on our blog: [generateforgeneration.wordpress.com](http://generateforgeneration.wordpress.com). I'm so grateful I had the opportunity to meet and work with these amazing individuals!

Also, I lived with a Ugandan family during my time there. My favourite memories include learning how to cook traditional meals and sitting around the table at night playing cards. We had a few laughs discussing stereotypes we each had of the other's culture. The community I

lived in was so hospitable and welcomed me with open arms. I even had the chance to be in a traditional wedding.

**How did your intern work tie into women's empowerment and ethical fashion in particular?**

My intern work directly tied into women's empowerment because rural women in Uganda makes our products. Most of them are widows, affected by HIV/AIDS, victims of abuse, or teenage mothers. Unemployment is so high in Uganda making it nearly impossible for these women to find a job. Our organization provides a way for them to work from home so they can earn an income while caring for their children. Additionally, in Uganda the stereotype of a male "breadwinner" still exists. These women are breaking stereotypes and empowering other women in their villages to do the same. Any excess profits from our organization fund classes for our women to learn about nutrition, health, alternative income etc.

My intern work tied into ethical fashion because we pay our women fair wages, and they operate within safe working conditions. Our customers are ensured that the money paid for each product helps the women supports themselves and their families. This model is in opposition to traditional fashion where the majority of the money that consumers pay does not go to the producers.

**What is the best way for people to find and become involved in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

My favourite phrase in the ethical consumer movement is "Buy Local, Buy Fair." The best way for someone to ensure that a product was produced ethically is to look for the Fair-Trade logo. If you're not sure, ask the store's owner! Your curiosity will encourage them to look into buying more ethical products. A lot of ethical and sustainable fashions can also be found online or at local events so do some research during your spare time about fair-trade outlets in your community! When you can't buy fair, buy local instead. Shop at the farmer's market, support a local artist, or attend a clothing swap!

If you would like to purchase products from the organization I work with, feel free to contact me at [melanie.v@live.ca](mailto:melanie.v@live.ca) or go to [circleofhandsuganda.com](http://circleofhandsuganda.com). We sell jewelry, bags, and baskets made from recycled and sustainable materials.

**Also, what is a good way for people to empower women and girls as best they can with the resources and opportunities they have on hand?**

Another great phrase I've learned in this movement is "Vote with your wallet." Every time you make a purchase you are choosing what kind of world you want to live in: One with modern slavery or one where individuals are empowered. It is so easy to use the resources and opportunities you have on hand to empower women and girls. For example, when you are shopping for house décor or holiday gifts, look for ethical options. Often, fair trade organizations not only purchase products from women but also empower them through health classes, clean water programs, education for their children...the list goes on!

We also encourage the producers we work with to be resourceful and use the opportunities they have! They use recycled materials and are taught to harvest other necessary materials in a way that won't harm the environment. The benefits to fair trade products are endless!

## An Interview with Sarah Confer and Ariana Svenson of Threads of Peru

March 24, 2017

Threads of Peru is a nonprofit organization that connects the world to handmade treasures of Peru, helping to preserve ancient craft techniques and empower indigenous artisans.

### What are Threads of Peru?

Threads of Peru is a not-for-profit social enterprise that connects the world to handmade treasures of the Andes, helping to strengthen ancient craft techniques and empower artisans. We work with Andean people, mostly women, to improve the quality and marketability of their weaving in an effort to strengthen cultural traditions, provide a supplementary income to artisans in rural communities, and offer a glimpse of this amazing culture to the rest of the world.

You can read more [here](#).

### What inspired the title of the organization?

We were working with textiles, which are made of many threads, therefore we felt that “Threads of Peru” was a catchy name that also alluded to the different aspects of Peruvian culture.

### What are some of its feature products?

One of our favourite products is the poncho, and we offer a range of beautifully crafted ponchos to last a lifetime. The poncho has become such an object of pop-culture fascination — thanks in large part to a certain “man with no name” — that sometimes we forget that this garment traces its roots to the high mountains of the Andes. The Spanish word “poncho” [likely came from the Quechua word “punchu”](#) or similar words in other languages spoken nearby.

We also offer stunning ruana style wraps (or an open poncho). The [CAROLINA ruana](#) and [ANGELINA wraps](#) are a type of alpaca poncho that is open in the front. More traditional in design, the [CHASKA women’s alpaca poncho](#) features a timeless, modern design, accented by the *ch’aska* – star – woven pattern at the edges.

In addition to ponchos, ruanas and wide alpaca scarves we also offer a carefully curated Home Décor line, a little bit hippy and with lots of bohemian flair, our home interior design items are super popular.

### What are the main fibres and fabrics used in the products?

High quality fibre is the foundation of Threads of Peru products and is at the core of the traditional Quechua lifestyle. Most of our products are made with alpaca or baby alpaca fibre, but many of our small accessory items and bags are made with wool.

Alpaca is a soft, luxury fibre which is finer, softer, and more “slippery” in texture than sheep wool or llama fibre. It is naturally hypoallergenic, water-resistant, non-flammable and highly breathable. Alpaca fibre occurs in over 20 natural, undyed shades, ranging from browns, to greys, cream and black, making the alpaca the most colour-diverse fibre-producing animal on earth.

Wool is easier to work with and takes dye much better than does alpaca fibre. Though not as soft as alpaca, wool is extremely durable and warm, and the resulting cloth tends to be heavier than alpaca fibre products.

### **Who grows, harvests, designs, and manufactures the products of Threads of Peru?**

The production process is one of collaboration between the small Threads of Peru team and the artisans. Many of our products are designed in-house, but some are the pure creative inspiration of the weavers themselves. Threads of Peru is involved in the coordination and preparation of yarn, from spinning to dyeing to plying, right up until the warping process before an item is woven. The weavers then have at least one month to work their magic, weaving those yarns into beautiful, complex designs. Some of these products are finished in the communities themselves, while some are taken to a local tailor to be sewn up into bags or other accessories. The Threads of Peru team are very hands-on throughout the entire process, ensuring the highest quality output.

Some products use fibre that has been sourced from the weaver’s own animals, while others are made with yarn that is sourced from Michell, a responsible Peruvian alpaca yarn manufacturer which has been in operation for over a century, and which sources their raw fibre from small producers all over the country – including communities like those that Threads of Peru works with.

To know more about Threads of Peru or if you’re interested in visiting Peru on a textile tour, visit the Threads of Peru website [here](#).

## An Interview with Alyssa Couture of Alternative Fashion

March 27, 2017

**Alyssa Couture is designer /owner of Eco fashion brand Alternative Fashion. Read more about Alyssa Couture and her sustainable journey.**

**How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

I care about the fashion industry as a whole, and all things fashion in general. It is the non-ethical and unsustainable part of the fashion industry like the trafficking, slave labor, and unfair trade, among other things that are a cause for concern. It is clearly an epidemic that on a collective stance, needs to be balanced out. My interest of healthy fashion has evolved and progressed over time, quite naturally.

**What makes slow fashion better than fast fashion?**

There are different ways of valuing clothing, and there is an array of interpretations of what slow fashion vs. fast fashion is about. To some, ready-to-wear designers like Karl Lagerfeld for Chanel would be considered fast fashion. However, Chanel ready-to-wear is clothing made of quality, and therefore can be considered as investment pieces. The lifecycle of that piece of clothing will outlast cheaper products. Most fast fashion is to the commercial chain stores like H&M, Zara, forever 21, Target, Etc. Most of us can agree, that the value of these products is much less, yet due to many financials budgets, this product is much easier on the wallet, and has more affordability when it comes to a person's monthly income. The fast fashion trend is most popular because it hits the poor and middle classes. So, it's not a matter of convenience, it's more of a necessity in many cases. Contemporary brands play an important role and become a middleman in terms of creating an important niche for the budget-conscious and will also balance out some of this slow fashion vs. fast fashion extreme. Slow fashion is more expensive, and investment pieces. Fast fashion throw-away clothing does not live more than half a year to a year without becoming damaged and unwearable.

Slow fashion additionally pertains to having a more minimal wardrobe and taking better care of our clothes through mending and laundering with care. Fast fashion in terms of the relation with the seasonal trend are giving trends a poor reputation. We are now determining trends as part of a fast-paced culture that constantly creates trends to instill more buying power. What is happening is that our world is evolving at a more heightened speed, and our fashion industry is attempting to keep up to speed with the pace of our cultures and lifestyles, and the planet's own maturity. Trends are valuable in the way they can be holistic cycles that represent the times. When we change our clothing, or evolve our style, we are moving and growing along with the trends.

**The Pythagoreans, the Neoplatonists, Aristotle, and the Stoics, William Wilberforce, Baron Erskine created the ancient thought about animal rights. Jeremy Bentham, the founder of utilitarianism, discussed the suffering of non-human animals. Peter Singer argues for non-human animal rights too. The Nonhuman Rights Project (NhRP) People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), and others work to support animals and work to enforce their rights. Some fashion**



**manufacture processes violate animals' rights. What is the importance of animal rights, especially in an ethical and sustainable fashion context?**

It is entirely important to keep animal products at a minimum and focus on plant-based fibers. Not only are animal-based products predominantly inhumane, but it's also sincerely a health hazard with allergies that form from them. Many slow fashions, investment pieces are luxury goods made of furs, skins, and leathers. They require much less maintenance, and overall can outlast many substitutes made of these non-vegan materials. This is where our 'plant-tech' fashion needs to become more pronounced. 'Plant-tech' is a term that I say to illustrate new and advanced materials made from plants, that can perform equivalently or are substantially more advanced to animal products. There are several new materials that are being slowly introduced, yet we still need to provide and produce more options, and most importantly in the luxury good market. Much high fashion is the most influential fashion of our life, and all other sectors of fashion are below Haute Couture, and Ready-to-Wear.

**Climate change represents one of the biggest medium- to long-term threats to human survival in reasonable forms. The Government of Canada, NASA, the David Suzuki Foundation, The Royal Society, The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and numerous others discuss this. Ethical and sustainable fashion relates to it. The reductions in hydrocarbon production from sustainable materials seem imperative sustain the further deterioration of the atmosphere, the biosphere, and the environment. What seems like the responsibilities of ethical and sustainable fashion companies in the prevention of climate catastrophe?**

It is very common to hear that the Fashion Industry is the 2nd most polluting industry in the world. What people do not hear is that the 1st most polluting industry is the oil industry. The fashion industry is the second most polluting industry because we are using oil to produce and generate the most popular petroleum oil-based, synthetic fibers that dominate. Fast fashion is synthetic fashion. We cannot slow down, our cheap, synthetic fashion production until we discontinue the production, of disease-forming, polluting, and traffick-producing fiber. Petroleum fibers are not only destructive to the earth, but they are also unhealthy to wear on the body. Synthetic fibers are made from oil. Fossil fuel is an oil derivative from underneath the earth, formed over time that is highly condensed and acidic in nature. Plants are breathable which is another way to create more oxygen and is a way to protect our earth, animal, and human life.

**How can ethical and sustainable fashion contribute to the long-term sustainable future for the atmosphere, the biosphere, and the environment?**

Ethical and sustainable fashion can help correct the issue of pollution, disease, and create healthier, more life-giving properties. With an eradication of plastic fashion, we can eliminate the vicious cycle of producing a material that is not biodegradable. Plant-based fibers are much healthier for our earth and our bodies. If we discontinue the mistreatment of animals and guide our industry into supporting and promoting more advanced 'plant-tech' fibers and materials, we build and do not destroy.

**The Sustainable Apparel Coalition invented [The Higg Index](#). It assesses some products' sustainability throughout the products' lifecycle. The European Outdoor Group and the Outdoor Industry Association developed an index of products' impacts on the environment throughout their lifecycle, the [Eco Index](#). Large regions with serious attempts to implement standards and quantitative analysis of sustainability of products throughout their lifecycle. What seem like the importance of quality tests, or metrics, such as these and others?**

These tests, metrics are very much important to keep people aware, and give more statistical data, for those who need proof, over opinion. My work with Healthy Fashion Campaign, [www.healthyfashioncampaign.com](http://www.healthyfashioncampaign.com) is an environmental action, public awareness campaign that is in its very new beginning. It yields its own guidelines, network, community, and database that will support both the conscious consumer, and the fashion industry professional. What matters most to me, is that we learn to share our vision of eco fashion, and not build traps that would keep the fashion industry as a whole at bay. Much of the "tragedy" sectors of the industry is simply playing a role in the collective consciousness, and it is what was passed down to us from generations. It started very rapidly in the 1930s with the invention of synthetic fibers, and it has only made more of a mess than what can actually take in presently. It's a very heavy issue that has taken its toll with everyone involved. Healthy Fashion Campaign has plans and arrangements, to ensure 'plant-tech' becomes much more common, and to support the awareness of plant fibers as a therapeutic, healing modality that will liberate humanity, and the planet earth included.

### **What is Alternative Fashion?**

Alternative Fashion is an eco-chic womenswear brand founded, owned, and designed by me. We are stylish, 'holistic cycle' trend driven. We cater to those who are both health-conscious, environmental activists, and up to date with current fashion and style.

### **What inspired the title of the organization?**

Alternative Fashion is a company formed by my love for fashion. I have a serious passion for fashion, as cliché as it sounds. It's my ultimate form of communication, and it speaks to me. Alternative Fashion is based on the word, Alternative, as "different". We care about trends, yet we evoke the personal style of a person. It is also rooted from the concept of 'Alternative Health'. Many of the alternative, natural food and herb remedies are relevant to the times, and bringing that holistic and medicinal perspective of both food and fashion is important.

### **What are some of its feature products?**

We feature women's clothing, that range, from loungewear, athleisure, to dresses and formal wear. Most of our fabrics are made with organic fiber, if not organic it is a plant-based natural fiber.

### **What are the main fibres and fabrics used in the products?**

Our fabrics mostly consist of cotton, hemp, and flax. We're always updating our fabric library, and we have plans of introducing several more versatile, interesting, and therapeutic natural fibers, some of which will be nettle, pineapple leather, ramie, banana, coconut coir, and tree bark to mention a few.

**Water use in production is an issue. What is the importance of reducing excess water use in the production of fashion?**

There are water-less dye houses that are using DryDye which interests me. I think water is an important element and creates part of the alchemy of creating a beautiful fiber. When we use vegetable and plant-based dyes, the use of water I feel may be less of an issue. Collecting rainwater and having water recycling machinery can be a few ways to reduce water excess.

**Will the fibres and fabrics for the products from the company biodegrade?**

We are using natural plant-based fibers, that are biodegradable. The dyestuffs that are used on the GOTs certified and non-certified plant-based fibers are not made with 100% vegetable or plant-based dyes. I have created small-batch production of plant-based dyed fabrics for my designs, and it is the goal to be 100% plant-based.

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

Thank you!

## An Interview with Rhonda Labatt of Redemption Market

March 27, 2017

Redemption Market is a boutique featuring a variety of fair-trade gifts. They choose only the highest quality products, focusing on sustainability and ethical treatment of the designers and artisans. Every purchase makes a difference and is a step toward recovery and rehabilitation. **Tell us about family background – geography, culture, language, and religion.**

I'm a wife, mom, and founder of Redemption Market, an ethical boutique based in Phoenix. We have three amazing teenage daughters who also help with the business. I love camping, gardening, and spending time outdoors.

**What is your personal story – education, prior work, and so on? How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

Redemption Market was founded in 2013. We had just adopted our youngest daughter from Peru, and she was ten at the time. Previously I had been a middle school Spanish teacher, so I quit my job to stay home and teach our new daughter English and get her caught up in school.

I saw an advertisement online from Sak Saum, an organization that was helping women rescued from trafficking. They were looking for ambassadors in the US to carry their products and share their message. So, it all started with selling one small box of purses and jewelry and has now expanded to over fifteen organizations!

**How did your educational/professional experience inform fashion work?**

My travels in South America as a college student really opened my eyes to the plight of workers worldwide, and I wanted to choose a career path that would somehow better the lives of people.

**What is the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?**

If no one stands up for the rights of workers, fast fashion will continue to reign, with lowest prices and cheapest quality being the most important factors in production. Someone needs to share with the public the truth of how items are made and share resources for producing clothing in an ethical manner.

Sometimes it's a hard road to travel, because profit margins are slimmer and turn-around times are longer, but it's worth it for the workers to be able to do dignified work and receive fair wages.

**What is the importance of fair trade?**

I think that the term "fair trade" is something that a lot of people throw around but don't really understand what it truly means. Someone might praise their coffee as "fair trade" just so they can

feel good about the purchase. I think more and more companies are realizing that more and more consumers care about where their product comes from, especially among the younger generation.

### **Who is a personal hero or heroine within the ethical and sustainable fashion world for you?**

Muhammed Yunis was the first person who introduced me to the idea that poverty is a problem that could actually be eradicated. Until that point, I had assumed that there will always be those who are marginalized, but by listening to him speak, I realized that it really doesn't have to be that way, that there is hope for a world without poverty.

On a more personal level, Melody Murray, the founder of JOYN India, is a hero to me. I am so inspired by her business and personal life, and especially her theory of "purposeful inefficiency" in which the most lives are changed by having many people participate in the fabrication of a product.

### **What is Redemption Market?**

Redemption Market is a curated boutique where every purchase supports a cause. We are currently in partnership with over a dozen organizations, both locally and internationally. Some of our items are fair trade, while others are "products with a purpose."

### **What inspired the title of the organization?**

I love the idea of a marketplace of all good things, like a general store of giving back. Redemption is a heavy and beautiful word. It is the idea of taking those dark issues like trafficking, slave labor, and poverty and redeeming them or bringing them into the light.

### **What are some of its feature products?**

There are two major factors for us when we consider a new partnership for our store. The first of these is the mission behind the organization. Is it something we believe in and want to support? Our second consideration is the quality and beauty of the products. We want to sell the best of the best. Our best-selling lines are JOYN (India), Pebble Toys (Bangladesh) and The Tote Project (California).

### **What are the main fibres and fabrics used in the products?**

Our focus is always on sustainability, so we carry items with handwoven fabric, organic cotton, and sustainable wood.

### **What is your customer base – the demographics?**

Although we carry products for men and children, we are truly a boutique catering primarily to women. Our customer is educated, interested in craftsmanship and owning something unique and of high quality.

### **What topics most interest you?**

I'm passionate about serving the people on the earth who have been the most neglected and marginalized, who are simply in need of a voice to represent them.

### **Did you have a mentor in this work?**

Yes, I have the benefit of working with some amazing women in downtown Phoenix at the Arizona Women's Entrepreneur Center. It has been so encouraging to have these remarkable mentors give feedback, encouragement, and insight.

