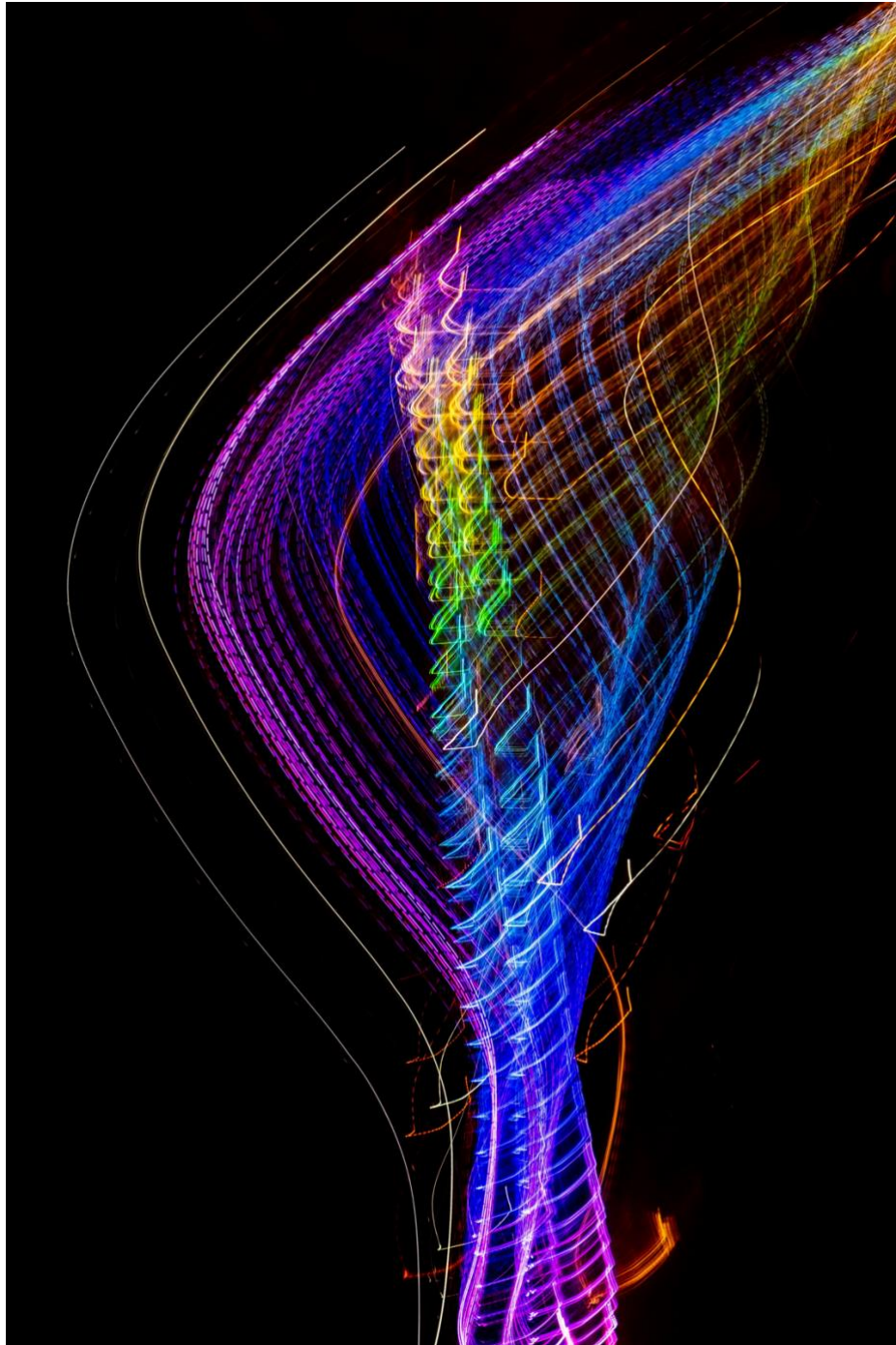


The Trusted Clothes Collection: Volume V



Scott Douglas Jacobsen

In-Sight Publishing

The Trusted Clothes Collection: Volume V

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To the Schroecker family for the opportunity to take part a small, special project with them, after their shift from the advertising industry when an ethical change of heart occurred.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Foreword by Scott Douglas Jacobsen

This will be the final set of volumes in the *Trusted Clothes* collection, as I found more extant materials. I missed a bunch. So, several years later, I did what I could to recover the lost interviews or articles and compiled them into the hilariously and overly self-involved archival work of the “Jacobsen Bank”—so-called. The word “bank” instead of “archive” is simply because “bank” is three letters shorter and does much the same job.

This amounts to the final articles of *Trusted Clothes* by me, which began as a side project in the ethical and sustainable fashion industry. My foci are varied, as with the recent addition to the horse industry. An interesting project focused on gaining some basic and intermediate skills in the rapidly shrinking equine industry in British Columbia while using the connections made with people, some basic knowledge, and work experience on a horse farm to bolster some of the claims and questions asked in the interviews.

Trusted Clothes was a remote job on the Western side of Canada for a family on the East side of Canada with the family running a website and business to bring exposure to small and medium business fashion people involved in ethical and sustainable fashion. Insofar as I know, the business no longer functions as one; it is defunct. By the looks of it, the business has not been running for several years. I came at the right time. I enjoyed the job interview with Shannon. I remember the question, “Where are you from?” I was asked with a peculiar curiosity.

I appreciated the opportunity to grow in a completely disparate journalistic, editorial, and writing area. It was interesting to have a steep learning curve in this field and then to convey this in the interviews with ethical and sustainable fashionistas and some fashionistos. As with most of these businesses, or most of these types of business enterprises, the majority of the people involved in them are women and somewhere between young adult to early middle-aged for the most part.

Highly involved work, difficult to achieve any success. However, they worked their butts off to come out with a product earning the title of ethical and sustainable. This could be the fashion industry’s future in terms of design, harvesting, production, sales, use, and discard: a cycle into an environmentally sustainable product with minimal harm produced—something like an ethical and sustainable assembly and recycling chain.

At some point, the consumption patterns and the recycling processes will need to adapt to several billion people on the planet and the desires of everyone to attain—what is called—a Western standard of living. If those dreams of a Western standard of living sustain themselves, then things like ethical and sustainable fashion—simple as the clothes we wear—will need to be taken seriously. The only problem is scaling up.

Even though the global population growth has slowed tremendously and continues to do so, the consumption rate continues to climb in gross terms. The best part of a fashion-based change in consumption is more fun than transitioning to more powerful energy forms, e.g., nuclear or geothermal or solar. It can be done with aesthetics, which, to me, is fabulous—much more fun. Indeed, more energy consumption isn’t inherently bad, but efficiency and harm reduction are better.

January 21, 2024

Scott Douglas Jacobsen

Trusted Clothes

What's The Problem

May 23, 2016

We're back again once more with a very short discussion on natural fibres! Another important discussion around the foundations of sustainable and ethical and healthy fashion. We here at Trusted Clothes work on these issues and consider them of the utmost importance.

Natural fibres are more important than many other things. They incorporate networks of people and ideas in blogs and fashion clothing lines. It's to do with global warming and climate change, sustainability, pollution of the environment, plastics, synthetic fibre industries including especially polyester, and many things that are not necessarily on the forefront of concern, and possibly those not even discovered to date.

The basic distinction in natural fibres is between plant and animal fibres. Plant fibres have cellulose and can decompose. Animal fibres have amino acids for proteins and can decompose. One of the best ways to decompose is hot composting. However, one of the other ways to decompose, a standard way, is through cold composting. Composting is dumping stuff into a pile with other rotting things like fruit and vegetable peels and the stuff will, in general, if not synthetic, decompose and can make for a pretty good fertilizer.

There can be some additional help for the decomposition with a general purpose red wiggler worms. They've helped for millions of years. Why not some more now? Synthetic fibres or man-made fibres cannot decompose and they are in fact the problem for the environment, for climate change and global warming. Their lifecycle is only a one-way arrow and not an actual cycle. Not even that little critter can help. Sorry little buddy!

So I want to talk a little bit about what the nature of the problem is. The problem is that healthy and sustainable ethical fashion does require a focus on the natural fibres. Natural fibres are pretty much the only way that we do have and know about in terms of creating the cycle of the Earth's fibres.

Fibres that can be taken from the earth, manufactured and made into fashion, and then put back into the earth – or what is put back into the earth becomes the fertilizer based on the decomposition of the original biological material.

The fibres can then be utilized for further growth of crops that can be used for fibres. The nature of the problem is many, many fold. It is a multi-headed beast, but we can work our way through it. So, what can we do?

We can change our consumption patterns. We can change the things that we grow. We can change the things that we wear. We can change the things we consider fashionable. We can adapt our current consumption patterns to a more sustainable cycle. We can coordinate with indigenous cultures that happen to use natural fibres rather than larger conglomerates and corporations that happen to use the synthetic or man-made fibres that do not decompose and pollute the environment, that contributes to one of the most devastating environmental challenges overtime for the 21st-century known as climate change/global warming.

This is noted by the international community, many national communities and societies, groups and associations and organizations, and individuals with equal perspective and concern not only

for themselves, but also for the subsequent generations coming before our children and our children's children. If we do want a sustainable future, and to keep ethical bounds of with respect to our life-support system known as the environment, then we will need to have a radical shift in terms of how it relates to the environment as a whole.

As with everything written, I could be wrong, incredibly wrong – think for yourself and come to your own conclusions. I'm human. I'm a writer. I have biases, fallibilities, and quirks – even some funny ones. My words aren't gold, nor are they a calf.

An Interview with Dorris Bogus of Kamit Sport

August 5, 2016

Dorris Bogus, founder of KaMIT Sport fitness and lifestyle wear focuses 30 percent of her line on eco-friendly fabrics like organic cotton and bamboo. Read more about her and Kamit Sport below!

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

I grew up in Knoxville Tennessee. as the middle child of 10 siblings. I can remember vividly shopping at thrift stores for clothes for school and special events. “New” was not a part of my upbringing. Perhaps that is where my affinity for recycling started. I graduated from Tennessee State University with a BS in Allied Health and minor in Chemistry. I worked in a clinical laboratory for 10 years in Texas and Hawaii.

After moving to Plano in 1991, I started a floral and gift basket business with a focus on corporate accounts. After the tragedy of 911, most of my corporate business dried up. I started my apparel business for two reasons. I like working out and wanted to inspire and address obesity in teenagers (I thought that apparel would be a way to reach them. *It was not*) and I like the creative-entrepreneurial process. Later I focused marketing efforts toward an older demographic.

I am currently married and have three children. We reside in Plano Texas.

After a 3rd grade student called my company and asked If we recycled I started to consider ways to incorporated eco-friendly fabrics into my line of active wear and also to find ways to recycle the everyday items associated with running a business.

What is the importance of ethical fashion to you?

The number one reason is Empathy.

Scott, I grew up working. I started working summer jobs at the age of 13. Some of the jobs were hard in terms of long hours with little pay. When I look at the age of the workers and the working conditions in some of these apparel factories it is dis-hearting. Many of the workers have no way to advance and to earn a decent wage. Right now, my company is able to hire local talent for design, and cut and sew when needed. I like being able to visit the companies associated with the production of my products. As my company grows I will continue to require the same fair labor standards.

What is the importance of sustainable fashion to you?

I want future generation to inherit a planet that is able to replenish itself without the use of harsh chemicals that pollute the air. To me it is all about the next generation. They need a legacy to build on not one that they constantly have to repair. Sustainable fabric in particular are well suited for the category of clothes that KaMIT makes. Active wear requires certain properties that fabrics like bamboo and organic cotton already possess. Bamboo is naturally antimicrobial, has moisture wicking properties. Bamboo is easy to maintain and holds up well under repeated washing. It is great to design with and feels great against the skin. Organic cotton requires less water and no harsh insecticides to grow abundantly.

What is KaMIT Sport?

eco friendly fitness wear from Kamit Sport

KaMIT (pronounced Commit) because whatever you do you have to commit to it.

KaMIT is women active/casual wear brand. KaMIT (fit for your lifestyle) allows a woman to transition through her day in comfort and style.

KaMIT the brand takes into account the many roles that women have during the course of 24 hours. As a mother of three children I wore many hats; mom, wife, PTA board member, entrepreneur, I struggled to find balance and a wardrobe that was functional and stylish.

The pieces in the line can do double duty.

Eco friendly clothing from Kamit Sport

What makes the company unique?

The company's culture is one thing that makes it unique. I learned the industry from the ground up. I could not sew a pillowcase let alone use industrial sewing equipment, so the company likes to take chances on new hires and train them. I would not ask any employee, contract worker or anyone associated with my company to do anything that I would not do myself.

We are constantly searching for sustainable fabrics to incorporate into the brand. We design in ways to leave as little as possible fabric on the floor. When possible, we use recycled newsprint for cutting out patterns. We are looking at outfitting our sewing machines with motors that are quieter, (minimize noise pollution) and that shut down when the pedal is not being pressed (energy efficient).

Mentee Cori Robertson for Kamit Sport

We mentor design students from the local high schools and University of North Texas.

We are able to design, make patterns, grade and sample sew in house. We can do small production runs in house.

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

I am on the board of a non-profit J. B. Dondolo whose main effort is to provide services to impoverished areas worldwide. J B Dondolo is a member of Green Industry [Platform](#).

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

I remember the charitable organizations that helped my family and me. When I was growing up without the help of charities like the Salvation Army, I would not have had clothes and sometimes food to eat. The ability to give back to people who just need the necessities of life like food, health care, clean water, and shelter is rewarding. It feels like I am reaching back and helping and paying it forward as well.

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

I think that with the global economy as well as global warming we have a real and immediate sense of connection with all groups of people and a responsibility to act consciously towards the ultimate good of all. Ethical and sustainable fashion is the industry's opportunity to do just that.

Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?

I urge all in the fashion industry to plan incorporate and actively monitor their efforts to make the planet cleaner, safer and sustainable for now and for future generations. Do what you can.

Thank you for your time, Dorris.

An Interview With Janay A of Janay A Eco Bridal

August 31, 2016

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

I grew up in a family of craftspeople in rural south Missouri, and was always making things, creating, exploring nature. I'd spend hours by the creek, with the plants and animals, and developed a relationship with nature that is a wellspring of joy and curiosity to me. I started a handmade clothing line right out of high school, selling to boutiques, and kept getting asked to make wedding dresses. I thought brides would be crazy to work with, and I resisted at first.

I made my first wedding dress (a pale blue one) and set of bridesmaids dresses at age 19, after taking on a more custom orders launched a small eco bridal collection.

I am a self-taught maker, I went to school for fashion but everything or real importance I learned by experimenting... I love taking old dresses apart, and we still re-create many heirloom vintage wedding gowns for brides.

My super power is intuitive design, working closely with a bride to design her dream dress. I love walking a bride through every fitting, putting the final details together and that moment where every element is in agreement and clicks and makes the bride shine!

What is the importance of ethical/sustainable fashion to you?

It would be too easy to design a line of dresses with trendy elements and have it unethically manufactured, but my conscious wouldn't let me do business in this way. Besides, I like a good challenge

We only use three main fabrics in our gowns, sumptuous eco sources Silk/Hemp blend, and two weights of Organic Cotton that's grown and milled in the USA. These fabrics are so amazing and each different texture work together to create so many diverse styles.

What is Janay A Eco Bridal?

Custom Weddings gowns for Awesome Eco-Goddess. Based in Kansas City, working nationwide soon with a mobile service and we can also design over skype and mail finished dresses to brides anywhere!

What makes Janay A Eco Bridal unique?

We focus on creating each gown specifically to the brides desires, much different than buying a gown style from a store that many hundreds of brides also would be wearing. The custom process is a unique alchemy, taking the most luxurious natural materials and waving a magic wand (meaning much hard work by my small and talented team of pattern makers and sewers!) to craft the most special dresses for our lovely eco-goddess brides.

The designs we create are as varied as each unique awesome lady we get to design in collaboration with. Things that I really love are clean lines with a bit of flowey whimsy, comfort, functionality and subtle design surprises. Dashes of vintages laces and textures are so fun to play with, and I often add pockets or hidden colourful linings or tulle under a skirt.

Many gowns I design are made to transition from full length formal ceremony gown to a short fun party frock for the reception and beyond, as easy as the removal of a part of the bottom of the dress.

What is the greatest challenge in founding a business?

Adhering to the mainstream business model didn't work for me- things like big bridal shows, industry bridal trade shows, selling to stores weren't congruent with how my bride shops or set up to deliver the personal attention that brides deserve.

After I let go of trying to do these things my custom business blossomed, now I'm able to empower more local women who are the artisans that create the dresses and accessories.

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

My next big project is so exciting- I'm rebranding a mobile version of Janay A as "High Vibe Bride," which will be a functioning custom shop and design studio in a remodeled biodiesel bus.

I'll be able to go on tours to other cities and bring eco-custom designed wedding gowns to brides, made on location rather than having to mail a gown out to be fitted to perfection, and without having to go through bridal shops.

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

This work is the most fulfilling! I love being able to facilitate making brides dreams come true and doing it in a way that is ethical and in right relation with the earth and all beings. That truly is the magic sparkles on my days, plus I also get to empower local women who are my awesome seamstresses and accessory designers. Icing on the cake!