### **Have you mentored others?**

I think in life one should always be helping others along on the journey. As a mom and teacher, my life has always been about sharing my little bit of wisdom with those younger than me.

### **What is the importance of mentors in the fashion world for professional, and personal, development?**

The beautiful thing about being a social enterprise is that those companies who would traditionally be seen as "competition" instead are your brothers and sisters in the fight for sustainable fashion. We can inspire one another and keep each other on track.

### **There have been large tragedies such as the Rana Plaza collapse, which was the largest garment factory accident in history with over 1,000 dead and more than 2,500 injured. Others were the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire (1911) and the Pakistan Garment Factory Fires (2012). How do tragedies shed light on work conditions in garment factories?**

Because of the great amount of publicity that this event garnered, especially through the documentary *The True Cost*, many eyes were opened to the realities of workers' lives in the third world. However, it is unfortunate that events like this are quite common, to the point that the media doesn't spend much time covering them. It needs to be a record-breaking crisis for the tv channels to take notice. It surprises me that many of our customers are quite unaware that tragedies like this happen.

### **Who are a women's rights and children's rights activist or campaigner hero for you?**

I love the work that artists like Bono are engaged in- how it is possible to be a musician or actor and still spend time working for organizations like Red to end AIDS.

**Two factors seem to matter in the discussion of gender equality in societies: economics and rights. Many girls and women, especially in developing nations, face disadvantages unknown, or less well-known, to boys and men. Women face discrimination in education, health, the labor market, legal status, political representation, and reproductive rights. When women lose, everyone – boys, girls, men, and women – loses. What might bring this**

**basic fact, with ubiquitous positive consequences, into the public discourse in ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ nations?**

I truly believe that awareness is growing among developed nations, perhaps not at the rate we would like, but certainly more than say, ten years ago. A large component of what we do at Redemption Market is educating the public on some of these issues, to get the conversation going and to offer some tangible steps we can take to help.

**What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?**

I think it would be amazing if everyone’s passion and career were one and the same. Currently, I’m really loving what I do, because it’s hard to tell where my “work” ends, and my regular daily living life begin. I love what I do!

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

My family and I are actively involved in the localist movement, social enterprise movement, as well as adoption support and awareness.

**Any recommended authors or fashionistas (or fashionistos)?**

*Overdressed* by Elizabeth Cline was quite inspirational to me. In terms of business, I was also impacted by *Let My People Go Surfing* by Yvon Chouinard, founder of Patagonia.

**Any recommended means of contacting, even becoming involved with, Redemption Market?**

We are easy to find using the search terms “Redemption Market” across any platform. Feel free to drop us a line any time through our website [redemptionmarket.com](http://redemptionmarket.com).

**What has been the greatest emotional struggle in business for you?**

For me the biggest challenge has been to have patience with my growing business. It’s so easy to compare oneself to long established organizations and expect to have the same volume of sales or same number of followers. Deep down, I understand that slow growth builds a healthy foundation, and so I continually have to remind myself of that truth.

The biggest challenge that I still currently face is to educate the average consumer that the cheap fashion we are accustomed to buying actually comes at a very heavy price in terms of slave labor and the environment. It’s challenging to present ethical choices as both fashionable and affordable.

**What philosophy makes most sense of life to you?**

Living a life of purpose is crucial to fulfillment during our short time on this planet. For me that is a life filled with nature, music, stillness, serving others, and loving God.

Thank you so much for taking the time to interview me and to support Redemption Market!



## An Interview with Vanessa of Madam Chino

March 28, 2017

Vanessa Devaki Andrew is an artist, illustrator, clothing & textile designer and producer, community educator and reuse entrepreneur living and working in Milwaukee WI, USA. Milwaukee is also home to her USA-made sustainable reuse clothing brand Madam Chino which started 2003 and strives to remove the vanity and social irresponsibility from fashion through creative reuse.

### **Tell us about your background**

I grew up in Milwaukee County in Wisconsin, USA and for my childhood formative years lived on a farm appreciating nature. My father was a Hare Krishna, and we would go to the Krishna Temple in Chicago, sometimes bringing our cows and parading in the streets during Janmashtami, chanting and drumming with flower garlands. I felt the uniqueness of this experience and it allowed me to appreciate life and culture outside of mainstream American living.

### **What is your personal story – education, prior work, and so on?**

My family moved to an urban setting and began college not needing to soul search. My grandmother was an artist, and artistry was in our family genes. I was not as good at rendering as my sisters, but ideas and brainstorming were my forte. Craftsmanship came after. Before I started making clothes, I was sort of at the pinnacle of “anti-fashion.” In high school, I figured that high fashion equated vanity, and I wanted to make sure that my friends liked me for who I was and not for what I looked like. I combined many styles as a way to symbolically cross-reference every style simultaneously in hopes to negate any one of them and not be “labeled.” At the time, I didn’t realize that I was using fashion in an attempt to make a point and for self-expression. And in the end, people would call me a “freak” anyway.

At 19, I began tailoring my own garments. I realized that there was a reciprocal determinism between what you feel like and what you look like. Using clothing as a tool of communication can transform the wearer to new states of awareness and consciousness. This happens when the wearer’s confidence and sense of self are increased through this amazing process of expression. I became Madam Chino in 2003. As Madam Chino, I began reconstructing garments, mostly dresses and T-shirts on which I screen print my drawings. I became very amazed with how various parts of clothing items could be cut and reconfigured to fit congruently elsewhere on the body with little to no scrap, which sparked my interest in zero waste design. I use all scraps and reformulate on a piece as surface design or save and recreate in smaller designs, which seemed to invent themselves based on the left over shapes.

### **How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

I was hesitant to begin a “career” in fashion because I didn’t want to support an industry so full of vanity and social irresponsibility. Besides wanting to make people feel good about themselves

through expression, what finally gave me the “go” was realizing that reclaiming old clothing was not only stopping them from becoming landfill, but could circumvent new materials extraction, fabrication, and transportation. This was socially responsible! I use my old clothes, clothes that are handed down or donated to me, thrifted items, or bulk textiles purchased from rag houses.

### **How did your educational/professional experience inform fashion work?**

As an artist by nature, and an “outsider” to mainstream media culture looking for unique and expressive clothing options not available in “mall stores” I began viewing clothing as “soft sculpture,” “utilitarian art,” “wearable art,” and “accessible art.” I was working as an illustrator in the painting program at the University and stumbled into screen printing, which combined with reuse textiles, became an expressive mode of art.

### **What is Madam Chino?**

Madam Chino is a reuse clothing label. Online it is completely made-to-order from recycled t-shirts as a way to consolidate listing individual, unique found-fabric garments, and to avoid over-production. It is essentially very similar to American Apparel in that it is almost completely knit wear by size and color, except I use recycled t-shirts; in order to create consistency, the articles are flipped inside out and buyers accept slight variation in color. In person, the Madam Chino line is utilitarian wares and wearables from recycled materials with a much broader range including cloth napkins, dish towels, hot pads, washrags, mittens, hood scarves, laundry bags, tote bags, flag bunting, rugs, dresses with unique skirting, steering wheel covers, and many more all from recycled fabric. These items are offered wholesale to local shops however the purveyor must accept the variation based on the nature of reuse fabrics. This accounting for diversity while offering consistency is a huge logistical battle with merchandising reclaimed goods.

### **What inspired the title of the organization?**

While thrifting one day I bought a shirt with white velveteen iron-on lettering that said, “Madam Chino” and I wore it all the time. “Chino” or “khaki” was a fabric I was working a lot in, and I loved the idea that maybe I was “Madam Chino.” It inspired me to get into a creative persona to work with fabrics, cutting them apart and recreating them. I adopted the name when I was not able to find anyone on the Internet using this name, however I do wish I would know who the first Madam Chino was.

### **What are some of its feature products?**

For the made-to-order from recycled T-shirts line, there is a broad range of shirts and skirts, mostly for women but some adoptable for men. I am working on creating a men’s line with raglan sleeves where you can switch the colors of the sleeves and collars out. The goal is to be customizable. Offline I am interested in finding all ways to use scrap fabrics, and have been making many quilted items, have spent many hours whittling away at scraps culling the pieces and sorting them. The tiniest pieces I am weaving into rugs! I am also taking custom orders, mostly creating heritage quilts, pillows with memory pockets, tote bags and messenger bags for

people from their late as well as living relatives clothing, as well as costumes for dance squads, custom fits, plus offering classes and alterations/repairs in shop.

### **What are the main fibres and fabrics used in the products?**

Most of the fabrics that I find or are given/donated to me are polyester or cotton blends either knit like t-shirts but also woven fabrics with different patterns on them. I use a lot of Snuggies, which are bountiful in thrift stores as winter mitten liners, and quilt batting. I love using 70s double knit polyester for gloves because it is essentially indestructible.

### **Who designs and manufactures the products of MADAM CHINO?**

Madam Chino is made from all recycled textiles, either from donations, thrift stores, or industrial textile sorting facilities. They are completely manufactured in house at Madam Chino in Milwaukee WI USA on used industrial sewing machines.

### **What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?**

To provide a service to others is very meaningful. I find fulfillment from helping others and the planet.

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

I am working with a few art organizations in Milwaukee providing in school supplementary art education through project-based learning and after school programs, integrating textile and patternmaking into socio-cultural programming. I have been teaching community education for over 10 years and have worked with dozens of organizations.

### **Any recommended authors or fashionistas (or fashionistos)?**

As far as videos I am very much into “Story of Stuff” and “True Cost” Movie. I love how “Reformation” has popularized conscious consumerism, but there are many amazing artists and designers doing top notch stuff on etsy and elsewhere, and I applaud anyone hand-making or buying hand-made, even better if it’s from reuse, and organic fabrics.

### **Any recommended means of contacting, even becoming involved with, MADAM CHINO?**

Email me! [madamchino@gmail.com](mailto:madamchino@gmail.com)

### **What has been the greatest emotional struggle in business for you?**

Not always feeling validated by society can be very hard. Again, reaching out to others in a similar vein is very important for gathering a sense of community.

### **What has been the greatest emotional struggle in personal life for you?**

I'm not sure. I think when I have trouble, I look at my past experiences and it reminds me that I can get through it, and that helps. It's like art therapy or something, each project is a metaphor for life.

**What philosophy makes most sense of life to you?**

DIY, it's the best. It empowers people to take control of their own lives, and author their own culture instead of letting someone else.

**Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion based on the conversation today?**

Thank you so much for your time and efforts in this field.

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

## An Interview with Jennifer of BRM

April 1, 2017

brm is a luxury eco and ethical clothing label, designed and made in the UK.

They are committed to sustainable policies including fair trade/fair wage initiatives, animal rights issues, commitment to eco-friendly fabrics and practices and carbon offsetting.

**Tell us about family background – geography, culture, language, and religion.**

I grew up in Northeast England, near Durham, in an ex-mining village – my immediate family all live in neighbouring villages, and having done my family tree, most of my recent ancestors did too. I guess I was raised Christian (my family have a Methodist background) but we weren't very serious about it, and we don't ever go to church now.

**What is your personal story – education, prior work, and so on?**

I loved art at school but wanted a more practical career and was dedicated to pursuing fashion as a career as soon as I realised fashion was an industry that you could work in! I studied Fashion Design (specialising in Womenswear and pattern cutting) at Northumbria University, graduating in 2011 with a First-Class degree with Honours. I showed my final collection at Graduate Fashion Week in London that year. I interned at a fast fashion supplier in London during my course, and at independent label Reality Studio (then in Berlin, they've since moved their HQ to Porto!) after I graduated. I loved living in Berlin – it's such a young and vibrant city – but there aren't a lot of permanent fashion jobs in Berlin, just lots of young startup labels.

**How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

Sustainable fashion wasn't my starting point when I decided to start a label. brm actually began very organically; I was just making pieces for myself, similar to vintage pieces I already owned which were starting to fall apart. I grew Collection One out of those pieces and when I began researching fabrics, I remembered an organic cotton company I'd come across when doing the research for my Final Collection at University, which had the sort of fabrics I wanted. Unfortunately, that company no longer existed, but I did find several other UK-based fabric vendors who specialised in organic and fairtrade fabrics and had great collections of fabrics which worked well with my ideas. I also wanted to keep production close to home so that I knew the people who were working on my pieces and could visit the factory whenever I needed to – that was a response to Rana Plaza and the thought that companies can't be sure of the standards of factories without visiting, and knowing that while the price of manufacture would be much lower outside of the UK, I would rather have that peace of mind. I'm also a great believer in keeping things local where possible, the factory is about 50 miles from my home! When I started to sell those pieces online, I used those attributes to market brm. In doing so, I've joined communities of ethically minded people on social media and found myself more and more interested in that area, meaning I'm striving to make ethical choices in as many areas as possible, rather than just chancing upon being ethical.

### **How did your educational/professional experience inform fashion work?**

My time working in the high street supply chain really informed that that's not what I wanted to do with my career, especially after working at Reality Studio. At high street level, it's just creating for consumption, giving the most options for the buyers, having samples made that you know the buyer won't go for. There's very little room to be creative because buyer's only wanting to buy what they know will sell. After my time at Reality Studio, where, despite only being an intern, I felt I had a lot of creative input, and where the pattern cutting was challenging and interesting, I knew there was a market for better design and knew that that would inform my future career.

### **What is the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?**

I think the existence of these companies is essential, though I do think that as ethical pioneers we need to remember that while ethically minded customers might be easy to sell our products to, the majority of consumers are not looking for and don't care about ethical products necessarily. Our products need to not only compete with non-ethical items in terms of both good design and longevity, but in fact need to be better than the non-ethical equivalents, to win over those consumers who have that little extra money to spend on better quality goods. I don't think we can get away from the fact that ethical goods are more expensive – even though there's good reason for that, as it means everyone in the supply chain is being paid fairly – but our expectations have been lowered by the race to the bottom in prices and it's going to take a lot of work to turn that around.

### **Who is a personal hero or heroine within the ethical and sustainable fashion world for you?**

I really admire Livia Firth, who I hadn't really heard of as a public figure until getting involved in the ethical community. She's working hard within her influential social circle to push ethical fashion and eco living as an alternative. I also have lots of praise for Irish comedian Aisling Bea, who is a young up-and-coming face on British TV and who champions brands such as Reformation in her TV appearances and media interviews.

### **What is brm?**

brm is an eco and ethical women's clothing brand, designed and made in the UK, with a focus on vintage style cuts and details.

### **What inspired the title of the organization?**

It's my surname with the vowels missing! I always thought my name wasn't very "fashion-y" but brm sounded quite *cool*. Unfortunately, this means that Google brings up British Racing Motors before our website, though!

### **What are some of its feature products?**

My favourite Collection One piece and a product which stands out for me is the Pleat Sleeve Jacket. It's a biker style cropped jacket with statement sleeves in rich Navy Blue which photographs beautifully – it's one of our non-organic pieces, but it is still ethically produced in the UK. Our other key product is the Panel Dress with its gorgeous 40's style cut. It's very fitted and flattering, with a flip out hem and contrasting plaid check yoke, but it also has pockets which don't break the line of the dress. I think that's important, to make sure these pieces are practical where possible so the consumer can get as much wear out of them as possible.

### **What is your customer base – the demographics?**

Professional women, aged around 30-65 – this is my target market as the prices of brm pieces probably prohibit younger women from buying into the brand. The style of brm is chic and timeless, but the cotton fabrics give a casual edge to our pieces. I hope this makes them versatile and easily dressed up or down for day-to-night wear, for the busy modern woman.

### **What topics most interest you?**

In terms of inspiration? Vintage clothing, particularly pre-50s clothing when most people made their own, so essentially everyone could be a designer – there are a lot of interesting ideas and design features to be inspired by. I'm also constantly inspired by structures from nature; lots of projects in my commercial design portfolio have been inspired by patterns, prints, and shapes from nature. Film and TV are also inspirations.

### **Women and children remain the majority of the exploited and violated work forces. What is the importance of the status of women's and children's rights in the ethical and sustainable fashion world too?**

I always say that fast fashion is a feminist issue – I think it's very hypocritical of women's rights campaigners in the western world to ignore the rights of women and children in the developing world on issues such as this. I think the promotion of the rights of women and children should be a key cornerstone to any ethical company. I think ethical companies can and should do more promote such causes – we already have a captive audience! Our social media followers are already (you would imagine) interested in ethical issues, eco issues, sustainability, fair wages and fair trade, workers' rights, all of that sort of thing. A quick share of a relevant article gets it in front of more eyes. Some companies are doing this right – we have information about our factory on our 'ethics' page on our website, but we're made in the UK, for a fair wage so there's not a lot of reassurance that's needed. Sometimes you'll find an ethical company, like Everlane, who produce in countries with a question mark over them, such as China, but they are very open about precisely which factory the product is made in and give lots of information, which is essential for truly ethical companies, I think.

### **What mass movements or social movements can fight for the implementation of the children's rights outside of the fashion industry?**

Children's rights are always bound up in women's rights, so the feminist movement should play a large part in fighting for children's rights. More so than I see it doing, certainly. Worker's rights movements, too. In the UK, it was labour and worker's movements which helped to stop dangerous child labour in our cotton mills, coal mines and other dangerous industries. Those who fight for workers in the developed AND the developing world should fight also for children's rights worldwide.

You can order brm products from their website, or find them at the following sites:

Ecohabitude: [ecohabitude.com/stores/brm/products](http://ecohabitude.com/stores/brm/products)

Etsy: [etsy.com/uk/shop/brmstudio](http://etsy.com/uk/shop/brmstudio)

Folksy: [folksy.com/shops/brm](http://folksy.com/shops/brm)



## An Interview with Tereena Lucas of Luca Jouel

April 4, 2017

**Luca Jouel is a boutique Australian fine jewellery brand celebrating a sophisticated yet organic beauty. Founded on a passion for creating beautiful heirloom quality jewellery with a modern sensibility, their pieces combine ethically sourced diamonds, gemstones, and mixed precious metals together with luxury hand finishes and a love of the details. Tell us about family background – geography, culture, language, and religion.**

I am essentially of English heritage and am English speaking. My father was born in Northern Ireland though when his father, after having served in the RAF during World War II, moved his family there in order to take up the position of head gardener to the estate of the Duke of Abercorn, the late Lord Hamilton. Some years later in 1953 he accepted a position as director of the Royal Tasmanian Botanical gardens and so the family, consisting of his wife Edith May, my father and his three siblings, moved all the way to Hobart, Australia. My father then went on to join the RAAF, met my mother in Darwin and we travelled around a lot. I was born in Malaysia and have lived in Melbourne, Perth twice, Maryland and Canberra. My mother is a dressmaker and was born in a small country town in Western Australia. When I was 12, she insisted we settle back here in Perth and my father then left the air force and took up a position at the Bureau of Meteorology. My mother's own mother had been *dragged here* – her words! – on a ship from England when she was eight and also married an enlisted man and had four children.