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

There is a power in this collective movement for slow fashion, where quirky eco businesses like mine can thrive. We're all in this together, and by lifting everyone up through the creation process I feel good about contributing to a vibrant healthy planet.

Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?

Thank you for including my business in this awesome website, honoured to be among such a talented conscious collective!

Thank you for your time, Janay.

An Interview with Bonnie Murthy of Vegan Wares (Part One)

September 16, 2016

In brief, tell us how you got involved in ethical and sustainable fashion.

I started working full-time here five years ago. The owner of the company, Peter, is my step-dad. He started the company 21 years ago, which was when ethical and sustainable fashion was not something familiar to people.

The business started with Peter getting a redundancy from his job. He has always been a vegan. He was looking for some good quality vegan shoes. He never found any that he was happy with by his standards.

He put out an ad about starting a vegan shoe store. He met the co-founder Jenny. She is no longer in the store. She was involved until about 3 years ago. Peter and Jenny started the business and began manufacturing in Australia. They worked from there – step by step.

If you take the idea of ethical and sustainable fashion, what is the importance of it to you?

I think it should be the baseline. I don't see why we should have any other form of fashion. I don't see why you should invest any money or effort into unsustainable things. If you look at the planet today, we are saturated with population.

We are using more resources than everyone has access to, which is a sustainability issue. It should be the baseline. We receive feedback from customer. I want them. I like them, but my shoes from 5 years ago still work.

It is probably a terrible business model, but a good business ethic. We want things to last through time. That's why if you look at our store that our styles have a classic fashion look to them.

They are more or less timeless. People don't have to go out and purchase new shoes every few months or soles every 3 months. The shoes are designed to be repairable and durable.

Many things come into the discussion such as the Rana Plaza Factory collapse. This is an incident that garners attention with injuring over 2,500 people and killing over 1,000. That's when these issues come to the fore.

Most of the workers in the garments industry are low-income, children, and women. What aspects of this play into children's rights and women's rights?

Usually, we're doing the majority of the manufacturing in Australia. Workers are looked after, well-compensated, and treated well. We started looking at making a small range of shoes a couple years ago, in India.

Recently, we've had the first line of products come out of there. Apart from being really corrupt, things in India move slowly. Peter and myself will go and visit them every 12 to 18 months.

My background is Indian. That makes walking in and talking easier with the workers rather than through agents and managers. I am going in and having conversations with the workers. I see what they're after there.

We are exploring options into developing education programs for the women that are employed and looking at how to help them educate their children. We want to build something that would mean the empowerment of women without taking away the culture.

That is something hard to deal with when you're dealing with another country. Often, I have realized that women don't want to or are afraid to because they've never been told that they can manage the business.

They don't understand the conversation because they don't have the conversation. In terms of kids' rights and women's rights, kid shouldn't work. I know a lot of cultures put their kids to work young. I know they are poorer and need the income to support the family.

However, childhood should be about exploration and education. We can work to empower women and parents to allow their child to have a good childhood growing up. We can give them the resources to educate themselves. And that it's okay to educate themselves.

That breaking some cultural barriers is a good thing. Some conversations with women close off because they feel as though they'll get in some trouble if they decided to further their careers. They don't see it as careers, only as a labour job.

I think kids should not be allowed to work and parents should have the resources to give their children and themselves a good life.

***This is part one of a four part interview series with Bonnie Murthy.**

An Interview with Bonnie Murthy of Vegan Wares (Part Two)

September 20, 2016

This is part two of a four part interview series. For part one, please click [here](#).

In brief, tell us how you got involved in ethical and sustainable fashion.

I started working full-time here five years ago. The owner of the company, Peter, is my step-dad. He started the company 21 years ago, which was when ethical and sustainable fashion was not something familiar to people.

The business started with Peter getting a redundancy from his job. He has always been a vegan. He was looking for some good quality vegan shoes. He never found any that he was happy with by his standards.

He put out an ad about starting a vegan shoe store. He met the co-founder Jenny. She is no longer in the store. She was involved until about 3 years ago. Peter and Jenny started the business and began manufacturing in Australia. They worked from there – step by step.

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However, childhood should be about exploration and education. We can work to empower women and parents to allow their child to have a good childhood growing up. We can give them the resources to educate themselves. And that it's okay to educate themselves.

That breaking some cultural barriers is a good thing. Some conversations with women close off because they feel as though they'll get in some trouble if they decided to further their careers. They don't see it as careers, only as a labour job.

I think kids should not be allowed to work and parents should have the resources to give their children and themselves a good life.

An Interview with Bonnie Murthy of Vegan Wares (Part Four)

September 22, 2016

What meaning does this work bring for you?

Everything, there's a lot of different aspects. I have often been yelled at by friends and family that I work too much. I am happy when I am here. I know every time that we improve, then we are helping people make a difference.

Of course, we want to give really great shoes to vegans and those ethically inclined. However, my goal is to reach out to people who would normally use leather, especially since the lifetime of a shoe should be more than a year.

People think it's a year. I want to reach out to those people and let them know you can have shoes that last 10 years. That concept that ethical and sustainable fashion is an option. It's, to me, a love. I spend a lot of time in the retail front of the shop. I love talking to customers.

I love taking feedback. That means I can direct us in a way that is fulfilling the demands of the marketplace. Also, it is making sure that it is not simply the niche that we are getting to, but when we get to customers that aren't ethically inclined or vegans.

They say, "Oh, this isn't leather." We go, "No, it's not." We say, "It's a high-tech synthetic. It's neither animal or plant." It different and durable. But they go, "It looks exactly like leather."

It is getting to those people. I will come back to that. It is a big thing for me, getting to people who don't necessarily think that is an option, and getting to people who believe leather is the best thing out there and going.

It's not. You're looking at pineapple fibre and leather made out of mushrooms now. There are so many amazing things going around. The slaughter of animals is important. Same with the mass consumption of things is important.

We have people come after three years from the first purchase and come to replace the shoe, change the color, replace the laces, and then you have a new shoe, but you haven't gotten a new product, really.

You have re-utilized what you had before. You are reducing the amount of resources you use significantly. The impact is like the person buying 6 shoes a year versus 2 pairs of shoes in 10 years. If you think about it, it is a lot of resources being saved.

That's a lot less in terms of manufacturing and stuff being grown. That's a whole lot fewer animals being slaughtered. Everything, I can't tell you one thing alone. It is every little bit of it.

It is reaching out to people that don't quite know that that is available. It is improving out customer standards, providing a better product, and so on. All of it is fulfilling. All of it.

A lot of the ethical and sustainable fashion help reduce the amount of climate change and global warming ongoing via carbon capture. In addition, it can reduce the need for animal fibres, which can be a net carbon negative in the end.

Cow leather is the most common in terms of industries. Camels are more expensive. It's funny because if you stop using leather. That will leave farmers with all of this left over product, which they can't circulate.

It's the same thing with the meat. If you consume it less, you get to the point that you're cutting down and it's supply and demand. If there's no demand for it, then they have reduced supply. Otherwise, it will cost them.

You're looking at less and less lives being taken and destroyed because you've decided to make an ethical choice. One company we deal with, and have stock in the shop, are Eco Vegan Shoes.

They have a concept: beyond leather. It resonates with me. It is getting past that.

This can reduce the amount of consumption of things that become pollutants. One model is sustainable and recycles the fibres through decomposition. These can be net negative for carbon emissions, especially to your point, I think. Any thoughts or feelings in conclusion?

I think with something like pineapple fibre. It is not necessarily about the agriculture, when you harvest a pineapple for every pineapple you have these leaves that sit around it and the leaves would go to waste or compost.

They figured out how to use those leaves to turn them into a fibre. You're reducing what would normally go to a lot of waste and utilizing it. It is not that it will decompose and replenish the soil. You have use what would go to waste and then made a product.

You have reduced people use PVC-based stuff and using other stuff. That new product will biodegrade. Yes, it goes through manufacture and treatment. The amount of manufacture that goes into it would be a lot less for that product.

With us, you're looking at a synthetic product, but that will last 10-15 years; whereas, a natural product will last much shorter comparatively. Also, our material is designed to biodegrade, and will dot hat over a century.

It is designed to fall apart. Even when creating synthetics, there is a way, even if there is enough money to do research into those products to make those that are good for the environment because they have the sustainability and durability to them.

You're using less resources. Some synthetics are good and some are bad. The bad ones won't last a long time and are not as durable. They made to recycled and then used to make another pair of shoes, and so on. The difference is substantial.

Multiple factors come into it. If I had the choice, I would go for something that is the by-product of another industry. That means that which is being used is re-utilized, and that it is sustainable. So, you don't have to recreate a product several times.

And I think it is a good value for the world. Often, people can put all of the money into developing and creating a product. All of the sudden, you realize that it is too expensive for anyone to afford and it becomes pointless.

It is all of those factors being taken in and being considered that will eventually get us to a point where we are using materials that are way more sustainable and ethical. I hope that will point us in the right direction in the end.

Thank you for your time, Bonnie.

An Interview with Matilda Janosi of TildArt (Part One)

September 27, 2016

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

I was born and grew up in Transylvania. It is a different life there. There are eco-fashion designers. It was a part of my life. I grew up with it around me. I found it important. I moved from Transylvania from Budapest, Hungary in 2006. In 2009, I started TildArt.

I had works showing Budapest. I always find fabric, which can be recycled. One of my collections was from vinyl records, movie strips, and recycling fabrics. In 2012, I moved to London.

It is a fashion center of the world and a fashion city. I went here without knowing the English language. I came here without knowing it. I needed to learn to take advantage of the opportunities.

One friend that does the rickshaw bike. It is a tricycle with the passenger sitting in the backseat, which can seat 3 or 4 people. When I arrived to London without English language or money, I started to ride the rickshaw.

(Laughs)

It was a bit difficult at times. I was in the city. After I get used to the it and the English language, it was interesting. I met a lot of interesting people. I found my main show piece through a bicycle inner tube.

With my new collection, I hand wove together and put things together with different techniques. There are bicycle inner tubes put together. I changed the fabric. I changed the fabric into luxury or quality fabrics, which I combined together.

With recycled products, they are cheaper, made faster, and so on. I started my studio in London in 2014. I decided to do something different than it with recycled products. It looks luxury and feels that way, too.

Before, when I did the rickshaw, I had a work in Hungary. I applied to different events. I applied to the Vancouver fashion show week. They invited me. It was my first big event. Everybody loved my collection. I brought two. One from bicycle inner tubes.

Another from movie strips. When I opened he studio, I decided that the fabric would be high quality or luxury. There are many handmade products from me. I use handmade oils and new technology like a laser cutter, for instance.

My buyers are more North Americans and people from London. I decided to go back to Vancouver to do the next show with a different collection, not simply a recycling eco-luxury. It was a wonderful time.

I had a lot of interest. I had sales. It is a really, really nice event. I really think it is like 100 staff members that organize the events into perfection. I really enjoy the event, especially bringing the collection.

Everything is working to bring my dream come true, and it's coming true. I am rally enjoyed being there. From Vancouver, I went to Los Angeles. I found Los Angeles buyers as well. I make private sales occasionally, too.

I went to the New York. I had an exhibition at the trade show. This is the next level of selling products for the business. Also, I will have work showing in Australia on October 8. When I came back from New York, I have to leave to Australia, which means a lot going.

An Interview with Matilda Janosi of TildArt (Part Two)

September 29, 2016

Your major locations are London, Vancouver, New York, and Brisbane.

New York one is for exhibitors. There will be over one thousand. I am in the handmade section. With the British designer, this was an opportunity through the UK. I applied for the opportunity. They provided the opportunity for me.

These are great opportunities for me. It is great exposure and mutually beneficial. It helps with the international viewers, buyers, and agents. Agents are very important for spreading out my brand to different countries.

After the buyers come and know the product, they can order and communicate with me. It is important to put out the shops. I like that my company is eco-luxury. Right now, nobody really knows what it is.

Many designers use organic fabrics. I think it is really starting a special line with the recycled luxury fabrics. It is finding my market and hopefully this is becoming normalized. In fact, it is becoming more normalized in the fashion culture.

People care about the environment and the natural resources, and the environment. My products are made in London, and I source all fabrics from the UK. I only buy from UK sellers for the fabrics.

I am keeping this strong. I think it's important to keep things based on and sourced from one country. A lot has been sourced from China for other companies and brands. They are not well-made products. They are made fast. They have to change.

It is fast fashion. I think fast fashion is the direction for most companies. I want to keep the handmade and unique products. I feel like with machines it is the same. I like having things different with the products.

My next collection will be British tailor-made. It is so beautiful. It lasts forever. I would like to combine with luxury fabrics for really nice products. The rubbish company is Spencer House. It is the house where Princess Diana lived before.

It is a good rubbish company. The rubbish company called me and asked if I would like to recycle the curtains. I said, "Yes!" I went crazy, "Oh my God, it's so full of history." It is British tailor-made styles.

I would like to put a touch of England history to it. I am just so excited to start on that project.

It is historic. You're able to take the materials from one of the most famous people in London and then make something unique. It's cool.

I am so, so happy to this company found me. I have been cleaning the fabrics. I had a look at the fabric quality, and the century. I have some from the 18th century. It is a wonderful project. I am so excited to give a second life for this kind of fabric.

It is full of history. It's exciting.

A lot of the work you've been discussing, the shows, the fabrics, and the collections. What have been some major collaborations other than those stores like the rubbish provided by Spencer House? You contacting them or them contacting you.

You have skill sets they don't have, and vice versa.

An Interview with Matilda Janosi of TildArt (Part Three)

September 30, 2016

I love to collaborate. In London, it is some people throwing out some beautiful things. I always have a fantasy about how to recycle different fabrics. The rubbish company, this company collecting the rubbish from the bigger houses in London.

They just give the recycling to collaborate together. They are all too happy to give a second life to fabrics rather than throwing it out. It is a good collaboration. Also, I would like to use 3D printing. I want to learn more about this technology.

Some work with corn flour, which is a natural material. It is always improving and becoming eco-friendly. I like to be able to combine different techniques such as the oil technique., too. There are many different things ongoing.

I see eco-friendly as the future. We need to think about our future and our children's future. We need to think about what's going to happen later. It is all in my heart since my childhood. I love to speak about these things.

I used to teach children about recycling toys. I think teaching children is important. It is easier to teach them than the adults. I see in my background, in Transylvania, where it is normalized.

I grew up with clothes that adults would give to parents' children, and so on. Those that they were about to throw out they would give to the other parents for their kids. It was community sharing.

Most of part-time labour force is women. Most of those in the garment industry are women and children. If you care about children's rights, women's rights, and the environment, the fashion industry can be one linchpin.

I went to a sustainable event. It was looking at the fast fashion in places like Bangladesh and seeing how the children are working and so on. It's a big problem, but it's gaining attention.

You've seen the same meme campaign: who made my clothes?

Yes, people like to know where their clothes came from, which is a bit like their food. We need to get to a point where some or most people get to this point. There are companies that go handmade in London, in New York, in Vancouver, and so on. It's hard, though.

If something is made in China, you reach more people. However, we don't want to do that because we know what's happening there. We need to advertise more. The people can see it on the TV and the magazines, which provides more exposure for smaller companies and brands.

In the long road, it is an uphill battle for new competitors. You've seen a couple countries and will be presenting and many events, soon. What is the state of ethical and sustainable fashion in contrast to non-ethical and non-sustainable fashion?

People are open to the new in the US. They are open to new products, new styles, new stuff. I still believe it is possible to grow even if I'm equal and don't have money for advertisements. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about my brand without charging thousands of dollars.

I believe the future is getting better. I believe the word is getting out with more editors and magazines. It's here all over the world. It is in this moment a bit in need of improvement.

Any thoughts or feelings in conclusion?

Thank you for very much for your interview. I will share this. I will share on my website as I can. It is good to think of the future, not simply our life and while we are living here, but the next generation and the environment. With hard work, we are getting there step-by-step.

Thank you for your time, Matilda.

An Interview with Nicole Bridger of Nicole Bridger (Part One)

October 14, 2016

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

So, I grew up in Vancouver. I was born and raised here. I went to school here. Every play that I did was about “reduce, reuse, recycle,” and so it was ingrained in me at a young age. That the Earth is not at our disposal. That we need to take care of it. I had two very loving parents. I am fortunate to have experienced unconditional love.

At 13, I started sewing, but I thought I was supposed to go and do sciences like my parents. When I was 16, I fell in love. His dad is a shoe designer. I went off and did what I loved doing, which is designing clothes.

I decided to make a career out of it. At 15, I wanted to start my own business, have stores, and figure out what I needed to learn, from who, and where, and what. I decided to go to university of fashion design.

I built my portfolio out of school and went to Ryerson University. In third-year, I went and interned with Vivien Westwood for a semester. She was great. She answered a lot of questions, which I had in my head.

I am not a fashionista. I wasn't sure if I could survive without selling my soul. She showed me that I could be whoever I am, which was really nice. I knew that I needed to learn business, if I wanted to do any good. There was a crew at the university.

They were working with natural fibres. They were into yoga and ate organic food. They were aware, but I wasn't totally aware of how detrimental the industry was, yet. It wasn't a niche thing. “Eco-fashion” was not a word yet, in our vocabulary.