**What is your personal story – education, prior work, and so on?**

I have enjoyed two vocational passions, gemmology, and naturopathy, for which I have studied and worked for years in both occupations. I have always had an interest in health care and the causes of illness, as well as gemstones since I was a small child. After high school I started studying to be a Naturopath over many years whilst I worked in various hospitality and retail type jobs. I then went on to work for a prominent jewellery valuation laboratory here in Perth where I was responsible for gemstone identification and authentication. During this time, I also received my qualifications as a gemmologist, diamond grader, and synthetic, imitation and treated gemstone appraiser.

All in all, I consider myself a passionate life-long learner and will no doubt do more in the areas of health research and holistic health care in the future.

**How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

My interest in ethical and sustainable fashion is an extension of this. Toxic chemicals are very often involved in many processes of making jewellery, clothing and accessories, cosmetics, and other personal care items. The effects on people and our shared environment are very real. Just one example of this stark reality was presented by EWG President Ken Cook in 2012 when he shared information about how babies are born pre-polluted with as many as 300 industrial chemicals in their bodies.... the majority of which were industrial chemicals and the break down

products of pesticides banned more than 30 years ago. Unbelievably disturbing! And they were American babies. What's happening to the babies of mother and fathers in developing nations that are involved firsthand in industrial manufacturing work and intensive agricultural methods?

### **How did your educational/professional experience inform fashion work?**

Well, I consider myself to be an ethical person. I am a proponent of nature cure and as such the nature has to be in health for that to be relied upon for the health of everyone. I care about people and animals in general; and more specifically I care about the major disparities involving children and women, and I care about environmental pollutants affecting the health of people and animals adversely. I see the multitude of chronic and serious problems and don't feel I can just turn a blind eye.

In establishing Luca Jouel, I wanted to make sure that I did it the best way I could. I wanted to make sure that the people in my supply chain adhered to policies that did not take advantage of the people in their employ, and that they adhered to processes designed to limit their environmental impact. No matter what we do we will all have an effect; there is no way not to while living our lives and being productive individuals. However, I believe it is important to try one's best to make the best possible choices to try to have the most positive effect. And this is generally not the easiest route; it requires extra time researching, saying no to some opportunities for the greater good and all rounds being conscious of every decision you make.

### **What is the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?**

When the fashion industry is considered to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest pollutant on our planet behind oil and is rife with gender and age biased maltreatment, the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies has become paramount. The current situation will only change if there are people who actually care about our shared environment and substantial global social inequities and who are prepared to demonstrate that by taking affirmative action by consciously designing their products and having transparent business practices.

### **What is the importance of fair trade?**

It can be hard for many people to understand the real effects of their purchasing choices in an unregulated market as a consequence of geographical distance, busy lives and general lack of education around the issues involved. Many are not able to resolve the true meaning of what that bargain \$5 T-shirt might actually mean in the life of someone who was involved in its creation.

This is where Fair Trade comes in. Fair trade means decent working conditions and stable prices that aim to cover the costs of sustainable/pesticide-limited production for the farmers and people actually making the products – and their families located in 58 countries. This in turn raises their standard of living and supports the further positive development of their communities. Fair Trade empowers and connects people, which is ultimately beneficial for everyone near and far. Fair Trade means that what you buy matters and actually helps others to live better lives.

### **Who is a personal hero or heroine within the ethical and sustainable fashion world for you?**

This is a hard question, there are so many people doing really great things within the ethical and sustainable fashion world now!

One person I would like to highlight in particular though is a lady I have had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of this past year. Her name is Diana Verde Nieto and she is the co-founder, along with Karen Hanton MBE, of [Positive Luxury](#). Diana started with the idea of trying to create a way to inspire people to buy better and also to influence brands to do better. I am proud to say that Luca Jouel is part of the Positive Luxury community having been awarded the [Butterfly Mark](#) which is the sole trust mark that exists in the luxury industry today. We were awarded the Butterfly Mark in recognition of the fact that we take pride in our craftsmanship, service and design whilst caring for our employees and suppliers and our planet's finite resources. I love the concept underlying the Butterfly Mark and believe it is particularly clever in its practicality because consumers are able to easily recognize brands that care and that are part of the solution to drive positive change globally.

### **What is Luca Jouel?**

[Luca Jouel](#) is a boutique Australian fine jewellery company celebrating a sophisticated yet organic beauty. Founded on a passion for creating beautiful heirloom quality jewellery with a modern sensibility, our pieces combine ethically sourced diamonds, gemstones, and mixed precious metals together with luxury hand finishes and a love of the details.

### **What inspired the title of the organization?**

I decided on the name *Luca Jouel* essentially because I have a love of travel and languages. Luca is a truncated version of my surname Lucas, and although it is said to have several European origins, I like to think of it as being derived from one of my most favourite places, Italy! Luca is also said to mean *bringer of light* and paired together with the old French word for jewel, I felt it was a perfect fit.

### **What are some of its feature products?**

Our collections feature rings, necklaces, earrings, and bracelets set with both finest quality diamonds and gemstones as well as lower quality stones that are both unique and aesthetically pleasing. Beauty is not always about perfection and our pieces aim to celebrate and showcase both the finest of fine but also the natural beauty of gemstone inclusions as is possible. I have an affinity for design that evokes a sense of nostalgia and old-world charm, and that is of quality above all else.

### **What are the main materials used in the products?**

In acquiring the elements for our pieces, Luca Jouel is committed to the legitimate and ethical sourcing of materials and maintains a policy of dealing only with companies who demonstrate

that same commitment to ethical trading and warrant their own reputable supply chain and general business conduct.

The primary metals we use are gold, platinum, palladium, and silver. The principal specialist manufacturers we engage are members of the Responsible Jewellery Council and also follow sourcing procedures that are fully compliant with the LBMA Responsible Gold Guidance and OECD Due Diligence Guidance for the Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals.

We also use diamonds that have been purchased from legitimate sources not involved in funding conflict and in compliance with United Nations resolutions and the World Diamond Council's System of Warranties. Our coloured gemstone suppliers also warrant that they have been sourced ethically. I have a particular love of spinels, sapphires, tourmalines, tanzanite, tsavorite and malaia garnets, labradorite and rubies.

Considerable thought has gone into our packaging and after much trial and error we decided to opt for handmade sustainable bamboo boxes that are not overly branded so that they can be repurposed as keep-sake or trinket boxes.

### **Who designs and manufactures the products of Luca Jouel?**

I design each piece of jewellery or the concept behind each piece. Some pieces are handmade for which I primarily work with one jeweler of some 30 years' experience, Kian Dastyar, here in Perth. Other pieces are made using CAD/CAM, hand-assembly, and hand-finishing by expert crafts people either here in Australia or with a smaller family manufacturer in Hong Kong that also employ skilful diamond and gemstone setters. For these pieces I also work with two CAD designers, one of which is in India and the other in the Ukraine. In Australia all our diamonds and gemstones are set by one master setter. And lastly our chains are custom crafted in Germany and Hong Kong.

### **What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?**

Having come from a predominantly health care/science background it has been a fantastic experience doing something creative. I like creating a collection of pieces along a certain thematic idea and I like then creating the photographic images. I have always been a very visual person, and these are the elements I enjoy actively creating.

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

I still see some Naturopathy clients. I very much love to help anyone with health issues if I am able to do so.

### **Any recommended authors or fashionistas (or fashionistos)?**

I am quite a fan of Margaret Zhang. I love her imagery and think she is a very clever and creative talent. She has also just recently authored her first book which is a volume of photo essays entitled *In the Youth of our Fury*. I would actually love to collaborate with her.

**Any recommended means of contacting, even becoming involved with, Luca Jouel?**

I can be contacted either by email at [tereena@lucajouel.com](mailto:tereena@lucajouel.com) or by telephone, +61 422 587 70 and am always interested in expressions of interest.

**What has been the greatest emotional struggle in business for you?**

I have also found the whole process of being an entrepreneur quite lonely and isolating at times, though this is improving as I form new relationships with others in business and engage with customers. I am also very grateful for all of the support I have received thus far from everyone at Positive Luxury, especially brand relationship executive, Catherine Mugnier.

**What philosophy makes most sense of life to you?**

I have a few that I live by. I believe that life rewards effort. I believe you should try always to be kind if nothing else. And I believe that you should strive to always be true to who you are, and not risk integrity and beliefs for money or stature. The grass is never truly greener elsewhere. Remember to keep your sense of humour, at the end of the day life is always about perspective.

**Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion based on the conversation today?**

Thank you for this opportunity to give more thought to my own knowledge and beliefs. These questions have enhanced my awareness yet again and also my resolve to continue to do the best that I can do to help other people and our planet.

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

## An Interview with Jesse Junko Beardslee of Themis and Thread Part One

April 5, 2017

The Mission of Themis and Thread is to continue dedication to victimless fashion, wearable art, healthy environmental practices, and equal human rights. Owner Jesse Junko Beardslee creates fashions from concept to completion in Hector, New York with as many Americans made fabrics, trims as well as recycled materials. Read more about her below.

**Tell us about family background – geography, culture, language, and religion.**

Both of my parents were artists. I don't know much about my father or his family. My mother raised my younger brother and I in Central New York, a rural lakeside community in The Finger Lakes Region. A hippie and a farmer, my mother taught us to be free thinkers and hard workers. Growing up in a relatively homogeneous, poor, white, agricultural area did not prevent us from experiencing and celebrating diversity and culture. (English speaking, no religion)

**What is your personal story – education, prior work, and so on?**

I went to college for fashion at an art and tech school in the early 2000's, though I never subscribed to much of the industry and was never interested mass production of garments. I've always created, though most of my early work experience was in the service industry. Since 2004 I have freelanced art, custom design, and alterations. In 2013 I launched Themis and Thread, a micro manufacturer of clothing and jewelry created with sustainable materials. I also continue to produce custom gowns for private clients.

**How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

Probably when I actually started to create fashion as a teenager. Although I've always been aware of the injustices within the infrastructure of the fashion industry. As a kid I was aware of slave and child labor and dangerous working conditions, but thought it wasn't something I could do anything about. It makes me really sad to know that it's kind of a running joke to the average American.

I've always been interested in self-sufficiency. Figuring out how to do things for myself has been a passion, probably from watching my mother do it all on her own when I was a child. So, sustainability in all aspects of life is revealed once you consider the hows and the whys to anything. Fashion is just the same.

When I started making fashion items I started thinking about the processes and components. Being poor made think about sustainability because I couldn't afford certain materials, and on a quest for self-sufficiency researched how things are made. I have always been interested in working with items others consider garbage.

Working with what you've got is how I began creating jewelry when I was dead broke. Living on the road also taught me about sustainability, space for tools, opportunity for sales. Themis and Thread combines all of those lessons and puts them to work for our eclectic line made of organic and upcycled materials.

### **How did your educational/professional experience inform fashion work?**

Pretty classically. I took courses like "Clothing Construction", "Draping", "Pattern Drafting", "Fashion Illustration" and so on.

### **What is the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?**

The global enormity of the fashion industry allows ethical and sustainable designers an awesome opportunity to make real change and impact. There is a systemic malady deeply ingrained in today's society that is resulting in ecological devastation. The simple fact that the fashion industry in whole employs some 60 million people means that ethical and sustainable designers and companies have great influence. Just think of the restoration possibilities if this giant industry turned away from unjust, inhumane, dangerous, dirty, practices and instituted ethical and sustainable systems. That's what we call fighting with fashion.

### **What is the importance of fair trade?**

Fair Trade is a great start, although local sourcing eliminates pollution and underrepresented costs during delivery. Fair Trade is important because the value of a human's skilled work is important and deserves to be acknowledged. The message we're sending when we toss out a cheap article of clothing is that human who made it was a throw away person.

### **What is Themis and Thread?**

A micro manufacturer of clothing and jewelry made from 100% American made sustainable materials.

### **What inspired the title of the organization?**

Themis is the name of a goddess representative of many things including justice and seasons' change. I first discovered the word while nurturing my obsession of my favorite band, The Doors. Jim Morrison's girlfriend had a boutique in LA in the 1970's that was named Themis, when I looked it up and found out it meant The Goddess of Justice, I knew my business name would include it one day. Other than indicating a component and process the word Thread in the title is to remind us there is at least one common thread which binds us all and that is our humanity.

### **What are some of its feature products?**

Goddess Wrap, Merry Gold Belt Pouch, and Guitar String Bracelets.

**What are the main fibres and fabrics used in the products?**

Organic Cotton and Vintage Fabrics.

**Who grows, harvests, designs, and manufactures the products of Themis and Thread?**

American farmers in Texas grown, harvest, sort, spin, mill, knit or weave the fibers. Some are dyed with low impact techniques there, some are GOTS dyed and printed in The Carolinas. We have a mostly one-woman operation in a sewing studio in New York where most of the designing, drafting, and constructing takes place.

**Will the fibres and fabrics for the products from the company biodegrade?**

The organic cotton is made from a seed hair cellulose and does not undergo any chemical treatments, so not only will it biodegrade, but it will do so safely. Our Merry Gold Belt Pouch is made from an in house designed textile whose base is untreated art canvass we steam printed w marigold petals in a process we call Heavy Petal, no heavy metals are used to affix the natural dye, dissimilar from conventional fabric dyes. We also use some other American made nonorganic cotton denims which will biodegrade. The varied nature and unknown content of available vintage textiles we use makes that difficult to determine.

**What is your customer base – the demographics?**

Our customers are activists and educated educators, they love life and are awesome! 18-60 college educated, interested in environmental policy, altruism, American made, organic living. Many of them are artists and homesteaders themselves.

**What topics most interest you?**

Sustainability & Self Sufficiency, Enriching & Healthy Wholistic Living

**Did you have a mentor in this work?**

Have had many, still do! My Mother, Mother-n-Law, and Grand Leslie, Marie Fitzsimmons and Mary Wittig, beautiful enlightened inspiring women.

Continued in part two [here](#).



## An Interview with Jesse Junko Beardslee of Themis and Thread Part Two

April 5, 2017

**How can individuals, designers, fashion industries, and consumers begin to work to implement those rights so that these vulnerable populations, women, and children, in many countries of the world have better quality of life?**

Help make others aware this is an ongoing problem, this is not in our past, and if you think you're not privileged you must think again. Luck of being born in a place where women and children working in poor conditions is acceptable is a privilege. We can vote with our dollars, we can be vocal about injustices, we can ask our representatives and elected officials to fight against these policies politically.

**From personal observations, more women than men involve themselves in the fashion industry by a vast margin of difference at most levels. Why?**

I'm not sure why women are drawn to the industry. I think I understand why women are drawn to fashion in general, but working within the industry... Historically cooking, cleaning, and sewing were domestic duties expected to be done by women, and techniques have been taught and passed down to young women through generations. Many have fond memories of bond building through these practices. I don't know how much of that goes on in our society today, maybe women of the future will not have these skills or want to work in the industry.

**Also, more men than women appear at the highest ends of the business ladder in fashion. Why?**

That I think that has to do with inherent misogyny and the historic nature of men being the work force long before it was acceptable for women to work. This is not unique to fashion but a systemic issue in gender equality at large.

**What might make men more involved in the fashion world in general?**

It seems to me men are incentivized by money and power. So are women, but in a potentially emasculating (a word which has NO feminine equivalent) position I think that most men selfishly need to benefit excessively to comply. Which doesn't make sense to me, because the ratio would be in a man's favor if he happened to be available and looking for female companionship – not to mention the strong connections that are built between designer and client, these are things I think a typical dude would love to take advantage of! I certainly went to college with guys who leveraged the fashion angle! When I was making money altering clothing, I had tons of women and girls in and out of the studio (which was my husband's childhood bedroom, we live in the house he grew up in), lots of prom dresses, bridesmaid dresses and wedding dresses. I think it's hilarious to imagine how blown his prepubescent mind would be if he knew then how many naked women would be in that room one day!

**What might make men more involved in the ethical and sustainable fashion world in general?**

I think that knowing we are on the right track to affect great change in the whole world is incentivizing to everyone! The ethical and sustainable fashion world is a space that is challenging, rewarding, and fulfilling, peace of mind and soul nurture are side effects of working in a field that supports and protects all life systems.

**Will having men in the discussion and on-the-ground improve the implementation of children's and women's rights?**

Absolutely. The more diverse and inclusive group in on any conversation, the greater the likelihood is of finding a successful and effective solution. Also seeing how valuable the work truly is cannot be ignored once in the discussion and on the ground.

**What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?**

I really believe that even the tiniest drop in the bucket creates a ripple effect. I am encouraged by playing an active role in ethical and sustainable fashion, I can sleep at night, I believe in what I do, I feel so lucky and fulfilled by fighting with fashion.

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

Themis and Thread has recently partnered with a master milliner to upcycle our cutting floor waste.

I'm also wrapping up editing a story about Themis and Thread's journey for Shatter the Ladder's next issue.

I'm always politically activated.

There is an evolving fashion item implementing technology that I have been trying to get off the ground, sourcing in The United States has proved problematic. But we are trying hard to develop a top that is protective and responsive for activists being attacked, which we've sadly seen a lot of this year

It's the holiday season and we just partnered with The Navajo Water Project to offer some gifts that give; donating a portion of sales of certain products directly to the not for profit who is providing water to Americans.

Wednesday I am riding to the state capital with a local group of water defenders for a conference and rally at Governor Cuomo's office contesting a potential hazard to our local community. Gas Free Seneca is lead litigation not for profit defending Seneca Lake from out of state oil interests attempting to store gas within the abandoned salt caverns below the lake.

We have also fought this with fashion via our Activist Ts which have served as a fundraiser.

Tomorrow I am going to a native fire ceremony in solidarity with Standing Rock and continue to write about the injustices there.

**Any recommended authors or fashionistas (or fashionistos)?**

Kate Black and also the book “Women in Clothes.”

**Any recommended means of contacting, even becoming involved with, Themis and Thread?**

Tweet me @themisandthread, email [jessecreates@icloud.com](mailto:jessecreates@icloud.com), or call 607-546-8040

**What has been the greatest emotional struggle in business for you?**

Separating myself from my product.

Also, I had a really emotional experience sewing recently for a woman with cancer, I could tell you about that if you’d like.