I finished university. I knew I wanted to live in Vancouver. I wasn't happy in Toronto. I worked in the summers. Lululemon had start. I was doing hemming, when they were just one store.

A friend had a business idea that they wanted me to join in on. I asked if I could come in and pick his brain about it. I wasn't sure about a few things. He said, “Don't start one for them, start one for me. I am successful and want to replicate the formula for success.”

I thought, “Great! But I want to start my own company. Why don't I work for you for a year, get my hands in everything for a year, and then start my own?” He said, “Sure!” I was there for two years. I created Au Coco. It was an eco-fashion line.

It was way ahead of its time. That was in 2004. I graduated in 2003. It was 2006 when I was done there. And then I started my own company. I started in my parents' basement. I did a program called Entrepreneurship program, or something.

You take 6 months, which is subsidized by the government, and you write a business plan. I got my first loan from the Canadian Business Association for \$25,000. I bought the machines and my fabric, in my parents' basement, and made designs from scratch.

We would go around and have sales in my mom's basement. The mantra of the company is "I am love," which I believe is the reason we are here. Our true essence is pure love and we have to figure out how to come to that in our own lives in our own fashion.

It is a three-part thing. It is right for the earth. It is right for people. It is right for people. For the earth, we use all sustainable fabrics. The textile industry is the second biggest contributor to toxic waste on our planet. It is a huge problem. None of us are addressing it.

Yet, we're all a part of it. For people, I use ethical manufacturing, whether locally or overseas. And then for spirit, we put a label that says, "I am love," into each piece of clothing to remind the wearer to come from that place.

Whether it is how they speak to themselves with loving kind words, I believe all women should feel beautiful just the way they are, and how they are treating others throughout the day and through the choices they make throughout their lives.

That's the company. Now, we are in 2008. I got married. Then I had a child, and then I quickly got divorced. My son was 7 months old when I left. His dad was just very toxic for the relationship.

Things continued to happen. I finally sobered up to the reality of what was going on when I had my child and couldn't have a kid in that situation. My parents invited me to live with them.

So, it was not only our business in the basement, but me and my 7-month old child were living with them. It was incredibly generous, loving people – my parents. My mom would watch him one or two days a week to breastfeed every two hours.

It would keep things going. And then in 2011, my son was about a year and half and I brought in a nanny so I could work fulltime, and I opened my store in Kitsilano. That was 2011. That, for me, was when the business really started.

That's when we started to make sales. In 2012, the factory I had been working at locally. The owners wanted to retire, so, I bought the factory, not the build but the business, from them. That was \$80,000 for 6,000 square feet of machines and 20 something employees.

They all signed on to keep working. They said it was profitable. I very quickly discovered that it wasn't. We tried different iterations of it for 3 years. I lost a lot of money in the process. Just this last October, I closed the factory.

I just could not make it work and we were drowning. So then, I moved the store to Gastown from Kitsilano a year ago, last Spring. That was fantastic. It double sales right away as well as 50% of the clients that walk in are tourists, which is great.

And the clothing of the factory, that almost bankrupt me. Now, we are climbing out of that. We have some financing. We are turning it around, which I am really excited about. We are starting to do really well.

The company is profitable, very quickly after closing the factory. It has been mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually to lay off 25 people that work paycheque to paycheque.

It is one of the hardest things I've had to endure. I think it was harder than my divorce.

(Laugh)

It is part of business and growing up. That's where we are now. Now, we are profitable and doing really well and about what is ahead. I want to start another store next year. The goal of the company is to eventually grow to 20 to 50 stores, globally.

I would like 75% of our sales to be online. The stores act as a community building space, where people can come and connect. I really see that with our clients who are hungry for like-minded connection.

Our product is beautiful and functional and happens to have this value. Our value connections to our client, when you go and it doesn't seem to push recycling down your throat. I didn't want that.

I wanted it to be inspiring and beautiful and eventually diversify the product from women's lifestyle to men's, baby's, and ethical products you can rely on for worth in how they're made, and still beautifully designed.

That's where we're at.

(Laugh)

(Laugh)

My life story in 10 minutes.

Now, your son is 7.

He's 7 and incredible. If you can imagine, I am a single mom. When we closed the factory, I moved head office into my apartment. I only started paying myself a year-ish ago when I moved into my parents' home when my son was 6.

I finally felt like we could do it without so much help. Now, I have head office in the apartment, single mom without child care.

(Laugh)

I work when he's at school between 9:30 and 2:30. I am supposed to put exercise in there too. Luckily, he's 7. We can go biking and running together. It's intense, but I just keep going. We almost hit bankruptcy a couple of times.

You just keep persevering.

An Interview with Nicole Bridger of Nicole Bridger (Part Two)

October 17, 2016

Do you have any advice for women that are single mothers for acquiring family or community support for childcare or even just being really low on money – clothes, diapers, and so on? Even the subtle things, that are part of that like emotional support for a bad day, or an unpleasant experience during a ‘black month’.

Sharing! Sharing is caring. My son’s best friend, I take the boys on day after school to hockey and then the mom takes them one day after school. We have a sharing thing today, for instance. I needed my son to go somewhere.

I called my best friend. I had her dog all weekend. He has her kids all weekend. She has her kid for a few hours. I think it’s building a sharing community and are there for one another.

I know there’s always somebody that I can phone that is 5 minutes away. You have to not be a burden on people all of the time. It has to be a give, give, give, give relationship. That goes for clothes and things too.

You can find things from other people. Often, I give my second hand clothes to other people. I know people with older kids are happy to give to me, especially hockey equipment because I befriended somebody who’s son is older and is handing down hockey gear to me, which is amazing.

It is a give, give. There’s ways, whether buying second hand or some cheap store, because kids are always growing out of stuff. There’s quite a community. My sister has two kids. She’s great with that stuff. She gets into the neighbourhood and other mom’s schools.

Daycares are great for getting to know other parents for finding things and how. Also, shoes can get really expensive. Figuring out ways where we all come together, I have a bunch of really close friends with kids and will get together at each person’s house every so often and do a pot luck style.

Then you’re only bringing one salad and a whole room of people eat collectively. Then the kids get to play together, and so you have a sense of community. To be honest, entrepreneurship is lonely and single motherhood is lonely. It really is. It is lonely, lonely!

(Laugh)

You want to make sure you aren’t isolated and make sure that you’re not alone because everybody is going through life and it can easily feel overwhelming. It is important to connect and laugh and make sure we’re enjoying the process as much as possible.

With respect to developed nations, Canada and the United States lead the world in many respects regarding single parenthood. The majority of single parents are single mothers, too.

I suspect the community that you’re talking about will be single mothers and their extended family.

I don't know any single moms! I'm the only one. It's not intentional, but none of my friends are divorced or single parents. Yet!

(Laugh)

I'm kidding!

(Laugh)

I don't know why. I wonder because it is nice to have somebody who understands what you're going through or sometimes I have a lack of patience for my friends when they are complaining about their husbands doing the dishes wrong.

I think, "Really?" They know my situation and what I have to go through with my ex all of the time. It helps them to appreciate their own husbands, I think.

What can make an amicable relationship during and after a divorce with an ex – for both of your own sanity, but for the wellbeing of the child too?

If there's substance abuse issues, it is hard. My ex had substance abuse issues, and so it made things hard. That was the problem. You aren't dealing with a sane person. That was hard.

Nicole Bridger featured in River Blue Movie on toxic dyes.

If you were dealing with somebody who was generally sane, for myself, I went and saw a therapist weekly after the divorce. The messages were clear that what was best for my son and maybe as a mom it is easiest to do what is best for your child.

It was very clear to me that even if my son could see his father for a couple hours a week as long as he was sober and my child was safe then that was priority. That there was some regular visit so my child didn't feel abandoned and my child didn't see his father.

It was really easy for me to separate my issues with my ex-husband because there was still hostility that I had to heal for myself separate from supporting my son having a relationship with his dad.

So, I could heal those things and put those away and forgive him for all of those things. But I still have to manage and deal with him for what is happening today for the betterment of my child.

And I think that's what you do. You don't use your child as a pawn. Luckily, we've never done that. His dad doesn't do that, which is good. It is all about what is best for the child.

And then it becomes really clear and it's personal, it is not easy! I get frustrated sometimes, but people, you know. Yea.

I want to switch tracks now, if that's okay, to one of the main lines of thought. Thank you for sharing by the way.

My father is the one and only investor. I should say that too. And then we've gotten money from the BBC.

Now, with respect to ethical fashion, what is its importance to you?

What it really comes down to is people are treated with respect and compassion, and so are they being paid fair wages, are they working in a healthy and respectful and happy environment, there's an estimated like 35,000,000 slaves in the world right now.

Nicole Bridger and Kendall Barber, founder of Poppy Barley ethical footwear discuss eco and ethical fashion

A lot of those being, I don't exact percentages, employed in forced labor for apparel. And even locally, those people think since it's made locally then it's ethical; but it's not. There are a lot of dismal factories here, what I would call "tiny little sweatshops."

That wouldn't compare to some of the factories in China that are really pristine. I think the local consumer has an idea of local good-China bad, which is not necessarily true because it's not that simple.

I think the industry needs a lot more transparency about what that means. I think the food industry, the organic and health food industry are really leading the way around how to label consumer products.

it's clear for them to make choices, educated choices, and that they are empowered to make the choice instead of greenwashing or whatever. For me, for buying it, there are a lot of certifications. Certifications aren't perfect.

Fair trade is a certification. It is not full-proof, but it is a starting point. So, I factories in Nepal, Peru, and India with fair trade certifications. I buy fabric from Blue Signs factories, which is an eco thing associated with wastewater management thing.

I support global organic textiles. That is more about fair wages. Things like that that I can rely on a little bit to help me feel good. Also, it boils down to human relationships, and if you can go and physically visit the factories. That's a good thing.

I have used factories for years and then found these things when I bought them. They were shipping half out half of their production to Chinese sweatshops in town because it was cheaper for them to use the Chinese sweatshops than to pay people in town.

Also, there were people being paid under the table, not paying taxes, and not even in their name, which is a total mess. That's right here in a factory I've been using and that I visited regularly.

What I've been saying is I have not been given is that, it is a starting point. It is a journey. What I say to our clients is that I can't promise to be perfect, but I can promise to do the best that we can with what we have available to us, and financially and also technology-wise what's available and that we will constantly be improving.

An Interview with Nicole Bridger of Nicole Bridger (Part Three)

October 19, 2016

You mentioned greenwashing. For those that don't know, what is greenwashing?

It is pretending to be eco or sustainable when you're not, and using it as a marketing thing. It used to be a weird niche-y thing. When I started Au Coco, clients would come in and say, "Why should I care about eco-clothing? What does that mean?"

Now, that question is never asked, never. When I say what we do, people say, "That's great. Wow! That's amazing. I've been looking for you." That's in ten years, which is not a short amount of time, but it went from being weird granola grungy thing to now almost now more of an intelligent choice to live more mindfully.

If you don't recycle, people look at you!

(Laugh)

It's the thing to do. Now, with social media, it's blowing up. Now, with plastics in our oceans, society and other things like wars, and the refugee crisis. People are more tuned into what's happening.

Parents are feeling like "what can I do?" One thing I often talk about is the power of your dollar. You can vote with your dollar. Now, Wal-Mart sells organic yogurt, not because it is part of the value system, but they were losing sales to other people who were selling organic yogurt.

So, if you are mindful about where you put your money, you can create change. The corporations will follow the money.

(Laugh)

So, it's important and empowering for people that want to be a part of the bigger change. And so, people have been making money by pretending to be eco and through greenwashing and so on.

With respect to labeling not-so ethical behavior, or company practices that are pretending to act in an appealing way to consumers, but not actually acting in that way as per greenwashing, do you think that labeling it is a good tactic to combat that – "greenwashing"?

Only if there is some policy around the labeling. For instance, with foods now, if it says, "100% Natural" or "Organic" versus "100% Organic," you can find out exactly what that means. It is clear across the board what that means.

I'm not sure if it is global, but certainly in North America. Now, we are waiting for apparels to have standardized labelling. You can't just say, "Oh, this is ethically made."

You can state certain certifications, and the content is still really vague. That is coming. There's a few different people who are working on it. I am waiting to see what happens.

With all of these things, we wait for policy to take part, even in us working on a textile recycling system. So, the municipality of Vancouver wants to ban textiles in the landfill like they have organics, like food waste.

You can't do that without infrastructure, and so we are working with them right now along with a few other people to figure out a way. It is with a bunch of other brands. It is to figure out a way that we can set that up and what it would look like.

Not just the benefit for us, but for the residents as well. It's not as easy as food. You can compost food on your back deck. You can't recycle textiles. You have to mulch it and ship it away. It's a whole thing.

Also, they could hot compost with some red wiggler worms.

(Laugh)

I do that! We'll see what happens. Again, you don't just need designers. You need technology and policy makers. You need all of these people who play a role in moving things forward. So, that's why it takes a while.

It is new. This talk about eco and ethical clothing. I think we're trying to figure out the how, how to make it easy for consumers, how to make transparency. Transparency is probably the biggest shift now.

Not only in apparel, but a lot of consumers are wanting transparency. It's not about the perfect. For instance, Patagonia released, not that long ago, that they found child labour in their supply chain.

They weren't about hiding it. They came out and said, "Hey, we found this and are changing it." Patagonia has a huge ethical and sustainable mandate. They are a huge company. So, for them to find that is a big deal, and it's not about being perfect and lying.

It is about finding an issue and we're fixing.

It seems easier in the digital era.

Yea, totally.

Any advice for women in leadership?

I believe that the Dalai Lama is right. He said, "Western women are going to heal this world." I think it's important as a woman to acknowledge the special power that we have. I think we do!

(Laugh)

I think innately we have some incredible capabilities, whether that is around multitasking or other things. Science has proven our brains multitask more than men's brains. It is not men vs. women, but as a woman leader it's kind of a new thing.

This is still a new thing, topic of conversation. Something we are still figuring out. In our society and in other societies, but in our society, I think to have confidence in acknowledging your capabilities.

I often see women not thinking that they can do or that they aren't capable. "Oh! I need a man to do that," they might think. I think we are capable of it. I think we bring a unique kind of grace, which is really different not.

One perspective that is more holistic, caring, and nurturing. We need that. Maybe, that's my advice: women are needed! If you're feeling called, then answer the call and step up to the plate. Do your best and that's it!

Just make sure the number is from the right person.

(Laugh)

Just make sure it's a divine calling.

(Laugh)

A soul calling. It has taken me a way to actually listen to my intuition, to listen to my gut. Women are generally intuitive, I think. So, that's a special something to share.

There's one more part about women in leadership. One thing I observe with my friends, for example, is I'm in the middle. I really connect with my male friends who are business owners, but they have someone at home taking care of the child.

I connect with my friends who are moms, mostly stay-at-home moms. They watch their husbands go through the trials and tribulations of business. I can see both sides. But I have to do it all. It is hard for them understand that.

I tell my male business owner friends, "Imagine if you had to work between 9:30 and 2:30, and fit your exercise in there." They can't believe that. Nothing would get done and the business would fail.

So, what I've learned in that is you don't have to do it all. I think that that's what women who are – my situation might be exacerbated, but it's made it really obvious to me – leaders in the home and in their work life (and possibly the breadwinners in their home as well).

It feels like a lot. It is a lot. It is a lot of responsibility. So, I'm saying this to myself as I'm saying this to you. With that huge sense of responsibility, you have to remember that at the end of your day just do your best, and it's okay if things sometimes don't get done.

You also have to have fun in there too.

An Interview with Jennifer Graham of Salts & West Clothing

October 24, 2016

In brief, how did you get interested and involved in ethical and sustainable fashion?

I have been interested in art and fashion since I was young. I have always been the type of person who wants to do positive projects in the World. Knowing that the mainstream fashion industry is so damaging as far as labor and pollution is concerned, I wanted to make a difference the by making everything ethically.

When you started Salts & West Clothing, what were some of the things you had in mind when things were just percolating? The idea was there but had not been founded yet.

I started in 2005. I have been making organic clothing for 11 years. When I started designing, you could not get many sustainable fabrics. Bamboo fabric was just becoming an option. Organic cotton was hard to find and usually uncoloured. The materials that I could find were very basic.

When I first started, I started making hoodies from my home. I was selling them at markets and eventually online. It has grown from there. The fabrics that I am able to source now are so amazing to wear. Having options for wearable and sustainable fabrics has made my work as a designer very rewarding.

What would you consider your feature product at the moment?

We are known for our hoodies. We make a very unique, beautiful hoodie. I have clients who still wear hoodies I made 11 years ago.

At the moment, we're producing a bamboo, eco-fleece hoodie, which is soft and sustainable, as well as biodegradable. Regular fleece does not biodegrade and is left in our ecosystems forever.

If you look at your product line and getting the materials, what is the process for getting the materials?

We source from suppliers that use reputable 3rd party testing for chemicals and environmental toxins. Our Organic cotton fabrics are all certified organic. I have also have worked with organic cotton farmers in India to make fabrics there.

Our fabrics are OEKO-tex certified; this is a certification to ensure there are no harmful residues on the fabric from any of the fabric making process. The bamboo fabric is made using a closed loop system, this means that the water and materials used to make the fabric does not go into the ecosystem. It is treated in order to be used again.