**What has been the greatest emotional struggle in personal life for you?**

I struggle with negative people who focus on the worst of everything.

**What philosophy makes most sense of life to you?**

The two things my father hammered into my head:

Treat others the way you wish to be treated.

Leave any space you’ve visited just as good or in better condition than it was before you.

**Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion based on the conversation today?**

Wow, that was great! I didn’t read through first and was really pleased with the flow of the questions, great conversation, love where we just went – thank you!

My involvement with ethical and sustainable fashion began with a love for fashion and creating. I feel like I’m an accidental advocate. If there were not such rampant injustice in the industry and the world, I would still be making clothing. The fact of the matter is our entire world is under siege. I can’t think about making beautiful clothing if the whole shit house is going up in flames. This is about environmental responsibility and basic human rights (one of which is a healthy environment!)

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

## An Interview with Jussara of Jussara Lee

April 6, 2017

Jussara Lee is a native Brazilian of Korean heritage who has developed a small –scale business operation in which luxury fashion and sustainable practices work in tandem. Since moving to New York City in 1987 to study at the Fashion Institute of Technology, she has designed collections under her signature label that were embraced by prominent retailers such as Barneys and Bergdorf Goodman.

**Tell us about family background – geography, culture, language, and religion.**

My parents are from South Korea and immigrated to Brazil in the mid 60's. It was my paternal grandmother's idea. She moved the whole family of six kids and their respective spouse, including my newlywed mom. I was born and raised in Brazil in 1967 and have two sisters who also were born in Brazil. One is a year older than me. Her name is Iara Lee, and she is an activist, documentary filmmaker. The other sister is 5 years younger and owns a Brazilian restaurant on the same block as my shop in the West Village. My mom is a polyglot, and we inherited her gift for languages. Portuguese is my first language and I speak English from living in NY for 30 years, Spanish just from speaking to people, French from school and Hebrew because I was married to an Israeli. Catholicism is the main religion in Brazil and babies get baptized at birth. I got baptized at age 9. It was an awkward situation to go through that ceremony as a young adult. I then converted to Judaism when I got married, for the sake of keeping the husband's family happy and to have my daughter be accepted as one of them. Other than that, I don't care much for religion.

**What is your personal story – education, prior work, and so on?**

My mother raised us as a single mom, and we grew up somewhat poor. However, education was always a priority for my mom, and she made sure we attended good schools as we compromised on other expenses. I was hanging out a lot on the beach between age 16 until 19 when my mother offers to pay for my studies abroad. She worried I was going to become a beach bum and thought it was a good idea to support my passion for clothing making. I was attending college for French Language and Literature at that time and moved to NY in 1986. I took a job selling movie and art posters and attended fashion school simultaneously. New York was a different city at that time and a very nurturing one when it came to creativity. I used to experiment with outfits that got me into the best night clubs. My friends always wanted to go there with me because they knew I would always get in with no waiting and with drink comps. Ha ha.

**How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

I have been in business for 25 years and the real commitment to not producing waste took precedence over everything about 15 years ago when I downsized my company. I used to wholesale to stores like Barneys and Bergdorf Goodman, had a showroom in Tokyo and do runway shows. All of that came to a halt when I realized the nonsense of making so many clothes, the tremendous resources they employed and the residues of their manufacturing: a trail of pollution.

I started questioning the concept of releasing collections 8 times a year around 2001. And after the attack on September 11th, I really went on a self-searching journey and felt the idea of making clothes for people to buy every season made no sense. My foray into it happened when I was introduced to hand tailoring. I ceased to do volume production as a way to eliminate impulse buying and waste and started to offer custom made and made to order service where each piece is cut individually for a specific person. It was valuable for me to offer clients the knowledge of how their clothes were being made. I feel it is a lot more gratifying to have that kind of relationship to the clothes you wear. The decision to slow down was based on my personal belief that less is better, quality is much more important than quantity. I wanted my professional life to be representative of what I believe.

### **How did your educational/professional experience inform fashion work?**

I have evolved my beliefs and core values through time and experience. If you go through the motions of building a company with your eyes wide open, you actually come up with a lot of conclusions that for the most part go against what the industry and its media accolades project as being right or wrong. I am always questioning and coming up with my own solutions to problems as I see them arising in front of me.

### **What is the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?**

It is crucial for more companies to let go of the old model of making a profit no matter what the consequences to the environment are. It is essential that we stop denying the pollution and destruction we create while making clothes for people who don't actually need them. We must connect the dots, just like when you do in kids' activity books. It is that simple. But yet, people avoid the reality and don't question where things come from and where they go once, they are disposed. It is a basic concept that gets completely obscured by our dependence on convenience. Once you start practicing moderation, and other behaviours that take in consideration the environment, I realized the compromise is insignificant when compared to the benefits.

### **What is Jussara Lee?**

Jussara Lee is a small luxury brand that defies the conventional approach to luxury. I believe what is precious is to know your clothes were made with the least negative impact to nature possible, that they were made with respect to the makers, in small batches, and locally, so there is no doubt about all the above. And we can accomplish that without compromising the fit, the aesthetics, and the quality.

### **What inspired the title of the organization?**

My job is to come up with solutions to problems I consider important to tackle. Blind consumerism is one, disregard to the environment and fellow humans is another. I always knew I was going to use my company to express and exercise my personal beliefs and therefore I called it my own name.

### **What is unique about your brand?**

We employ menswear master tailors and shirt makers to make the women's clothes. It is rare to find well-made clothes for the women.

### **What are the main fibres and fabrics used in the products and where are they sourced?**

We only use fabrics that biodegrade and keep it simple: cotton, wool, linen, cashmere, and silk are our staples. And we are now embarking on a circular economy model where those natural fabrics will come from existing clothes and fabrics. That means by next year I want all the clothes we produce, to be made out of materials that don't come from virgin natural sources because even organic cotton takes a lot of water to be produced. And once they are done with the clothes, they will be able to bring them back for further recycling.

For the most part we use fabrics from local producers and weavers. I design all the clothes and have them produced in the vicinities of our shop and design studio. It gives us a lot more control to have the makers of our products be a subway ride away so we can always interact with them in person. And the goal is to convert all the fabrication, by the end of next year, to materials that already exist instead of raw materials.

### **What is your customer base – the demographics?**

My clients are affluent, urban people who are engaged with the state of the world. I tried to bring them offerings of clothes and services that they actually need. We are working on getting onto client's closet and purge items that they don't wear and create textiles out of them, restyle clothes they love and are not ready to part from and mend the ones that need some tweaking.

### **What topics most interest you?**

Waste, garbage, food production, the environment.

**The *Gender Inequality Index* (GII) relates to the empowerment of women, gender equality, and international women's rights. The progress for gender equity is positive. Regressive forces exist in explicit and implicit forms. What seem like some of the explicit and implicit forms observed in personal and professional life to you?**

To deny the women's right to abortion and to education are both explicit forms of regression. And to use women's sexuality as a marketing tool has implications that defy common sense and progress. When I first tried to enter the hand tailoring world, I experienced resistance from the master tailors. It was like they didn't think women deserve that level of craftsmanship, were able to recognize the quality, had fleeting taste and were too indecisive. It felt as if they thought women's place was in the kitchen and we had no business meddling with tailoring.

**Two factors seem to matter in the discussion of gender equality in societies: economies and rights. Many girls and women, especially in developing nations, face disadvantages**

**unknown, or less well-known, to boys and men. Women face discrimination in education, health, the labor market, legal status, political representation, and reproductive rights. When women lose, everyone – boys, girls, men, and women – loses. What might bring this basic fact, with ubiquitous positive consequences, into the public discourse in ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ nations.**

It is effective to conduct your own life in a way that others can model after. Financial independence from men allowed me to have a voice without the fear of being punished or isolated. A lot of men use money as a controlling device over women. And women succumb to it perpetuating the vicious cycle.

**What mass movements or social movements can fight for the implementation of the children’s rights outside of the fashion industry?**

The Convention on The Rights of the Child, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and The Declaration of the Rights of a Child are some of the large movements that protect children’s rights to shelter, food, health care, normal development, discrimination, among others. Save the Children is an organization that implements these rights through donations. And there are smaller ones such as the Lalela Project, that provides education through the arts, to children at- risk.

**How can individuals, designers, fashion industries, and consumers begin to work to implement those rights so that these vulnerable populations, women, and children, in many countries of the world have better quality of life?**

We need to stay informed, be inquisitive to dig out the truth and exercise our consumer power and boycott products that are made cheaply through the exploitation of the vulnerable ones. We need to be active, sign petitions, write letters to these companies telling them we are not supporting their product if they don’t stop the abuse and reach out to newspapers, social media, and spread the word.

**From personal observations, more women than men involve themselves in the fashion industry by a vast margin of difference at most levels. Why?**

It is probably because jobs in the manufacturing sector have been associated to a female task and don’t require too much muscle power. And women, especially if they are mothers, will succumb to more abuses than men, because they feel the responsibility of feeding the children at any cost.

**Also, more men than women appear at the highest ends of the business ladder in fashion. Why?**

Testosterone. Men bully their ways to positions of power. Women are built differently.

**What might make men more involved in the fashion world in general?**



I don't see a particular need to make them more involved than they are. Look at the CEO of Zara, an overweight man in his late 60's, filthy rich and who probably doesn't even have wherewithal to spend all his fortune. Meanwhile he can't adjust the workers' salary so they can live above the poverty line.

**What might make men more involved in the ethical and sustainable fashion world in general?**

Men are attracted to power and money. If there is a reward for being more conscientious about the environment and human rights abuse, there might be a chance more men will get involved in the solutions.

**Will having men in the discussion and on-the-ground improve the implementation of children's and women's rights?**

I believe inclusion is always good. That way the men can hear first-hand, the afflictions these women go through. Hopefully they have sisters and daughters and will heed to their woes and sorrows.

**What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?**

I see my job as a way of empowering women so they can exercise their influence and help the world become a better place. I must be doing a poor job though because the world seems to get worst by the minute.

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

I am a conservationist. I try my very best not to create pollution on my account. But I am far from being perfect. I fly on airplanes, that is my biggest sin. I offer my time to give lectures, participate in panel discussion associated to preservation, recycling, environment protection.

**Any recommended authors or fashionistas (or fashionistos)?**

Here are some books and videos I recommend: Sacred Economics- Charles Eisenstein, Omnivore's Dilemma- Michael Pollen, Story of Bottled Water- Anna Lennard, The True Cost- Andrew Morgan, Overdressed- The Shockingly High Cost of Cheap Fashion by Elizabeth Cline, Fashion and Sustainability: Design for Change by Kate Fletcher

**Any recommended means of contacting, even becoming involved with, Jussara Lee?**

Good ideas to solve the problem of pollution and waste are the best way to get to us. And we are always open to lend a helping hand.

**What has been the greatest emotional struggle in business for you?**

The biggest challenge is to thrive as a business without subscribing to the rules of radical capitalism and its economy of scale. In order to grow and be profitable, most companies shift their production overseas to take advantage of unrealistically low wages, inhumane work conditions, or by plundering nature and giving nothing back but pollution. The fashion industry is shored up by big players in the areas of the press, marketing, textile, manufacturing. As a small business, you get overshadowed by the magnitude of these hefty companies and no one pays attention to you or gives you an opportunity because you are not a player in that game, you are not 'one of them'. For the most part you are ignored or rejected by the industry. Factories don't want to take your orders because the quantities aren't big enough. Textile companies don't want to produce your fabric because you don't reach the minimums imposed by them. The press doesn't care about promoting or publicizing your ideas because you aren't a potential advertiser. Profit at any cost is such a pervasive concept in the times we live but one that I could never come to terms with.

**What has been the greatest emotional struggle in personal life for you?**

My personal struggle has been to live in an urban city my whole adulthood. I want to be a farmer.

**What philosophy makes most sense of life to you?**

Keep it simple and appreciate everything with joy and humbleness.

**Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion based on the conversation today?**

This was quite a mental exercise and reflection. Thank you for asking me all these questions.

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

## An Interview with Viktoria Nasteva and Kathrine Nasteva of Lozena

April 7, 2017

LOZENA is redefining responsible fashion with designs that transcend convention. Family-owned, their Slavic heritage inspires our work and reminds us of what is important – the preservation and celebration of culture, the environment, and its people.

**Tell us about family background – geography, culture, language, and religion.**

Viktoria: My sister and business partner, Kathrine and I were born and raised in Indiana, USA. Our parents are from the Balkans, Bulgaria, and Macedonia, and we grew up speaking those languages, eating traditional foods and learning about what life was like as an immigrant family. Balkan families are very tight-knit – we always admired and enjoyed spending time with our grandparents. Our paternal grandfather was a teacher and revolutionary in Macedonia, our grandmother was a seasoned chef, and our maternal grandmother was a seamstress – a master of leatherwork and embroidery, and folk singer in Bulgaria.

**Tell us about your story – education, prior work, and so on?**

Viktoria: Creativity runs in the family, and I have chosen to express mine in the form of fashion. My grandfather was a wonderful artist. His sketches were so life-like, his calligraphy was amazing, and he and my father drew their own blueprints and built homes together.

I always thought the clothing, tablecloths, and doilies both of my grandmothers made were so stunning. The intricacy fascinated me, and I loved wearing their creations because nobody else had such pieces! My mother and aunt also enjoyed designing and making clothing. They have both always been so refined and elegant that I think their love of style rubbed off on us. My cousin is also an amazing artist – when she came to the US, and I saw her drawings I wanted to be as good as she was!

That being said, I studied Journalism at Indiana University. I dreamed of writing for a fashion publication like Vogue, of course, but I later realized that I very much wanted to continue my creative inclinations and actually design clothes rather than write about them. Everything that goes along with design, like choosing fabric, styling photoshoots, and working with producers all over the world was the adventure I wanted to take, so we went for starting LOZENA.

**How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

Viktoria: Ethical and sustainable fashion is an extension of my personal values. I did not want my business to contribute to pollution and the depletion of natural resources, nor did I want to participate in the exploitation of workers.

**What seems like the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?**

Viktoria: These companies are actively working to improve an industry that is outdated, can be ruthless and is often frivolous.

### **What seems like the importance of fair trade?**

Viktoria: Fair trade is important because it puts people above profit, which is the reason most businesses ignore it. It is a partnership between producers, suppliers and buyers that is based on transparency and respect. Adhering to fair trade standards means ensuring safe working conditions, fair and agreed upon pay and no child labor.

### **What seems like the importance of a (relative to the country) living wage?**

Viktoria: A country cannot prosper when citizens are neglected and used. Providing a living wage gives workers incentive to do more and to do better. It provides families with food, shelter, and access to health care – basic human rights. It shows appreciation and compassion. It proves every job is valuable.

### **What makes slow fashion better than fast fashion?**

Viktoria: Much thought and effort go into designers' creations. We work tirelessly to create original looks, to find quality, sustainable textiles, to develop exact patterns and to make high-value products only to have fast fashion brands rip off our designs and turn them into cheap throw-away clothing. Fast fashion encourages consumers to endlessly shop the newest "trends" they reproduce at lightning speed. Much of fast fashion is made from synthetic materials such as nylon, polyester, and acrylic, which come from non-renewable resources like petroleum, and the sheer volume of clothing produced per year is staggering. The resources needed to make so much clothing is rapidly depleting and solid waste is soaring. These are the very reasons a fast-fashion brand, regardless of whether or not it uses organic cotton, is inherently unsustainable.

**The Pythagoreans, the Neoplatonists, Aristotle, and the Stoics, William Wilberforce, Baron Erskine created the ancient thought about animal rights. Jeremy Bentham, the founder of utilitarianism, discussed the suffering of non-human animals. Peter Singer argues for non-human animal rights too. The Nonhuman Rights Project (NhRP) People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), and others work to support animals and work to enforce their rights. Some fashion manufacture processes violate animals' rights. What is the importance of animal rights, especially in an ethical and sustainable fashion context?**

Viktoria: Treating animals with respect is just like taking care of the environment. Animals are an integral part of the ecosystems and human well-being. I use animal fibers, such as wool, silk and alpaca, in my collections because I believe they are the best materials available to designers as they are renewable and clean, but I seek out producers who do not degrade animals.

Leather is a tricky subject; leather is, in fact, a by-product of the meat industry, but commercial farming practices are, more often than not, inhumane. Agriculture, along with fashion and oil, is

a top polluting industry and cattle is a major threat to the environment. The leather tanning industry is also incredibly toxic and dirty, often dumping waste into waterways, poisoning them.

Mulesing sheep and or dipping them in pesticides are also horrible practices that must be eradicated.

As for silk, although cocoons are boiled whole, it is one of the strongest, most low impact (if processed and finished thoughtfully), renewable fibers in the world so I do use it. The worms have been domesticated to a point that they hardly exist in the wild and only live a few days if they emerge from the cocoon.

We are certainly opposed to the use of exotic skins.

### **What is Lozena?**

Kathrine: LOZENA is a family-owned fashion house with a mission to produce high-end, designer womenswear in an ecological and socially responsible manner. We started LOZENA three years ago with our mother because we noticed a lack of sustainable clothing in the upscale, mainstream marketplace. Our ethical philosophy stems from our Bulgarian and Macedonian heritage, and our Slavic roots are reflected in the design aesthetic.

### **What inspired the title of the organization?**

Kathrine: Lozen is the name of the Bulgarian village near Sofia where our mother was born and raised. As we are three women, we opted for the feminine version, LOZENA. It is an homage to the strong women in our family, the traditions, and artisanal craft of the Balkan region.

### **What are some of its feature products?**

Kathrine: Womenswear, including tops, pants, skirts, dresses, and outerwear. We create mini collections that transition from season to season without following the trends demanded from the fashion calendar.

### **What are the main fibres and fabrics used in the products?**

Viktoria: We use mostly natural fibers. When we use synthetics, it is recycled polyester or upcycled garments and fabric. One of our favorite materials is alpaca wool because alpaca are very earth-friendly animals. They have soft feet that do not dig into the soil, and they do not uproot plants as they eat. Alpaca wool is also known to be four times warmer than sheep's wool. We also love silk because it is one of the strongest, most low-impact and most beautiful fibers in the world.

### **Who grows, harvests, designs, and manufactures the products of Lozena?**

Viktorija: I [Viktorija] design each LOZENA garment myself. Thus far, I have used fabric from women's cooperatives in Cambodia, India, and Bolivia and from ethical producers in the Netherlands and Italy. We have also used designer deadstock, which is remnant fabric leftover from other fashion houses. We work closely with our producers in Bulgaria to make each LOZENA piece.