We also cut and sew the clothing locally. We make most of our items on Vancouver, Island, in BC, close to our studio.

Are there any companies that you collaborate with on a consistent basis?

We work with the Sierra Club from time to time. They're an environmental group. We also work with Elate Cosmetics; they have a chemically free, natural, vegan make-up line.

If you're trying to formulate a design for a particular product such as for the hoodies and the leggings, what is your general process when you're doing that?

My process really begins with the clients. I talk to clients everyday and find out what they are wanting from their clothing. We have some patterns people really love and continually grow our line from those base patterns. We add features and improve them. We get to learn a lot about what our customers want. We can adjust the design based on what people are telling me.

What do you consider the overall theme of Salts & West Clothing?

Our theme is locally produced using ethical labour with the most beautiful and useful sustainable materials available. Another big part of what we do is making things people really want to wear.

When some think about ethical and sustainable fashion, they will think about children's and women's rights. How much do you think women's rights and children's rights are intertwined with ethical and sustainable fashion, especially in areas of the world where the labour is mostly women and children?

This is the number one issue that is really near and dear to me. I feel like the fashion industry is built on the backs of women and children. People are profiting off the women that don't have many choices. They are trying to keep their food on the table and their children fed.

I believe in a society where we can do better and expect more. I know that as one person, I am probably not going to change the whole industry. As consumers, we can make the daily choice to be aware and shop mindfully.

Do you have any advice up-and-coming new business owners that are ethically and sustainably based?

My number one piece of advice would be to work with somebody else first. Learn from somebody else before you start your own business. Then, when you are ready to launch, let go of perfection, just start small and get your ideas out there.

I think starting small with one or two projects is a great way to start. You can test the waters with one or two products instead of trying to do too much too soon. Once you know your product is viable and there is demand for it, then that's when you can really dig in and go for it.

You started the company solo. Do you think there are different difficulties starting solo rather than together?

Each type of business has pros and cons. In a partnership you have to share the decision making process and that can be difficult. In a solo business all the responsibilities fall on you, that can also be hard. With a partner you have a second set of skills and hands available. If you have the right partner, and you chose that partner based complimentary skill sets, a combined business can be really successful.

Thank you for your time, Jennifer.

Salts & West Clothing has a Kickstarter campaign, which ends November 3, 2016. It can be seen [here](#).

An Interview with Monique Parker of Wallis Evera

November 7, 2016

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

Wallis Evera creates ethical, eco-friendly and locally made clothes that work – for you, for our communities and for the planet – because we believe that dressing well means more than just looking good.

I'm a West Coast girl. I lived in small towns in northern BC and the Yukon when I was very young, then we settled in Victoria in time for middle school and I stayed there until university. I studied Psychology at UVIC, took a couple years off to travel and live in Berlin, Germany, and then returned to Canada to study Public Administration at Carleton University in Ottawa. As soon as I was done, I moved back to Vancouver and have been here ever since.

Prior to starting Wallis Evera, my career was primarily in management consulting. I worked as an analyst and project manager in industries ranging from manufacturing and distribution, to high tech, healthcare and government. When I had children, I stopped working for a few years so that I could be with them. When it was time to re-enter the workforce, I realized I wasn't going to be happy plugging back into the regular 9 to 5 office routine. I wanted to start my own business and create a life that was a direct reflection of my values and interests.

How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?

About 3 years ago, I happened to come across a book in my local public library, called *Overdressed: the shockingly high cost of cheap fashion*, by Elizabeth L. Cline. It opened my eyes to a side of fashion that I really had never considered before in any great detail. I hadn't been aware at all of the scope and degree of devastation (environmental, social, economical) that our clothes were having on the world. After that, I read everything I could get my hands on that related to Slow Clothes and the Eco-Fashion movement and I knew that this was a movement I wanted to be a part of.

I began supporting the sustainable fashion movement as a conscious consumer. When I had trouble finding locally produced, eco-friendly clothing that were my style and that I could wear to my 9-5 corporate office job, I founded Wallis Evera and started making them myself.

The company is named after my two grandmothers – both of whom lived and raised families in the 1940s, an era when materials and resources were well understood to be limited, and everything was – simply as a matter of course – recycled, reused, reduced and repaired.

What is the importance of the idea of ethical and sustainable fashion to you? What about ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?

As a consumer, I want to know that my actions and purchases are not contributing to environmental degradation or human rights abuses in any way. In fact, I will actively seek out companies who are creating a better world through their business model. I want my purchases to reflect my values and I believe that many consumers today feel the same way.

As awareness increases about issues such as climate change, population growth, and the limitations of our world's natural resources and how that is all going to affect our societies, it is

becoming imperative that anyone producing products at all should be searching for a way to do it sustainably... or not at all.

I believe in the assertion that building sustainability into your business is not just a moral imperative, it's a business imperative.

What is Wallis Evera?

Wallis Evera is a Canadian eco-brand that makes modern hemp apparel. Our aim is to make clothes that can spark dialogue and inspire change toward a more sustainable future.

We focus on two key areas — Fibre + Form — to create elegant and enduring clothing for women in the workplace. We choose to make a difference by:

- Manufacturing locally, and
- Using hemp as the foundation fibre for all our products.

What are some of its feature products?

We launched our first collection in Spring/Summer 2015, comprised of simple sheath dresses, loosely structured jackets, pencil skirts and matching tops. This year, we're adding a few pants and other separates. All our fabrics have at least 55% hemp content, and many of them have been custom woven and dyed specifically for us.

Many factors come into the fold for consideration within this movement. It is international, moderate in size, and growing. Tragedies such as the [Rana Plaza collapse](#), 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 in 1911 and the Pakistan Garment Factory Fires in 2012. This implies human rights, worker rights, and, in many instances, women's and children's rights. 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?

At Wallis Evera, we've chosen to manufacture locally and, although it's an expensive choice, we will continue to manufacture locally – wherever local is – as we grow. We place a high value on contributing to our local economy and giving within the communities where we live. By staying local, we're able to have a very close and personal relationship with our factory workers and we're able to have a direct impact on the vulnerable populations in our own community.

What topics most interest you?

Because I have small kids and a husband that works in the public school system, our dinner table conversations tend to be a lot about educational theory – how we think, learn, change, grow – and how this can be encouraged. Stories related to the Hero's Journey, human potential and transformation are very interesting to me, and I look for those themes when I pick up fiction, go to the theatre, read the news, build my business, everything.

What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?

It's incredibly fulfilling to be able to create something beautiful and tangible in the world, from nothing but an idea. The problem solving, team building, research, mistakes, all of it – being an entrepreneur in the fashion space is challenging in every way, every day. The learning curve is steep and continual, and the feedback is pretty immediate because you're dealing with the

market. But that's what I love – every day there's some new challenge to tackle and also some old challenge that you can celebrate or lay to rest.

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

Juggling a young family and a start-up fashion business is beyond full-time work already. The only other thing I try to do on top of these two priorities is stay fit – if I can get a run in every day, I do – it's how I stay sane!

Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?

Thank you for the opportunity, Scott.

Thank you for your time, Monique.

An Interview with Rachel Faller of Tonlé (Part One)

November 11, 2016

Tonlé, Cambodia's eco and sustainable fashion brand are committed to zero-waste production. They are currently the largest ethical apparel brand in the country, offering fair wages and a secure working environment since 2013.

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

I grew up in the Boston area of the Northeast US, and from a young age I was interested in social justice and activism, mostly inspired by my parents. I also always considered myself an artist and looked for a way to merge the two passions. I studied at the Maryland Institute College of Art, where I became involved in textiles and received a BFA in Fiber.

How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?

I made clothes from a young age (I made my first Halloween costume in 3rd grade out of second hand clothing, and by high school I was making clothing and bags and selling them to my peers. But I always knew there were problems in the fashion industry, and my conscience prevented me from pursuing study or a career in that field. In my last year of college, I had the opportunity to visit Cambodia with a family friend who had interested in starting a textile business there – and that was the first time that I came into contact with artisan groups who were trying to practice fair trade principals in making textiles and other handicrafts. This inspired me to realize that the fashion industry is not going to change simply by criticism, but needs change from within and that was the first time that I saw the possibility of participating in that.

What is the importance of the idea of ethical and sustainable fashion to you?

The fashion industry is one of the world's largest industries, and also happens to be one of the greatest contributors to pollution, climate change, human rights abuses, modern slavery, suppression of women's rights, and the list goes on. Fashion also is not going away any time soon, so we need to find a way to change it for the future of our planet and our people.

What about ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?

Right now ethical fashion is defined in a number of different ways and I do think there is a need for greater definition and standardization of what those words mean. But I do think it is admirable and important that there are so many new designers coming up that are trying to consider doing things differently, and even larger companies that are changing to incorporate greater transparency into their supply chains.