**Water use in production is an issue. What is the importance of reducing excess water use in the production of fashion?**

Viktorija: Water is life. I cannot emphasise the importance of reducing its use and keeping it clean enough.

**Will the fibres and fabrics for the products from the company biodegrade?**

Viktorija: Yes, garments made from natural fibers do biodegrade. Synthetic materials, which we use in the form of deadstock or recycled fibers, do not. However, our intent is to make unique, timeless clothing that people will want to keep for generations. If they do dispose of their garments, we encourage consumers to gift them, to recycle or return them to us, or to donate them to credible organizations that do not flood foreign markets.

**What is the customer base – the demographics?**

Kathrine: Sustainable fashion is still a niche market in the industry. LOZENA's customers care about, and are conscious of issues such as climate change, water pollution, sweatshop labor, etc.; they are willing to purchase from companies that are having a positive impact on local communities (despite the price premium); and they are fashion risk-takers and trendsetters who want to showcase their personal style with one-of-a-kind, unique pieces from emerging brands.

**What topics most interest you?**

Viktorija: The entire garment lifecycle. While I work, I constantly refer to an infographic from The Sustainable Angle that depicts every issue, from health risks to CO2 emissions to solid waste at each step of the lifecycle, and I try to find the cleanest material, to make the greenest garment and the fairest product possible. I am also passionate about cultural craft. I love everything that is handmade, and I want to make sure traditions stay alive.

**Did someone mentor you?**

Viktorija: Many people have influenced me, but a woman I met in Bulgaria a few years ago stands out. She is an environmental champion and a special soul. Since we met, she has encouraged me to continue working toward my goal, one way or another. She is a community builder, and she has inspired and brought together so many like-minded people to grow and advance the cause.

**Have you mentored others?**

Kathrine: As an organization that cares deeply about women’s empowerment, we make every effort to serve as mentors and examples for other women and girls in our communities. We welcome inquiries for internships and other mentoring opportunities from individuals interested in this field.

**What seems like the importance of mentors in the fashion world for professional and personal development?**

Kathrine: In fashion, as in other industries, the relative scarcity of women in leadership positions is in part due to the lack of women mentors in these roles – to help others secure top positions, and for career development and as a channel for professional growth. Mentors are especially important to women who are starting their careers, as the presence of women performing in executive and upper management positions inspires, influences decision-making, and increases confidence that corporate advancement is attainable.

**How can individuals, designers, fashion industries, and consumers begin to work to implement those rights so that these vulnerable populations, women, and children, in many countries of the world have better quality of life?**

Viktoria: Consumers speak with their purchases. They have to research what they are buying, but it’s our job to make sure we are not exploiting workers across the supply chain and to make that information available to consumers.

**Also, more men than women appear at the highest ends of the business ladder in fashion. Why?**

Kathrine: The number of women leading companies in the Fortune 500 is small to begin with – 5% or 25 female CEOs in 2015. None of the apparel companies and conglomerates on the list had women at the helm. Globally, the numbers aren’t much better; only two of LVMH’s fifteen leather & luxury goods brands have women CEOs, and although Kering’s recent efforts to place more women in executive roles has been effective, three of its nine luxury fashion brands are led by women. Often, women in fashion end up starting their own companies, or inheriting family fashion houses (Miuccia Prada).

It’s easy to say that fashion is still an “old boys club,” but unfortunately that is the reality. While women are dominating entry-level creative roles and fashion schools’ student bodies, entrenched workplace structures such as lack of flexible work arrangements & parental leave policies, and the likelihood of being a female CEO candidate selected by male-dominated boards of directors contribute to this discrepancy at the top.

Finally, the confidence gap between men and women has perpetuated this phenomenon. A growing body of evidence suggests that success correlates just as closely with confidence as it does with competence, and compared to men, women consistently underestimate their abilities and performance. The confidence gap has real-world consequences for earning potential and upward mobility. Luckily, confidence can be developed, and the gap can close. We are looking

forward to seeing more women's leadership on both the business and creative sides to serve as role models for aspiring designers in the years to come.

**What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?**

Viktoria: I am fulfilled when I meet the people who our business has helped. When I listen to their stories or watch them work. When I make connections with people who share my values. It is a joy to see that we are all working toward a common goal. It's also a wonderful feeling when your talents are recognized.

**Any recommended authors or fashionistas (or fashionistos)?**

Kathrine:

- Eco Fashion (2010) & Eco Fashion Talk by Sass Brown
- Sustainably Chic by Natalie Kay Smith
- AWEAR World & Conscious Chatter podcast by Kestrel Jenkins

**Any recommended means of contacting, even becoming involved with, you?**

Kathrine:

Partnerships & Business Inquiries: Kathrine Nasteva,  
CEO: [kathrine@lozenainternational.com](mailto:kathrine@lozenainternational.com)

Media & Stockist Inquiries: Viktoria Nasteva, Chief Creative  
Officer: [viktoria@lozenainternational.com](mailto:viktoria@lozenainternational.com)

**What seems like the greatest emotional struggle in business for you?**

Viktoria: It's a struggle to know how long the road to 100% sustainability is. It's difficult to understand why businesses are not more concerned about these pressing issues. The lack of variety and availability of moderately priced sustainable materials is also a challenge, and can be frustrating, but this challenge is ultimately what makes our work more rewarding.

**Thank you for your time, Viktoria, and Kathrine.**



## An Interview with Heiðrún Ósk of Dimmblá

April 9, 2017

Founded in 2014 by Heidrun Osk, Dimmblá is an Icelandic clothing brand using classic, Icelandic design. She believes in creating beautiful clothes that reflect grace, power, and integrity.

### **Tell us about yourself – familial/personal story, education, and prior work.**

My name is Heidrun, and I live in Iceland, an island in the North Atlantic Ocean. I feel a deep connection to Icelandic nature. One of my favorite things is to spend time with my family surrounded by the Icelandic elements. I feel privileged to live so closely to the raw and pure nature.

I previously worked as a manager for orthopaedic company. I have a master's degree in international business and marketing. I'm creative and I love new challenges so in 2013 I decided to take the leap with my family's support to start a company and build a brand. Fashion has always fascinated me, however I had very little experience in the fashion field and that was my biggest challenge. I am very fortunate to have great advisors and to work with experienced fashion designer.

What I value the most is a time with my family, and I have three beautiful sons who are one, four and six years old. There is never a dull moment.

### **How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

I was shocked to discover how wasteful and harming to the environment manufacturing common fabrics and materials can be. I want my company to have a positive impact on the environment and our goal is to reduce waste. We do that by using sustainable fabrics that are produced from crops requiring none to low level of chemicals to grow, use less water and leave less waste during production.

### **How did your educational/professional experience inform fashion work?**

I use my education in marketing and business to create a marketing strategy for Dimmblá and I use every opportunity to deliver clear facts about the clothing industry and inspire people to make a difference.

### **What is the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?**

Sustainable and ethical companies have an opportunity to change the status quo and be **dedicated to both environmental and ethical practices** throughout their production processes. They can also educate others so consumers can start questioning how the clothes **we wear everyday** are made and how, and what kind of conditions manufacturers provide to their employees.

### **Who is a personal hero or heroine within the ethical and sustainable fashion world for you?**

I believe everyone who truly wants to make a difference and are betting against fast fashion is a hero because it is a challenge to change something that has been the path for decades.

### **What is Dimmblá?**

Dimmblá is an Icelandic environmentally friendly clothing brand that offers luxurious nature-inspired clothing for the confident woman who cares for the planet. Dimmblá is Icelandic for “deep blue.” Iceland has a lot of blue, from its magical waterfalls to gushing hot springs and glacier lagoons. At Dimmblá, the designs reflect the spectacular and unpredictable mystery that is nature.

### **What are some of its feature products?**

Our designs are created with nature in mind, and inspired by Icelandic landscapes, featuring patterns made of photographs by some of Iceland’s top photographers.

The Glacial Collection is a reflection upon the current effects of climate change on our planet. This collection features photographs by accomplished Icelandic photographer Ragnar Axelsson, more widely known as RAX.

Our scarves are made of handwoven banana fabric. Created in only a handful of places in Southeast Asia, banana fabric comes from the banana stem after a harvest and is processed into a pliable fibre. The weavers had their skills past down from generation of family members and we want to help preserve their heritage and culture. Not only does this fabric look and feel gorgeous this process creates a valuable new resource from what was once burned or buried. The fabric and the prints make our scarves distinctive and stand out, so each piece is unique.

### **What is your customer base – the demographics?**

Our design is for the independent, confident, and luxurious woman, who dares to be little different and enjoys self-expression with the desire to remain young and trendy and a need for clothing that fits her changing body shape.

### **How does Dimmblá differ from other fashion companies in its manufacturing and selling of products?**

We are not only designing beautiful clothing but also creating a lifestyle for women who care about the planet and want to feel good what they wear. We want to redefine eco-friendly, ethical fashion by creating luxurious, nature-inspired styles while encouraging more conscientious shopping practices. Our luxurious, nature-inspired eco-friendly fashion brand offers high quality, long-lasting, seasonless design in eco-friendly textiles that use fewer resources and less water. We use certified sourcing partner and support initiatives that increase environmental protection and sustainable development so you can feel good about what you wear.

**There have been large tragedies such as the [Rana Plaza collapse](#), which was the largest garment factory accident in history with over 1,000 dead and more than 2,500 injured. Others were the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire (1911) and the Pakistan Garment Factory Fires (2012). What is the importance of human rights and worker rights in this new movement, and to the garment industry?**

We should care for the people who make our clothing and value their experience and expertise. It is crucial to choose a supplier that offers their staff a good environmental condition in the working place, good salaries, paid monthly holiday, no double, or nights shifts, provides yearly bonuses and medical insurance. If companies exclude working with factories that do not incorporate human rights than we are one step ahead in making a change in the garment industry.

**Women and children are the majority of the exploited and violated work forces. What is the importance of the status of women's and children's rights in the ethical and sustainable fashion world too?**

There should always be equality wherever you are, and human rights should always be valued. On October 24th, 1975, 90% of Iceland's women refused to work, cook, or look after children. The question was raised by women's movements why young men were taking home higher wages than women when their job was no less physically strenuous? The effect was incredible! Women from all walks of life, young and old, grannies and schoolgirls participated. The participation was so widespread because women from all the political parties and unions worked together, and made it happen. Iceland's men were barely coping.

Not surprisingly this day was later referred to by them as "the long Friday". Changes do not happen in a day, but this is a powerful way of reminding society of the role women play in its running, their low pay, and the low value placed on their work inside and outside the home. Companies can have a large effect by refusing to work with manufacturers that exploit their work force and should make a regular observation. If we accept this as a norm than there will be no changes.

**Children are the most vulnerable population. Women tend to have less status than men in societies including the right to decent working conditions, decent pay, to vote, and so on. What is the relationship between the need to implement women's rights and children's rights?**

I think it is all about equality and balance. Where there is inequality there is imbalance. Shared responsibilities of women and men in all aspects of life is key to the welfare and wellbeing of ourselves and thus our children.

**Child labour and slavery are problems, major ones. These include children throughout the world. Tens of millions of children in the case of child labour and a few million for child slavery. How can individuals get the word out about these other rights violations?**

By speaking out. Our voices are always they strongest force to create change.

**How can individuals, designers, fashion industries, and consumers begin to work to implement those rights so that these vulnerable populations in many countries of the world have better quality of life?**

Choose suppliers carefully and build a good relationship. I prefer to work with small factories, and I choose to have transparent process where I show photos from the factory when the clothing is being made so my customers can see the working conditions.

**What topics most interest you?**

Human impacts on the environment.

**Did you have a mentor in this work?**

I'm privileged to have a few. I seek those who have the knowledge and the will to share it.

**Have you mentored others?**

Not really. Knowledge is meant to be shared and I hope to share it to those who seek it.

**What is the importance of mentors in the fashion world for professional, and personal, development?**

It is of great value to have mentors with experience that can advise and give different aspects on the business.

**From personal observations, more women than men involve themselves in the fashion industry by a vast margin of difference at all levels. Why?**

I don't think gender is relevant to the question. I believe people should choose their vocation by their interest or their passion whether they are male or female.

**What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?**

I want to make a difference and I want my customers purchase to make a difference.

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

We recently went to the magnificent Nýifoss waterfall and Hagavatn glacial lagoon located at the southern edge of Langjökull glacier to photoshoot Dimmblá's latest collection. At Hagavatn I signed a contract with Icelandic environmental organizations to donate proceeds from our collection and support **Establishment of a National Park in the Central Highland of Iceland. I believe a park in this area is one of our biggest steps to protect the nature in Iceland** ". Icelandic Hydroelectric Power Ltd wants to construct a 20MW power plant in the area. A power plant at Hagavatn would result in the disappearance of Nýifoss waterfall, located in the

river that runs out of the lake, and would involve intervention into the epic land formation processes at Langjökull that can teach us a great deal about this subject in a time of rapid climate changes.

### **Any recommended means of contacting Dimmblá?**

You can contact Dimmblá by e-mail [dimmbla@dimmbla.is](mailto:dimmbla@dimmbla.is) and follow Dimmblá on social media <https://www.facebook.com/Dimmbla/> <https://www.instagram.com/dimmbla/>

## An Interview with Charlotte Davies of Sahel

April 10, 2017

Charlotte grew up in England as horse lover on the English countryside. She has always loved fashion and earned a BA (Hons) in fashion Design at Nottingham Trent University. She has worked in public relations and fashion then founded SAHEL. Here is her story.

**Tell us about your story – education, prior work, and so on?**

I grew up in England, loving horses and the countryside. As well as horses, I have always loved fashion and did a BA (Hons) degree in Fashion Design at Nottingham Trent University. I loved the creativity, frivolity, and escapism of fashion. I went on to work in PR and then as a Fashion Assistant for Karl Plewka at The Observer, before becoming Fashion Editor at The Sunday Telegraph Magazine. I loved it at first but after 6 years I found the superficiality of fashion ground me down. This co-incided with my becoming a Christian. I ended up leaving my job in search of something more meaningful than simply promoting consumption. I swapped my Manolos for flip flops and moved to Cambodia, where I started a magazine for women at the other end of the fashion industry – in the garment factories around Phnom Penh. ‘Precious Girl Magazine’ was an affirming publication for these women who had low literacy levels. It was fun, helpful, and inspiring for workers who were not respected much by local society at the time. I handed the magazine to a Khmer team and left to get married after nearly 3 years in Cambodia.

My husband lived among the Fulani people in a small town in the north of Burkina Faso. These are among the world’s poorest, and when I joined him, I thought I could do some sort of poverty relief. I explored endangered traditional crafts and my passion for horses, fashion and poverty relief came together when I met a family of reinsmakers, who had all but lost their livelihood due to horses being replaced by motorbikes. In 2012 I launched [www.saheldesign.com](http://www.saheldesign.com), blogging about traditional craft techniques, fashion and home accessories. Due to the increased security threat to foreigners in our region, we had to leave our home in the north of Burkina Faso. We returned to London where I am continuing to develop the SAHEL brand.

**How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

My global journey has given me perspective on all sides of the industry, from the couture houses of Paris to the huts of Cambodian garment workers. I understand the allure of new clothes as well as the ugliness of the industry behind some of them. My faith inspires me to strive for social justice and fairness, and to do what I can to inspire others.

**What seems like the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?**

It seems to me that the current system is not working. The demand for cheap clothes and fast fashion is unsustainable and damaging to people and the environment. We need radical change in the way we shop. We need people who care about these factors, as much as they do about profit, to offer a compelling alternative and lead the way for a better future.

### **Why is fair trade important?**

The 10 principles of fair trade mark out the definition of fair trade, and we need that map as a guide if we are claiming any business as fair. Traders in developed countries should be paying a fair wage to producers in developing countries. Anything less than fair is exploitation.

### **What seems like the importance of a (relative to the country) living wage?**

Understanding the living wage of a country is essential, in order to know what a fair trade is. Paying too little is exploitative and damaging. Paying too much can also skew the local economy and cause problems.

### **What makes slow fashion better than fast fashion?**

Fast fashion is unsustainable and damaging. Slow fashion encourages us to be more considerate in our spending, so we will consume less and take better care of what we have, which is better for the environment. Slowing down to consider the source of the environment and the people who made it will increase our pleasure in the product if we have chosen wisely.

### **How can ethical and sustainable fashion contribute to the long-term sustainable future for the atmosphere, the biosphere, and the environment?**

We need to provide a wholesome yet captivating alternative to fast fashion. We need to shake off fusty clichés and produce cutting edge brands that are intelligent and glamorous. We need consumers to desire sustainability and longevity from their clothes, and to value the source and story behind them. I believe a global shift towards this attitude would be the demise of the fast fashion industry and the manufacturing that currently uses up massive amounts of water, energy, and land.

### **What is SAHEL?**

SAHEL is a luxury craft label, working with traditional horse reins makers in Burkina Faso. It is a social enterprise that exists to help alleviate poverty and preserve endangered skills in West Africa. We make fashion and home accessories and invest profits back into their community. We are a UK registered Community Interest Company.

### **What inspired the title of the organization?**

The Sahel is the region of Burkina Faso in which the reinsmakers live. It means ‘shore’ in Arabic, pertaining to the shore of the desert.

### **What are some of its feature products?**

We sell bags, belts and tassels that incorporate the reins makers’ hand-woven leather straps.

**What are the main fibres and fabrics used in the products?**

Goat leather, ox leather, hand-woven cotton mudcloth.

**Who grows, harvests, designs, and manufactures the products of SAHEL?**

All of our natural tan straps are made by the reinsmakers in Burkina Faso. They produce the leather, using their own or locally reared free-range goats. It is tanned using the pods of their own trees. For weave coloured leather straps, from UK tanned goat leather.

The bags are assembled in England using sustainably sourced leather that is tanned in the UK.

Buckle belts are finished by a bridlemaker in England.

I (Charlie Davies) design the products.

**Water use in production is an issue. What is the importance of reducing excess water use in the production of fashion?**

Of course, we must respect this precious resource. In the Sahel, it is especially precious as there is typically only rainfall for 4 months of the year. Even though SAHEL is a small producer, to ensure the reinsmakers work for us did not affect the local water supply, we installed an additional water pump in the vicinity. Now there is more water available for the whole community than before we started working with them.

**Will the fibres and fabrics for the products from the company biodegrade?**

Leather does not biodegrade easily. Our leather is a byproduct of meat consumption, so using it for making purposeful accessories is a way of dealing with what otherwise would be toxic waste.

**What is the customer base – the demographics?**

Our customers tend to be UK based, or with links to West Africa. We sell mainly to women over 30 who have an interest in ethical and sustainable fashion, horses, or Africa.

**What topics most interest you?**

Sustainable fashion and development work.

**Did someone mentor you?**

This year I had a business coach, Annegret Affolderbach.

**What seems like the importance of mentors in the fashion world for professional and personal development?**



Finding a business coach was critical for me. Being connected to a likeminded professional enabled me to see the way forward. All visionaries need support.

**There have been large tragedies such as the [Rana Plaza collapse](#), which was the largest garment factory accident in history with over 1,000 dead and more than 2,500 injured. Others were the [Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire \(1911\)](#) and the [Pakistan Garment Factory Fires \(2012\)](#). How do tragedies shed light on work conditions in garment factories?**

They show that the dangers of unbridled, mindless consumption are real and fatal.

**Any women's rights activist or campaigner hero for you?**

Carry Sommers.

**What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?**

Every time I place an order for straps from the reinsmakers, I know they will be pleased to get it. Each order represents food, medicines and security for these women and their children for a little while longer. I am also satisfied to see that the skill of weaving horse reins is preserved for another generation.

**Any other work at this time?**

I am proud of the Cambodian garment workers who have fought and won an increase for a minimum wage. I don't know if Precious Girl Magazine played any part in empowering them to stand up for their rights, but I am glad that I did it.

**Any recommended authors or fashionistas (or fashionistos)?**

Magnifeco by Kate Black.

**Any recommended means of contacting, even becoming involved with, you?**

Please contact me through my website [www.saheldesign.com](http://www.saheldesign.com)

**What seems like the greatest emotional struggle in business for you?**

To keep going through discouragement and rejection.

**What seems like the greatest emotional struggle in personal life for you?**

To know what is good but only do what is best.

**What philosophy makes most sense of life to you?**

Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly.

## An Interview with Fiona Clements of Seniorita AweSUMO

April 16, 2017

**Fiona Clements a Pakeha, Kai Tahu, Clan Gordon, Craftivist, and zero-waste textile practitioner.**

**She grew up in Waitati, Dunedin and is connected closely with nature and environmentally minded. Her beliefs are reflected in her textile design.**

**Tell us about family background – geography, culture, language, and religion.**

I identify with the earth as a Kai Tahu, Clan Gordon, Pakeha. I am kaitiakitanga for Papatuanuku. I believe we as humans can make a difference in creating a more holistic space for us all to evolve on this earth. One that doesn't centre around money, fashion, or power.

I identify with no religion other than humanity! Love is the answer!

I grew up in Waitati, just north of Dunedin, New Zealand. I spent my childhood at the beach and the outdoors. I am of mixed culture, neither of which I wholly identify with but parts of such I understand and take head.

My grandmother was a tailoress. She had a shop in Dunedin when my mother was small, I spent many hours in both their sewing rooms as a child, I still use my grandmother's treasures now.

**What is your personal story – education, prior work, and so on?**

I graduated from Otago Polytechnic School of Design with a Bachelor of Design, Fashion in 2011. Before that I worked as a Signwriter.

Fiona Clements. Pakeha, Kai Tahu, Clan Gordon, Craftivist, Zerowaste Textile Practitioner.

I grew up in Waitati, Dunedin. Connected closely with nature and environmentally minded, my beliefs are reflected in my textile design.

Seniorita AweSUMO is my response to workplace related harm. Re-examination of my own beliefs and experience took myself and Seniorita AweSUMO into a new phase of life, growing a holistic lifestyle, nurturing, and nourishing the whole.

I believe that designers can serve their community by providing solutions to problems. Witnessing the amount of waste created in commercial fashion production, I set about creating a solution.

An opportunity to create unique garments and provide a local solution to a problem facing the fashion system globally.

Reducing waste without compromising style. My designs aim to mitigate environmental harm from modern fashion production. Up cycled garments minimise impact to the environment from disposable consumer items.

Utilising a textile resource recovered from landfill, commercial off cuts, and recycling centres, adding value to otherwise discarded materials.

Senorita AweSUMO empowers ethical and conscious consumers with unique environmental fashion.

Encouraging conscious consumption by spreading awareness and giving an environmental choice in clothing.

Global problem, Local solution.

### **How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

Whilst studying at Otago Polytech I was disgusted at the number of fabrics my classmates would throw out as off cuts and toiles they no longer wanted. I started using this out of necessity on a low budget where I couldn't afford to buy new.

This idea sparked a thought of "If this is how much my one class wastes how much waste is created in the Fashion system globally?" So, I explored and found that around 8 – 30% is wasted depending on cut during manufacture!

### **How did your educational/professional experience inform fashion work?**

I came into the world of fashion in my late 20's after experiencing some terrible working conditions of my own in my previous profession. It informed me how to NOT work and how things can be done better. It also gave me a stronger voice in speaking up about what is and isn't right.

### **What is the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?**

This is hugely important; we need to show how the system can be better at closing the loop and stop harming the environment and humanity.

### **What is the importance of fair trade?**

Again, a large amount of importance as Fair Trade shows value of the commodity and of the humanity that does the work.

### **Who is a personal hero or heroine within the ethical and sustainable fashion world for you?**

Orsola de Castro – From Somewhere and Fashion Revolution.

### **What is Seniorita AweSUMO?**

Seniorita AweSUMO is my alter ego, a persona I created to escape work related harm, to help myself grow and to have a creative outlet as solution to the [problems](#) I see in the world.

### **What inspired the title of the organization?**

An image I have of a badass Seniorita taking a stand, and the cartoon South Park where in one episode Cartman dresses up as a robot to trick Butters about something and he has the acronym A.W.E.S.O.M.O written on the front. I adapted this to my needs: “What you have and are as a being should always be honest to self and earth alike!”

### **What are some of its feature products?**

Zerowaste Goddess Tunics are one of my biggest sellers. I use drape a lot in creating my garments.

### **What are the main fibres and fabrics used in the products?**

As I am zero waste, I utilise a lot of fabrics that I find in op shops, recycling centres and off cuts from local manufacturers, these can be vintage fabrics or remnants. If I do purchase fabrics, it is natural fibres only such as Merino, Organic Cotton, and Hemp and as locally as possible.

### **Who grows, harvests, designs, and manufactures the products of Seniorita AweSUMO?**

I design and manufacture every product; I hope to outsource and employ local sewers and manufacturers in the future.

In regard to growing and harvesting fabrics I can only go off the information I get from suppliers which I do question a lot before I am happy to purchase.

### **Will the fibres and fabrics for the products from the company biodegrade?**

Natural fabrics will yes, I hope that when people are purchasing my products that they are buying for a long-term reason at least 30 wears. I am happy for them to be returned to me at the end of their useful life.

### **What is your customer base – the demographics?**

Seniorita AweSUMO is a gender-neutral lifestyle brand but at present mostly caters to woman 18+.

### **What topics most interest you?**

Zerowaste, Human and social equality, Environmental leadership, Product stewardship, Kaitiakitanga, Conscious Consumerism.

**There have been large tragedies such as the [Rana Plaza collapse](#), which was the largest garment factory accident in history with over 1,000 dead and more than 2,500 injured. Others were the [Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire \(1911\)](#) and the [Pakistan Garment Factory Fires \(2012\)](#). How do tragedies shed light on work conditions in garment factories?**

It shows us the realities of the industry that need to be brought to the surface, the western world lives in its own bubble and some enlightenment about what others go through so we can stay clothed is important. It is sad that it has come to this though.

**Women and children remain the majority of the exploited and violated work forces. What is the importance of the status of women's and children's rights in the ethical and sustainable fashion world too?**

Woman standing up for woman, we are the nurturers, the life givers, the protectors. It is one of the most important things beside climate change, equality for all humans is a must. We cannot have a proper system without this as it degrades humans and makes us feel worthless.

**Who are a women's rights and children's rights activist or campaigner hero for you?**

Every woman who works in the garment industry are my heroes! The woman at Standing Rock. Kia Kaha Wahine Toa.

**If women had access and implementation of these fundamental human rights, would their livelihood and quality of life, even working life in the garment factories, improve?**

Yes, I definitely think so, if the industrial revolution has taught us anything, it is with those small improvements that quality of life also improves.

**When women lose, everyone – boys, girls, men, and women – loses. What might bring this basic fact, with ubiquitous positive consequences, into the public discourse in 'developed' and 'developing' nations?**

These are some really heavy questions which I don't have answers too at this point sorry.

**According to [Global Affairs Canada](#) (Government of Canada) in the article entitled Women's (2016), women comprise 1/3 of formal business owners, 2/5 of the global workforce, and have responsibility for 8/10 of spending for consumers. Economies and societies lose potential "development and growth" without women. Possible national moral authority lost, too. Rights and economies imply each another. Rights for girls and women develops economies and, therefore, societies. Likewise, economic, and societal development gives grounds for implementation of girl's and women's rights. What educational**

**campaigns and pragmatic initiatives might the fashion industry encourage and support to improve the chances for girls and women?**

Fashion Revolution is doing a great job of raising global awareness in this regard. The many initiatives of sharing educational resources and campaigns are right at the forefront of where and what we need to be doing and encouraging. Women make up 80% of the workforce in the fashion industry and we need to help them first by raising awareness of their plight, then taking actions to respond to those feelings brought up by the awareness. We can do many things individually and in our communities. We can shop consciously; we can ask questions of our retailers and shop assistants. We can take small actions like the Craftivist Collective, or larger ones like Labour Behind the Label, War on Want and Clean Clothes Campaign, there are many more out there. We as consumers are holding a great amount of power in this instance and until we realise that we will not move forward.

**What is the relationship between the need to implement women's rights and children's rights, and the fashion industry?**

This relationship is huge and neglected, 80% of garment workers are Woman and children. They need their basic needs met. The need to implement is hugely evident to me. We cannot go on the way we are. We are destroying humanity.

**How can individuals get the word out about these extreme children's rights violations?**

Speak up, Ask questions. Be curious, find out, do something, get involved in Fashion Revolution!

**What mass movements or social movements can fight for the implementation of the children's rights outside of the fashion industry?**

Fashion Revolution, Labour behind the label, clean clothes campaign, child labour free, craftivism collective, war on want. tertiary, primary, intermediate sectors, businesses, designers, consumers, everyone, and anyone is capable of making that choice for themselves, but can they?

**How can individuals, designers, fashion industries, and consumers begin to work to implement those rights so that these vulnerable populations, women, and children, in many countries of the world have better quality of life?**

Be transparent, approachable, honest as a designer. By asking questions and getting involved in local actions, take up one of your own. Creating awareness and sharing ideas, collaborating with other forms of art/designers.

**From personal observations, more women than men involve themselves in the fashion industry by a vast margin of difference at most levels. Why?**

Clothing traditionally is Woman's work is my first answer. We are born to it I expect.

**Also, more men than women appear at the highest ends of the business ladder in fashion. Why?**

Power.

**What might make men more involved in the fashion world in general?**

Awareness and creating a space where men are allowed to be emotional so that they are not the only ones who can hold power. Bringing them to a more equal level with Woman.

**What might make men more involved in the ethical and sustainable fashion world in general?**

Awareness and responsibility to act consciously.

**Will having men in the discussion and on-the-ground improve the implementation of children's and women's rights?**

Yes, as they are the ones leading the workers, they need to be the ones to achieve the actions. This is a conversation for everyone.

**What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?**

Creatively full filled, watching other people learn and share together. Creating community.

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

Just Atelier Trust, Fashion Revolution, Grad Dip in Sustainable Practice at Otago Polytechnic, Dunedin Designed Inc, and the GUILD store here in Dunedin.

**Any recommended authors or fashionistas (or fashionistos)?**

Tansy E Hoskins STITCHED UP – An Anti-Capitalist Book of Fashion.

Holly McQuillan, Timo Rissanen – Zerowaste Fashion Design

I love my friend [MelanieChild.co.nz](http://MelanieChild.co.nz) work.

<http://atelierzupal.com/>

**Any recommended means of contacting, even becoming involved with, Seniorita AweSUMO?**

email [senorita.awesumo@gmail.com](mailto:senorita.awesumo@gmail.com), check out my website [senoritaawesumo.com](http://senoritaawesumo.com) follow me on instagram, facebook and twitter – SenioritaAweSUMO



**What has been the greatest emotional struggle in business for you?**

Stepping through my fears.

**What has been the greatest emotional struggle in personal life for you?**

Having HNPP, suffering from depression and anxiety at times and having no current fixed abode nor financial security. Being without a dog.

**What philosophy makes most sense of life to you?**

What you have and are as a being should always be honest to self and earth alike! Senorita AweSUMO 2007.

**Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion based on the conversation today?**

We as humanity and consumers hold all of the power to change this industry. We must do it by acting and conversing together to raise awareness. Be Curious, Find Out, Do Something!!!

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

## An Interview with Ewa of Mara Knitwear

April 17, 2017

MARA is a social enterprise established in 2013 in Moldova. They focus on slow upcycled fashion and the ethical production, life essentials and the well-being of those who make them. **Tell us about yourself – familial/personal story, education, and prior work.**

I come from Poland where i graduated from a 3-D Product design faculty on Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow, my favourite city in the whole wide world. I also studied Fine product design on Coventry University, both my degrees are quite far from fashion design, but I must say I'd never consider myself a fashion designer I like to think that I have more interdisciplinary/ holistic approach.

My idea is to bring design thinking into already existing project, understand the problems it faces and help to find out suitable solutions. Together we try to design desirable and profitable products to help the project to grow and sustain itself.

### **How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

My interest in ethical manufacturing came gradually, it was a cross between my education and working experience. I was lucky to get some working experience in a furniture factory in Indonesia. The concept of the manufacturing was revolving around purchasing century old houses, that would become unsuitable for living and making very special up-cycled pieces of furniture out of the wood they were constructed from. I remember being absolutely fascinated with their zero-waste policy. I started reflecting more on how things are made and in what conditions.

After I returned to my home country, I was ecstatic to discover that the whole slow fashion movement kicked off. First slow fashion trade shows and makers markets. There was so much energy and optimism I wanted to be part of all this exciting new movement. I started making printed garments I would design and have manufactured by local seamstresses from organic cottons.

In 2015 I joined MARA, in their mission to fight unemployment and migration of women from rural areas. I think that together with the whole team we managed to create a brand that not only gives employment but also promotes the concept of ethical, sustainable, and locally made fashion in Moldova. In October 2016 we opened a shop that unites local makers and works as a platform for promoting local designers.

### **What is the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?**

I strongly believe that promoting the idea of sustainability and ethical manufacturing can influence consumers buying behaviors. Together with the whole MARA team we advocate empowerment via good design. Social business that targets and resolves particular social issue is

a model that, in my opinion, has a bright future. We at MARA put a lot of effort into educating our customers about the importance of ethical manufacturing and encourage them to question the origins of not only the final product, but also the materials.

The customers play the most important role in the whole process, as they have the power to push for 100% transparency about the cost of manufacturing and the conditions of the manufacturing. If consumers will have more interest in questioning who made the garments they buy, in what conditions and out of what materials, the companies will have to follow that direction. I am very happy that more and more companies are open about their manufacturing ways, and I hope that will sometime become a mainstream trend. Often, we get feedback that we are too focused on commercial part of our project, but I tend to depute that.

In order to become a successful, sustainable enterprise and reliable employer, social business like ours need a desirable product. I see a role of a designer crucial in this process. Improving the quality of the product and visual communication, to help the sustainable brands reach new customers and grow. Only this way the concept of ethical manufacturing can spread, and employment rate can grow. We still try to find the right balance between the commercial side of our project and the social one, sometimes it isn't easy.

### **Who is a personal hero or heroine within the ethical and sustainable fashion world for you?**

My personal hero is founder of TOM's shoes Brake Mycoskie. What I find the most impressive is that they grew, into a very recognizable enterprise, re-branched and still managed to sustain the concept intact. I respect that they are very open to outside evaluation and committed to transparency and improving their vision. TOMS is definitely very inspiring story.

### **What is MARA Knitwear?**

MARA is a social enterprise based in Republic of Moldova, country sandwiched between Ukraine and Romania known mostly for its wine cultivating traditions, great people, and crazy emigration statistics. We try to tackle the problem of women migrating the country and leaving their children behind with grandparents.

In our workshop, located in Scoreni – a village with around 3000 inhabitants, we create knitted up-cycled woolen garments and accessories. We campaign for ethical manufacturing and 0 waste management in Moldova, we make our knitwear out of leftover yarn that we buy from bigger producers. Our manufacturing means are very limited, that gives us opportunity to advocate for close relationship between our makers and customers.

On the start we were backed up financially by East European Foundation and Swiss Agency for Cooperation in Moldova. We cooperate with village authorities on a number of social projects. Our objective is to enable and dignify women through trainings, creating job opportunities, rising local employment rate, and giving women means to stay in the country with their kids. We try to educate our customers about the importance of ethical and fair production.

### **What are some of its feature products?**

We create our knitwear on manual knitting machines. We try to focus on minimal and timeless design with simple, easy to accessories shapes and colors. The garments are created for women by women, so among our products customers will find many knitted dresses, soft comfy sweaters, shawls. We take the concept “know who made your clothes” quite literally, all our items come with the hand signed message from the person who actually crafted it.

We made our garments to last, using the best yarns we can find. In our selection we have sheep wool, merino, organic cottons, mohairs and occasionally limited editions of cashmere. Our collection is very limited due to the fact that we up cycle woolen leftovers, but we think it’s an interesting asset of our brand, each piece comes in very small quantity, each is special and each of them has our close attention.

### **What is your customer base – the demographics?**

The internal market in Moldova is very difficult and it shrinks rapidly due to migration of young people that is why we put a lot of our efforts into reaching out to international customers. We are hosted by two shops WORKSPACE COLLECTIVE in Connecticut, USA, and SOME WEAR ELSE based in Wroclaw, Poland.

We cannot forget to mention a wonderful circle of returning customers based across the globe really and expats that work for international organizations based in Moldova. Big group of our audience is also Moldovan diaspora members, who by buying our products want to support employment growth in their home country.

We still try to reach out to new audience, only by doing so we can improve the employment rate in the village and maintain our business model as a self-sustainable, enterprise independent from grants and international aid programs. Sometimes we struggle to approach first time buyers due to the almost complete lack of information about Moldova as a country.

Our customers are usually women who appreciate our products, the social side of the project, and personal attendance that we try to give them. They usually come back for more and we often become friends.

**There have been large tragedies such as the Rana Plaza collapse, which was the largest garment factory accident in history with over 1,000 dead and more than 2,500 injured. Others were the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire (1911) and the Pakistan Garment Factory Fires (2012). What is the importance of human rights and worker rights in this new movement, and to the garment industry?**

Apparently after Rana Plaza collapse more workers are interested in joining and forming the unions. All the brands along with local government should support workers right to form unions that will represent their interests, because fashion industry cannot afford another disaster like Rana Plaza collapse. Unfortunately, at the end of the day when it comes to fashion we still over

consume, and low price is still the most important factor for many customers. This huge demand for cheap clothes combined with very short consumers' collective memory and lack of interest in workers' conditions makes it possible for manufacturers to simply get away with creating poor working conditions, not respecting workers' rights and codes of conduct. I know that many companies that manufacture their garments in Rana Plaza have contributed into paying compensations to the victim's families and really push the standards up, but I also know for a fact that many of them refused or delayed voluntary donation towards this fund.

**Children are the most vulnerable population. Women tend to have less status than men in societies including the right to decent working conditions, decent pay, to vote, and so on. What is the relationship between the need to implement women's rights and children's rights?**

MARA's aim is to empower women and we strongly believe that employment and fair wage is crucial for enabling women within their community but also the important step towards changing the mindset of the community.

Working women gain respect in the community, their self-esteem improves and that helps to fight domestic violence. As they become less financially dependent, and they can contribute to the family budget they gain the power of decision making and that paves a path to equality at home and in the community.

In Moldova the education is free and compulsory thus child labour is not an issue. The problem lays in very high unemployment rate in the rural areas, what pushes women with no qualifications to migrate outside the country. Because they have very low or no qualifications and no language skills often, they end up being exploited in their new jobs abroad. Sadly, often due to low wages and challenging living conditions they make a tough decision to leave their kids behind.

We reflect on how that kind of parental migration affects kids and the whole community in the long run. Kids are still provided for financially, but they are left with very little or no supervision. Very often they break out of education system too early and end up being under qualified, low skilled labour like their parents. The cycle of poverty is maintained. There is an obvious correlation between women's employment rate and children's well-being. When women human rights are maintained, moms can earn a living locally and parent their kids the empowerment of both comes as a side effect.

**Child labour and slavery are problems, major ones. These include children throughout the world. Tens of millions of children in the case of child labour and a few million for child slavery. How can individuals get the word out about these other rights violations?**

This is very important issue and the one that is difficult to resolve because kids are very often an important economic asset for many families in developing countries and child salaries in many cases are a crucial contribution to family budget. However, we mustn't forget that work will

have long term negative effect on those kids. First of all, it interferes with process of education, secondly kids very often are exposed to toxic substances and unsafe working conditions.

Child labour also slows down the economic development of the whole country, because kids are filling the low skilled positions, so there is no incentive for innovation or technical development for the economy. We all must become more aware of the negative effect of child labour because we are all consumers and every day, we make a decision about what kind of manufacturing models we support.

I think there is a need to educate consumers about the scale of the problem. Information is crucial here, social campaigns, promoting international certificates and symbols can prove helpful in encouraging consumers to question and demand transparency from manufacturers. Also, right, and clear labeling of the product is important. Fortunately, more people become conscious about the importance of ethical manufacturing and are aware of what information to look for whilst shopping.

**How can individuals, designers, fashion industries, and consumers begin to work to implement those rights so that these vulnerable populations in many countries of the world have better quality of life?**

Again, I will stress the importance of consumer education. I believe that conscious consumers that understand their needs and reflect on their buying behaviors have the biggest power to change the whole industry. The manufacturers need to be committed to bigger transparency about their ethics, business model and the way they operate. Generally, more people declare that they are prepared to pay more for the product to ensure that it comes from sustainable source, and it is manufactured ethically, but we all need to step back and reflect on the amount and quality of clothes we buy. We should question the insane rate at what we consume fashion because that simply cannot continue. The interested in the real cost of the garments is on the rise, but there is still a lot to do to boost awareness about the dark side of modern fashion industry.

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

Mara is my main project I work with fat this point, and I hope I will continue to keep it this way as I really enjoy being able to focus on this.

**Any recommended means of contacting MARA Knitwear?**

Check our website [www.mara.md](http://www.mara.md) for more information about the project or follow us on Facebook [facebook.com/mara.knitwear](https://facebook.com/mara.knitwear) and Instagram at maraknitwear.

And of course, visit our online store at [www.mara.md](http://www.mara.md) because we ship worldwide!

**Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion based on the conversation today?**

Thank you for this conversation, I am happy you guys decided to talk to us today.

**Thank you for your time.**

## An Interview with Mega Kitt of Tuli

June 13, 2017

Megan started Tuli to help empower women and bring us sustainable and ethical jewellery made in Uganda. Every purchase put money directly into the hands of the woman who made it, empowering them to feed their families, educate their children, and rise out of poverty.

**Tell us about your background and your journey to sustainable fashion.**

I grew up in the Pacific Northwest, and though my family moved around a lot, I consider Seattle home. Moving around so much made me adaptable which I think, years later, was instrumental in starting Tuli. When doing business in a developing country, things are constantly changing and supply sources aren't always as reliable, so you need a lot of backup plans and flexibility to build a large brand.

**Tell us about your story and how you got started in Fashion?**

Before starting Tuli, I worked as a journalist. I've always admired storytelling's ability to create change, and I hoped to do that in my career by writing about people and places people otherwise wouldn't experience. I studied journalism and creative writing in college, and then lived in Florida for a year working for a small newspaper before moving to Tokyo to work as a freelance journalist. While there, I was sent to Uganda on a writing assignment, and that's how Tuli began. After that trip, at 24, I started the company.

Before my career in journalism, I worked as a fashion model to help pay for college. Although I only did it around my school schedule and it was never a huge goal of mine, my experience in the industry taught me a lot of about the fashion industry that eventually made Tuli possible.

**How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

I've been interested in global development and poverty eradication for as long as I can remember, so throughout college and my early career I worked with several nonprofit organizations and realized that many organizations spend most of their time trying to raise money, which isn't sustainable. After spending some time in Africa and SE Asia, I realized that donations alone aren't solving the problem of poverty. I became increasingly interested in social business not just because businesses have sustainable income and don't rely on fundraising, but also because my experience showed me that economic development is the key to ending poverty.

My interest in ethical and sustainable fashion in general comes both from my interest in social business and my experience in the fashion industry. The longer I modeled, the more I saw firsthand just how big the industry is. Consumers flock to certain brands and bring their money along with them, and the more I learned about how most of what we consume is made, the more uncomfortable I became. Fashion shouldn't hurt people, and it doesn't need to. It's possible to create a quality, stylish product that is made under safe conditions and provides fair wages to its makers at a reasonable price.



### **What seems like the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?**

Right now, consumers don't have much access to ethically produced fashion, and that's a problem. Market research shows that consumers prefer fair fashion, even if it costs more, but access is an issue. Consumers still have to go out of their way to buy ethical fashion, and until recently, finding affordable and stylish options was difficult. I've seen this changing in the last several years, and I'm so excited to see so many ethical brands growing and to see companies pivoting to meet consumer demand. Ethical and sustainable companies are vital because they give consumers a new option for their dollars.

### **What is the importance of fair trade to you?**

Fair, transparent trade safeguards makers. It's not uncommon in developing countries to hear of or meet people sewing products for people overseas for obscenely low wages that barely cover their materials. Why do they agree to this? Because if they have no other employment options, they're faced with a choice between earning next to nothing or earning nothing. Fair trade stops this type of exploitation in marketplaces.

### **What is the importance of a (relative to the country) living wage?**

Living wages fight poverty. At Tuli, we pay living wages to all our artisans because we want to empower them to rise out of poverty. By earning a living wage, they aren't only able to feed their families and pay for basic expenses, but they are also able to invest in education for themselves and their children and practice long-term savings so unexpected costs (such as a medical bill) don't derail their lives. One of my favorite stories is of Florence, an artisan who used her income to go back to school and eventually got a job as a headmistress at a school in Kampala. We miss her, but we were happy to see her quit: Something as simple as jewelry turned her life around.

### **What makes slow fashion better than fast fashion?**

Slow fashion has meaning behind it. When I wear a Tuli piece, I'm reminded of where it came from, the impact it had, and the hard work that went into it. If I wear a piece of fast fashion, I don't think much of it beyond if it matches my outfit. When talking about ethical fashion, the conversation usually centers on the makers, but the wearers also benefit. Owning and wearing a piece that has impact is special and meaningful to Tuli's customers. Fashion should make people feel good about themselves, and knowing the story behind a product promotes this.

**The Ethical Fashion Forum developed the Ethical Policy Framework. An ethical policy framework tool for those devoted to enactment of ethical and sustainable purchases, production, and business decisions. What do services such as these perform for the public, consumers, producers, and businesspeople?**

These types of frameworks help both producers and consumers. On the production side, they help ensure that the best intentions have the best results. Unfortunately, in my time working with

Tuli, I've realized that many similar organizations with admirable goals aren't always helping as much as they'd think. For example, a popular business model for companies selling paper bead jewelry is to employ women for several months or even several years before "graduating" them from the program. The idea is that, in the time they were making jewelry, the artisans were taught a job skill: jewelry making. The problem is a woman selling jewelry in Uganda likely won't make much money; the market is saturated, and buyers are few. Many artisans who formerly worked for some of my biggest competitors are now on Tuli's team, and when I met them, they were still living in poverty; they tell me about their time with the other organizations was great – until it ended. Frameworks like the one developed by the Ethical Fashion Forum ensure that producers are focusing on impact first.

At the same time, these frameworks help consumers. As the founder of an ethical business, I spend a lot of time thinking about impact and sustainability, but consumers may not be as intimately acquainted with ethical overseas production. Using tools like the Ethical Policy Framework, customers can ensure that when they buy, they are truly supporting ethical brands.

### **What is Tuli?**

Tuli is a brand that fights poverty by creating sustainable jobs in Uganda. We sell handmade jewelry that is focused on both style and impact, and we pay the women who make our products fair, living wages. Because they have an income they can rely on, our partners are empowered to rise out of poverty.

### **What inspired the title of the organization?**

"Tuli" means "we are" in Luganda, one of the languages spoken in Uganda. We picked this name because it embodies the idea of collaborative solutions to poverty. Consumers from all over the world purchase Tuli products, and each of them is creating real change in Uganda by putting money directly into the hands of our artisans.

### **What are some of its feature products?**

Tuli sells jewelry, with a range of both statement and minimalist pieces. Our top sellers include the Eve chevron necklace, the Arianne choker, the Aster necklace, the Kira bracelet, and the Florence statement necklace.

### **What are the main fibres and fabrics used in the products?**

All our products are made using recycled paper beads. We buy the scraps from reams of paper that would otherwise be thrown away to create something beautiful. Our artisans cut the paper into small strips, roll them tightly into beads, and then paint them by hand before coating them in a water-based varnish that makes them durable as well as beautiful. After that, the beads are fashioned into jewelry using locally sourced materials.

### **Who grows, harvests, designs, and manufactures the products of Tuli?**

I design the pieces to ensure that they are relevant to the international fashion market, and then our team of artisans in Kampala create each piece by hand.

### **What is the customer base – the demographics?**

Our main customers are women aged 18-34 who are interested in fashion and interested in global issues. Our customers tend to shop at stores like Anthropologie and Free People in addition to shopping at Tuli.

### **What topics most interest you?**

I'm most interested in global development and economics. Every decision we make at Tuli is focused on impact, so I spend a lot of time reading about how economies grow to make sure we are making decisions that are as wise as possible.

### **What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?**

Knowing that your work is making a big difference in people's lives is enormously fulfilling. Although Tuli is still a young, small company and I spend a lot of time thinking about how we could do more, at the end of the day, I know that Tuli has changed lives. It's hard to find a job more fulfilling than that!

### **Any recommended authors or fashionistas (or fashionistos)?**

When I was coming up with metrics for impact for Tuli, I relied heavily on Muhammad Yunus' *Creating a World Without Poverty*, which includes an extensive discussion on how to measure impact and determine whether a person is truly out of poverty. I also recommend *The Social Entrepreneur's Playbook* from Ian C. MacMillan and James Thomson.

### **Any recommended means of contacting, even becoming involved with, you?**

I love collaborating! Tuli was entirely bootstrapped, and especially at the beginning, connections were huge for us. I love connecting with people and organizations at all stages. People can reach me at [megan@tulistore.com](mailto:megan@tulistore.com) or through my personal Instagram account, @megankitt.

### **What seems like the greatest emotional struggle in business for you?**

The biggest struggle for me is knowing just how vast the problem of poverty is and not feeling discouraged. I'm proud of what Tuli's done so far, and I'm loving watching its impact grow, but sometimes, as I look to the future and contemplate the gravity of global poverty, it's easy to feel insignificant. I have to work hard to balance dreaming big for Tuli's future impact with remembering that, to the two dozen women and their families we currently provide living wages to, Tuli has changed everything. It's a difficult act of staying encouraged without becoming complacent.

**What seems like the greatest emotional struggle in personal life for you?**

It's related to my above answer, because I think most business owners would agree that business becomes a huge part of your personal life, but I struggle with feeling like I'm doing enough, and because of that, it's sometimes hard for me to pull myself away from work, which isn't healthy. It's important for anyone doing work in entrepreneurship or poverty eradication to sometimes cut we some slack; the world won't change overnight, and it's helpful to focus on what you have accomplished – and to allow yourself time to step back and spend time with the important people in your life.

**Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion based on the conversation today?**

I really appreciate this opportunity to share my thoughts and work with Tuli! Thanks so much for your time.

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

## An Interview with Helen Minogue of Vintage Inspired Ethical Designs

July 8, 2017

Vintage Inspired Ethical Designs is a new eco-friendly vintage inspired contemporary fashion label based in Adelaide. The owner/designer, Helen Minogue develops her designs in Adelaide, and after many months of searching finally sourced home workers using traditional methods to weave, dye and print to make the eco-friendly fabrics she wanted to work with, in India.

Tell us about your background.

I was born and raised in South Australia to Anglo-Celtic parents. I was raised and educated as a Catholic. My father's parents lived in New Guinea when he was a child, and he was sent to Australia to board school from young age. My mother was born and raised in Adelaide and her parents were second-generation Irish. When my mother was growing up there was considerable discrimination against Irish Catholics to the extent that job advertisements would place the acronym CNNA – which stood for “Catholics need not apply”.

My mother's grandmother would tell stories of when the English ‘invaded Ireland’ (as she called it), they stopped population speaking Gaelic and the children from being educated. So, despite being raised a white Anglo Celt in a middle-class family I was made aware from a young age of the discrimination that can occur between groups of people and the long term and far-reaching impacts this can have.

Tell us about your story and how you got into fashion?

I have come late to the fashion industry and with no formal training or relevant industry experience. I initially trained and worked as a registered nurse before then moving into the field of occupational health & safety. The compulsory purchase of my house and being made redundant lead me to decide to pursue a lifelong dream of having my own fashion label.

How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?

I have always taken an interest in Human Rights, so I was well aware of the ‘sweat shops’ being used by many fashion houses and especially any label that was offering clothing at very cheap prices.

So, when I decided, I was going to start my own label being ethical was a given and that is why it appears in my label name. It was when I started looking for an ethical supplier that I learned just how bad the fashion industry was in relation to pollution and waste and I felt I just could not knowingly be a part of that facet of the industry. Thus, I began looking for organic fabrics and natural dyes.

As my designs are inspired by the vintage era my thinking behind my designs was that they would be more ‘timeless’ and therefore not impacted by the seasonal trends, I also hope that they are pieces that people will want to wear for years thus removing them from the fast fashion stream.

What seems like the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?

These designers and companies have 2 influencer roles, especially as there are more around. Firstly, we can impact upon the consumers by educating them about ethical and sustainable fashion and the benefits for everyone moving forward – this is particularly important for designers of teen fashion because if they can be educated at that stage of their buying journey it can impact them for the future.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> way I see us being influencers is upon governments in things like getting new sustainable crops grown, tax reductions on sustainable clothing, supporting initiative's for used clothing use.

What makes slow fashion better than fast fashion?

Fast fashion is usually mass-produced clothing that has everyone looking the same; it is made from synthetic materials, which come from a polluting factory and are designed to be worn only a few times and then thrown out – as because it is no longer 'on trend'.

Slow fashion is made from organic fabric using natural dyes and will provide a unique piece that does not belong to a season and people will want to wear them year after year.

What is the importance of animal rights, especially in an ethical and sustainable fashion context? Just like people animals as sentient beings have the right to be treated in a humane manner, if you are presenting yourself as ethical then by very choice of that word requires the appropriate action.

What is Vintage Inspired Ethical Designs?

A new label that takes inspiration for designs from the 1920's to 1960's. It is currently doing ladies daywear. The clothes are designed with a timeless flair so that they can become wardrobe staples.

What inspired the title of the organization?

I wanted the title to clearly explain what the label was about (this was before I had become eco conscious) and Vied means struggled/strived which I thought was apt for what I was starting and also for working with ethical companies.

What are some of its feature products?

Organic hand loomed, hand dyed and block printed by hand fabrics.

What are the main fibres and fabrics used in the products?

Organic cotton, organic linen, organic khadi, organic nettle, wood fibre.

Who grows, harvests, designs, and manufactures the products of Vintage Inspired Ethical Designs?

I design the clothes here in Adelaide, Australia. The growers and the manufacturers of the fabrics are local men and women from a number of villages across northern and north/western India. I choose the fabric and commission a bulk quantity (there is no capacity for sampling you have to commit), once the fabric is ready 5-6 weeks it is taken to the 'factory' in Mumbai – this factory consists of only about 7 people, and they pay award wages.

Water use in production is an issue. What is the importance of reducing excess water use in the production of fashion?

As water is a precious resource, this is a very important issue facing the fashion industry. I am conscious that organic cotton uses less water than non-organic, but it still uses a fair amount of water, so for my next collection I want to investigate the use of bamboo as an alternative but I do have concerns about the manufacturing process, so this is what I need to look into further.

Will the fibres and fabrics for the products from the company biodegrade?

Yes, they are all organic so break down quite easily.

What is the customer base – the demographics?

Any age would suit my clothes; however, I have specifically designed them for women 35+ and up as they are designed to fit women with realistic figures.

What topics most interest you?

New organic fabric developments, new sustainable crops, up-cycling ideas, ways to overcome the disposable society we have become (like the café in the USA where you can take broken kettles etc. and people will help you try to fix it instead of throwing it out and buying a new one).

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

## Interview with Asia Clarke – CEO & Creative Director, Wild Moon Jewelry

August 20, 2018

Asia Clarke, CEO & Creative Director of Wild Moon Jewelry, speaks with Scott Douglas Jacobsen.

**Jacobsen: As a youngster, what were some pivotal moments to set the life path for you, in fashion?**

**Asia Clarke:** When I was in high school, I was really into punk rock and old school 70s and 80s funk music (because of my parents' awesome music taste). I went to a catholic high school and had to wear uniforms every day, but I always looked forward to "Dress Down Day" which happened once a month. I remember my regular wardrobe being a mix of goth outfits and 80s exercise outfits that I would mash up to create my own style. Peers used to make fun of me by calling me Fefe Dobson because of the rock influence in my personal style as a young black girl, but I didn't care because I knew I stood out and I was dedicated to being creative in the way I adorned my body.

**Jacobsen: Did education help in the development of skills relevant to the interests in fashion?**

**Clarke:** I studied environmental science at York University in Toronto, and my research interests were always the socio-cultural implications of pollution and environmental degradation. It is with this lens I approach jewelry design – I try my best to manifest the Wild Moon Jewelry brand into an example of how we can create new cultural artifacts with a conscious respect for Mother Earth. I was also educated at the Academy of Jewelry Art in Trinidad and Tobago, a place that has greatly shaped my own cultural identity.

**Jacobsen: Wild Moon Jewelry is within the global movement of ethical and sustainable fashion. As a fine jewelry company, what is the inspiration behind its title?**

**Clarke:** Wild Moon stands for all the interconnected beauty in the world that we cannot begin to comprehend. 'Wild' is for the intuitive nature of all beings, and 'Moon' is to acknowledge our connection to celestial beings. I hope to inspire wearers to be aware of their greater place in the world and in the universe. My use of recycled and repurposed materials is my own solution to the need to create earth centred and ethical personal adornment for people worldwide.

**Jacobsen: What were some of the first products sold by the company?**

**Clarke:** I have always done bead and wire work in necklaces, earrings and rings incorporating semi-precious stones such as quartz, onyx, turquoise and pyrite just to name a few. I have used them because I know these stones can represent and enhance the symbiotic relationship between people and their intuition through the earth's minerals.



**Jacobsen: How does a company CEO ensure the socially and environmentally friendly aspects of the source of the materials for the company's products being sold?**

**Clarke:** For different businesses the process to sourcing ethical and socially responsible materials is different. For my business, I try my best to visit the direct source of materials I am using in order to be sure that I am sourcing the best materials for my designs. For example, in this collection I use recycled glass beads from Ghana. I visited the factory myself where they were made and witnessed the process by which the factory collected glass bottles and used traditional techniques to produce beautiful beads for jewelry designs. I also use a lot of recycled materials in the Kokrobitey Collection that was diverted from waste sites.

**Jacobsen: How are the Obrapa Women's Group and the Kokrobitey Institute in Accra, Ghana helping with some of the products?**

**Clarke:** The Obrapa Women's Group is a collective of awesome women in Accra, Ghana that work together to make jewelry as a means of economic and personal empowerment. They also work as peer educators for HIV / AIDS affected communities in underserved areas in Accra. They use traditional jewelry techniques with glass beads made locally in Ghana for their designs. I have partnered with them to design their last two collections which are available in Wild Moon Jewelry's online store.

The Kokrobitey Institute is an art, design, and sustainable development centre just outside of Accra, Ghana. At the Kokrobitey Institute I recently completed an artist residency where I created a body of work using recycled materials diverted from waste sites to create one-of-a-kind jewelry pieces. This one-of-a-kind collaboration is also available in my online store.

**Jacobsen: Will there be collaboration with the group and the institute in the future?**

**Clarke:** I hope so! The Obrapa Women's Group and Kokrobitey Institute are both based in Ghana, and I plan to return to Ghana in early 2019.

**Jacobsen: Where do you hope to take Wild Moon Jewelry into 2019?**

**Clarke:** I love making jewelry and learning new techniques to expand designs using as ethically sourced materials as possible. I hope to be able to learn new jewelry skills every year. I also have a passion for working with Women and Girls in personal and social development projects, so I plan expand the scope of Wild Moon Jewelry to incorporate this.

**Jacobsen: Thank you for the opportunity and your time, Asia.**

**Clarke:** Thank you too!

## An Interview with Marieke Ulman of Format

June 9, 2017

FORMAT features products with clean shapes, defined details, and confident lines for relaxed but well-dressed women and men. The FORMAT collections are partly independent from seasons and every style is made of organic and fair sourced materials and produced in and around Berlin.

### **How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?**

While studying fashion design (2003-2008) I found out about the conditions in the industry and decided not to develop and design that way.

### **What is FORMAT?**

FORMAT's designs are essentially minimalistic. This minimalism is accentuated by details that make a freedom of movement possible while giving the clothes their laid-back look. FORMAT products stand for the distinctive, individual, and unmasked style of each individual. They bring out his or her best qualities and thus remain a durable companion.

All FORMAT products are made considering high ecological and ethical standards. Our raw materials are organic; the cotton fabrics are certified by GOTS or produced according to similar organic standards. All of our clothing is made locally in Berlin, Brandenburg and Poland.

The FORMAT collection is partly independent from seasons because sustainability implies for us that clothes not ought to be old-fashioned after 6-month. We aspire a high level of eternalness in our styles: Some few items won't be reproduced again. Some pieces accomplish the collection since the early beginning of FORMAT and this collection keeps on growing by about ten pieces, new fabrics, and colors every season.

Primarily we are concentrating on B2B business. We sell our clothing to mid and higher priced shops and retailers in Germany and now to retailers in other European countries. Nevertheless, anyone can have a look at the clothes in WESEN showroom, which is our base and an insiders' shopping tip for Berliners and visitors since July.

### **What inspired the title of the organization?**

It fits to our style. Graphic, minimal, simple but comfortable.

We neither want to be millionaires nor rule the world. We just want to be able to do what makes us happy. With amazing colleagues in a comfortable work environment. Currently we have to make compromises to create this. While sticking to our quality standards, fair production and realistic retail prices aren't quite at our dream wages, yet. Our prices are calculated reasonably. Decreasing costs leads to decreasing prices. We reinvest our profits in new machines and slowly but surely increase the wages. We don't do any advertising and we don't pay anyone to wear our

clothes or to say or to write good things about us. Our customer service is always honest because we are convinced that short-term economic successes are not sustainable and valuable. We believe, maybe somewhat naively, that we are able to influence single people or even larger society with what we do.

### **What are the main fibres and fabrics used in the products?**

Organic cotton wovens and knits by GOTS certified manufacturers.

Not only our clothes are supposed to be ecological and fair. One of our most valued goals is for the designs to be timeless. Our clothes aren't only available for one season. We live sustainably at WESEN the same way we do in our private homes. We recycle and try to avoid waste, we use eco electricity and gas and for lunch we take turns in cooking (mostly eco and always vegetarian/vegan) for the whole team. Quite undogmatic.

### **Will the fibres and fabrics for the products from the company biodegrade?**

Most of them. Unfortunately, we could not find biodegradable sewing yarn, so these threads are still made of plastics, for longer living of the seams and the clothing itself.

### **What personal fulfilment comes from this work for you?**

Every day is different. that's exciting.

### **How can ethical and sustainable fashion contribute to the long-term sustainable future for the atmosphere, the biosphere, and the environment?**

Having a circular usefulness including waste and recycling should be the aim when developing any product.

**Certifications, or standards and labelling, remain important, which associate with analysis. These include Fairtrade International, MADE-BY, the Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code, the Soil Association label and the EKOlabel, the Oko-Tex standard 100 mark, and the European Eco-Label for Textile Products, and more. There's many. Do these helps systematize and clarify, or obfuscate and confuse?**

I think that it is necessary to work on such topics from many directions so as in many different organisations. It helps to find a wider angle on looking at problems and solutions that can be found. sooner or later if organisations work in same fields they anyway connect and coop. so it will lead to a clarification anyway.

### **What seems like the greatest emotional struggle in business for you?**

Staying alive It is not so easy to compete with a little company as mine on a market as big as it is. but it is also exciting to proceed.

**LOCK dress**

knee-lengthed dress with a pleated neckline, pockets, and a curved hem  
the soft semi-transparent fabric allows you to have fun layering  
can be worn with the belt or without

100% organic cotton

the ecological fabric of this item is made by a GOTS certified manufacturer.

**What seems like the greatest emotional struggle in personal life for you?**

Staying optimistic becomes not easier while becoming older.

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

Thanks for asking.

## An Interview with Kim Stevenson of the Autonomous Collections

June 23, 2017

Kim Stevenson founded The Autonomous Collections a few years ago with a clear and thoughtful idea in mind inspired by her experiences of extreme weather and global warming in her native Geelong Australia. Her collections are all sustainably and ethically made in London. Here is her story.

### **Tell us about your background?**

My father went to live in Australia with his family when he was 10. He was born in Kent, UK. He was always very creative and worked as a park ranger. My mum was born in South Australia, Adelaide and met my father while working at my father's family restaurant. We were brought up feeling quite free when it came to religion. My father was more religious than my mother. While they always made us aware, they allowed us to make our own decisions about what we believed.

### **What is your personal story – education, prior work, and so on?**

I am originally from Geelong, Australia. My father was very creative, and I always wanted to learn new things. We were always making things, carving, pottery, painting, and drawing. I loved to draw and would ask my father's opinion as I went along. We didn't grow up with much money, but my parents would always make sure we had enough petrol in the car for a weekend adventure somewhere. My parents loved fashion and loved to shop at the charity shop (which I hated). I would sometimes have a different uniform to everyone else and it felt really embarrassing until I started customizing my clothes. As soon as everyone else started to customize theirs, I felt okay about it.

I went through high school and wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I went to TAFE to study hospitality management for 2 years and from then on, I worked in some top hotels and wineries in Australia. I wanted to study again but I always wanted to travel. My father used to tell me stories of his childhood in London. So, I decided to come to the UK when I was 23. I travelled a little, my money ran out very quickly and had to get a job. I fell in love, a few years later had a baby and when he was three, I decided to get back to what I really wanted to do.

As I hadn't been at school for a while, I studied an art and design foundation degree for a year to allow me to figure out what direction I wanted to go in. Originally, I wanted to study Fine Art. But as I had a family to support, I felt that I could merge my art with fashion. I went on to complete a BA in Fashion Design at the University of East London.

### **How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion? How did your educational/professional experience inform fashion work?**

I've always been interested in ethical/sustainable approaches. I used to always find random materials to create with. I used to use my mother's old curtains and play 'weddings' up and down the garden with my friends. A mixture of a willingness to play around whilst being pretty

conscious of Australia's extreme weather conditions, made me grow up with a thoughtful ideal in terms of how to value what I owned.

When I studied my art and design foundation, I wanted to make my own paper so went around and collected everyone's old newspapers and made lots of textured papers. I love the whole recycling process and know I wanted to take this through to university. The more I read about ethical fashion and how much waste went to landfill actually made me sick. This was where I really knew I wanted to create an ethical clothing brand.

### **What is the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies? What is the importance of fair trade?**

It is so sad when large companies can price their garments so low by any means necessary to humanity.

All it does is water down the selection of our wardrobe, making people not care what they buy, as they can always throw it out or buy something new without even thinking who it has affected or the hard work someone has put into that garment.

Millions of tons per year go to landfill and that, for me alone, is **one** reason why ethical companies are so important.

Not to mention the working conditions or low wages these people get. Since becoming a designer, it has made me so conscious and appreciate the hard work it takes to make a single garment.

When something becomes the 'norm' it is hard for the world to see any different. It is only through education that we can change that.

It takes 'we' as a community to come together and shout about this importance.

### **What are The Autonomous Collections?**

The Autonomous Collections is a directional young brand which takes an ethical approach to fabrication and design. We are womenswear, but we do have some statement pieces which are unisex. Our process is to design first, then find ways to create each step ethically. Our ethos is to appeal to a confident, young, old, and young in spirit audience in order to promote ethics in production and consumption.

It is Our Mission to be as ethical as possible and to inspire other brands to follow. It's not an easy way to develop a business, but it is a rewarding one.

### **What inspired the title of the organization?**

*AUTONOMOUS – Meaning, having the freedom to act independently.*

Autonomous for me means a strong sense of identity *which* and self-expression. A contemporary look that defines the wearer irrespective of age, race, gender, or personal style.

### **What are some of its feature products?**

We cover all types of garments, Jackets, sweaters, skirts, dresses, jeans and so on. We make all the products here in our studio in London. What characterises us is our contemporary urban design aesthetic with fabrication techniques and cultural influences from around the world. Each collection has a story behind the process but still carries the signature such as, fringing, weaving, denim, and the use of natural fibers with a relaxed silhouette.

If I was to say one or two products it would be our organic denim jacket with wool fringing and organic sweatshirt lining and our tassel skirt made from scrap fabric, yarns, and wool.

### **What are the main fibres and fabrics used in the products?**

Our focus is to use as many natural/organic fibers as possible with in the design. But it really does depend on our story behind the collections. It may be that we have created one off or limited pieces within the collection that have the use of up-cycling or found fabrics in them. We also have some fabrics from a factory in Spain that use the cabbage from the factory floor. After the garments have been cut, they re-spin the fibers into new fabrics (therefore we are unsure of the exact fiber content). Some of our acrylic yarns used in the weaving process are from the Woman's Institute. The Women's Institute (WI) was formed in 1915 to revitalise rural communities and encourage women to become more involved in producing food during the First World War. Since then, the organisation's aims have broadened, and the WI is now the largest voluntary women's organisation in the UK. The WI celebrated its centenary in 2015 and currently has almost 220,000 members in approximately 6,300 WIs.

The WI plays a unique role in providing women with educational opportunities and the chance to build new skills, to take part in a wide variety of activities and to campaign on issues that matter to them and their communities.

So, if we do use any manmade fibers, we really take into consideration the thought about supporting good causes throughout the world.

### **Who grows, harvests, designs, and manufactures the products of The Autonomous Collections?**

We are only a small company, and it is me and a small team of students and graduates who more want to learn about ethical fashion and how they can use this in their work.

### **Will the fibres and fabrics for the products from the company biodegrade?**

I would say that 90% of our products will yes.

### **What is your customer base – the demographics?**

At the moment our age range is 20-40-year-old woman mostly based in the EU. Our customer is a person who has an appreciation of hand craft and forward thinking. They are unique and like to be different. Through our design process we try to ensure that each garment is different. Whether it be a different color lining, hand embroidered logo or different pattern through the cutting. They will always find something different to the next wearer. They like to feel comfortable and have a love for creativity.

### **How can individuals, designers, fashion industries, and consumers begin to work to implement those rights so that these vulnerable populations, women, and children, in many countries of the world have better quality of life?**

For individuals, you can ask questions when you purchase something. ‘Where are the clothes made’? ‘Who made them’? It is a knock-on effect. If we continue to ask these questions, it will make retail staff ask the questions and so forth the education getting wider and higher. If you buy from companies who don’t support these rights, you are just contributing and supporting these vulnerable communities.

For designers, it is our job to be aware about our suppliers and if you can, visit the premises where the clothes, fabrics are made. Or if you can’t get there, research and ask questions to see if other companies have. If you care, they will care.

### **From personal observations, more women than men involve themselves in the fashion industry by a vast margin of difference at most levels. Why?**

Men never used to sew. They were the ones who went to war or built things. While the woman stayed home, prepared the food, looked after the children. I think as boundaries everywhere are broken it allows others to be accepted. This has been happening for centuries and these things take time for people and the world to be in sync and to become educated to another way of thinking. It will and is happening, it will just take time.

### **What might make men more involved in the fashion world in general?**

Our acceptance. No judgement in particular from other men. Many think you have to be gay to be a designer. As a designer it is not just about making clothes but a whole process. You need to co-ordinate color, research, draw lines etc. Doesn’t that sound like an artist? If a man said to another man, ‘I am an artist’ is that more acceptable. It took a long time for an artist to be recognized as a real job or profession so how is a man in the fashion industry any different?

### **What might make men more involved in the ethical and sustainable fashion world in general?**

A male figure in the sustainable community. Whether it be a male designer or public figures which most men look up to, making the change.



**Will having men in the discussion and on-the-ground improve the implementation of children's and women's rights?**

Yes. It is one thing for a woman to stick up for other woman but when a man does it, it will other men think about the way they behave. I'm sure it would not be an easy fight but the more men who get involved the better.

**What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?**

It is so much hard work starting a fashion label and sometimes very stressful. I forget to look back at what I have done until someone reminds me all I have accomplished in two years. Sometimes I feel like I have done nothing. When people approach me saying they love what I do I feel so thankful that I have spread the word a little further. I get to be creative, doing what I love, be involved in this movement of making the world a better place and as hard as the fashion industry is I still continue my effort to think about the bigger picture.

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

We are being involved in a University charity event in February where they are hoping to raise money to support [The International Rescue Committee](#), a charity which responds to humanitarian crises all over the world, predominantly in Syria. They provide essential healthcare, food, security and protection for vulnerable men, women, and children whose lives have been torn apart by conflict.

The IRC provides safe houses for those in need as well as psychological support to deal with the aftermath of trauma. It also helps communities rebuild their infrastructure and teaches them new skills to ensure sustainability. Furthermore, the charity strives to empower refugees through educating them in ways which enable them to sustainably recover and change the direction of their futures.

We are working on a new collection where we will be working with a fair-trade factory in Cambodia and hoping to be involved in more charity events to come.

**Any recommended authors or fashionistas (or fashionistos)?**

No not really. I am so busy with work and family it is hard to catch up with these.

**Any recommended means of contacting, even becoming involved with, The Autonomous Collections?**

We can be contacted at [info@theautonomouscollections.com](mailto:info@theautonomouscollections.com) or follow us on

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/theautonomouscollections/>

Instagram [https://www.instagram.com/the\\_autonomous\\_collections/](https://www.instagram.com/the_autonomous_collections/)

Twitter <https://www.twitter.com/theautonomous>

**What has been the greatest emotional struggle in business for you?**

Limited access to funding and balancing work and family life.

**What has been the greatest emotional struggle in personal life for you?**

I think having a family and a business is always hard especially when you are over the other side of the world.

**What philosophy makes most sense of life to you?**

I just believe in things like-

‘What goes around, comes around.’

‘Respect others’ and so forth....

I am a bit of a realist when it comes to your future. I believe you have to work hard for anything you want in life.

**Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion based on the conversation today?**

Thank you for having me and letting me tell you about The Autonomous Collections and my views on ethical fashion.

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

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