The beautiful and talented Siphon making fabric for the new collection with fabric scraps and naturally dyed cotton

What is Tonlé?

Tonlé is a zero-waste, fair fashion company. We design, make and produce contemporary women's fashion and accessories in our workshop in Cambodia.

What are some of its feature products?

Tonlé is most known for its signature t shirts and easy to wear t-shirt dresses, which are versatile and well loved. Some of our newest ranges include products that are handwoven from tiny scraps of remnant fabric into unique new textiles. These products are higher-end price wise, but have been picked up by many designer boutiques that appreciate the craftsmanship and style of the products.

The Tonlé team in Cambodia has grown several fresh faces on our production and management teams, moving into a new workshop, developing new collections, and exploring new sales channels

Many factors come into the fold for consideration within this movement. It is international, moderate in size, and growing. Tragedies such as the [Rana Plaza collapse](#), 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 in 1911 and the Pakistan Garment Factory Fires in 2012. This implies human rights, worker rights, and, in many instances, women’s and children’s rights. What are the importance of human rights and worker rights in this new movement, and to the garment industry?

Many people forget that the United states was what we would now consider a “developing country” in the 1800s and early 1900s. Child-labor and abhorrent factory conditions were commonplace – health and safety standards were non-existent. It is only because of the hard work of activists, women’s rights advocates, and unions that we have the laws that now protect workers in American from those conditions that are still common place abroad. And while the US still has a long way to go, it’s easy to forget when these jobs are shipped overseas that the freedoms we enjoy in the US took the hard work and preference of many to achieve. It’s very important to empower workers abroad to fight for their own rights as well, so that they too can achieve the same conditions. With the globalization of the industry this is much more complicated nowadays, when it is so easy for a company to move their manufacturing elsewhere when conditions become unfavorable for them or wages are too “high”. That’s why we need a multi-pronged approach where consumers, brands, factories, and governments all need to take action to be a part of the change in the industry.

Continued on Part two [here](#).

An Interview with Rachel Faller of Tonlé (Part Two)

November 11, 2016

Continued from [Part 1](#)

Women and children are the majority of the exploited and violated work forces. What about the status of women's and children's rights as well?

Women and children tend to be most exploited in the industry because they are more exploited by society in general, which forces them to often take the low wage jobs that men who have been given more wealth, education, and power in society, won't take. 80% of garment factory workers around the world are women.

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, to acquire an education, and to be self-sufficient. What is the relationship between the need to implement women's rights and children's rights, which have existed for a long time, in this domain of the working world? 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 a tricky issue because many of the slavery issues occur early on in the supply chain, in cotton farming, milling, and spinning. Half of US fashion brands have no traceability of their supply chains at all, and most that do have any traceability can only trace to cut make and trim (CMT), meaning they have no idea where their cotton was grown or spun or made into fabric or dyed. There are non-disclosure agreements all along to supply chain to supposedly protect trade secrets, but it's a convenient way for the brands to ultimately shirk responsibility for slavery (and other issues) in their supply chains. Ultimately there are a lot of old world practices like this that I think will become un-tenable in today's global economy, which is increasingly more interested in transparency, connection, and sharing. I hope that this (and whistle blowers) will help us to see brands being pressured to change what's going on in their supply chains – which will help consumers decide which brands they should and shouldn't support.

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?

We have to tackle these issues from all angles, and everyone has a role to play. There is more information available to us about brands and with a little research the average person can get a better idea of how to really shop their values. Ultimately, brands do have to listen to consumers so changing your buying practices is really important. From within the industry, there will be change when there is a critical mass of CEOs, designers, accountants, and everyone else who does not stand for the current practices. In large companies, there is often a huge disconnect between design and manufacturing that keeps designers or CSR teams from making change, but it does not need to be that way if core members of these companies (and their shareholders) were to change their beliefs as well.

What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?

The most fulfilling part of my work is working directly with the women on our team and making products with them. I love getting involved in the big stuff as well as the little stuff, and seeing the lives of the people we work with changing and growing. The people I work with are a joy to be around and they inspire me every day. That is the most meaningful thing to me.

An Interview With Paola Masperi of Mayamiko (Part One)

November 14, 2016

Mayamiko Trust was established in 2008 by Paola Masperi. After extensive travel in Africa, Paola decided to help some of the most disadvantaged people in Malawi by supporting their creative talents and turning them into sustainable activities.

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

I was born and raised in Milan, Italy. My parents have always been very active in the community, so I think that's where the passion for social justice and activism comes from.

My Granny on my Mum's side was an excellent seamstress and taught me to sew dresses for my dolls from a young age, while reading classics like *To Kill a Mocking Bird* and *Four Little Women* to me. I was taught how to count use coins. My Granddad on my Dad's side was a very established and very creative tailor.

How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?

I had always been interested in human rights and sustainable development and always had a passion for fashion: the combination resulted in an awareness of fashion's impact on people and the environment.

What is the importance of the idea of ethical and sustainable fashion to you?

Fashion is intrinsic to our way of living and our nature – clothing is one of our basic human needs and has carried so much meaning in society across history, geographies etc.

So it is only natural that if we care for people and our world, and want to work towards a more sustainable existence, we have to look at the clothing industry as one of the key levers for change. The challenge is that fashion is complex, its supply chain is so complex and diverse, that it is very hard to define clear cut parameters and objectives.

What about ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?

I think there is a healthy level of debate and we are seeing some real change happening in various pockets of the market, with pioneering initiatives by manufacturers, brands and innovators, and with real civil society pushes for change by consumers.

But I think we need more clarity for manufacturers, brands, and consumers to make sure we all have a common understanding of what the words we use in the ethical and sustainable fashion debate really mean, and that sustainability is not confused with greenwashing or just a different PR angle.

What is Mayamiko?

I started Mayamiko in 2008 as a charitable project with the long term view of turning it into a sustainable business for everyone involved, but very aware that it required a charitable mind set to get going: I had been doing work in Malawi since 2005 (and in other developing countries) and I could see so much potential that could be unlocked by providing education and skills, a way out of poverty that was sustainable and not dependent on aid.

Two of mayamiko ladies, Jane and Everyn, busy writing down their vision for the future to then discuss it with the rest of the group and find ways of making it a reality.

Many studies have shown that women's education has a ripple effect not only on themselves and their family, but also on the communities they live in. Couple that with an interest in fashion, the availability of wonderful fabrics, and the many artisanal techniques that seemed to be slowly getting lost, that's how the idea came about!

At that point, I had been working with Malawi since 2005 on various programmes and the country was pretty close to my heart because of its incredible beauty, warmth, and potential, but of all the countries I had been to it seemed to need the most of this holistic approach. That made it in a way the one where I felt I wanted to start from.

At the very heart of it, there is a sole desire to help change people's lives by giving them choices. Choices come in the form of education, skills training, access to finance, and many other options that we often take for granted.

Tailoring and sewing have always been a pretty widespread skill, but often at a very basic level, and many of the other components required for people to be empowered to achieve change were missing: broader education, more in depth technical training, entrepreneurship skills, self-belief etc. And it was also about taking the wonderfully creative skills of many artisans and turning them into a way of making a sustainable living.

What are some of its feature products?

Every year, we launch a collection of contemporary womenswear. So, we are a 'season free' brand. This means we don't want to engage with the pressure of producing a new collection every season, month, or even week.

I believe we can offer desirable collections consisting of some key directional pieces and some more evergreen pieces, and by playing with different prints and fabrics to stay relevant. Locally sourced African prints or artisanal locally-dyed textiles are at the core of our collections.

We have a commitment to source everything, and wherever possible, within a 20km radius from our workshop to maximize the positive impact on our local community.

Alongside our main collection, and because of our Zero Waste commitment, we bring out 'zero waste' pieces, which make use of any cutting room waste in a clever and creative way. For example, our Namaste sets, our hair accessories, and some of our clutches are part of this collection.

Every couple of years, or when the opportunity arises, I launch an upcycled collection, making use of end-of-roll, end-of-life textiles from factories, which would otherwise be destined to the landfill – this is how our Rebirth collection came about and I finished developing a new capsule collection using end-of-life Italian silks.

Many factors come into the fold for consideration within this movement. It is international, moderate in size, and growing. Tragedies such as the [Rana Plaza collapse](#), 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 in 1911 and the Pakistan Garment Factory Fires in 2012. This implies human rights, worker rights, and, in many instances,

women's and children's rights. What are the importance of human rights and worker rights in this new movement, and to the garment industry?

The thing about human rights is that they apply to all humans, universally and indiscriminately. And what we have here is a world in which these rights apply to some and not to others. Those others are the most vulnerable in society, i.e. women, children, and less abled people.

Clearly, this is a massively complex and diversified problem and what we are seeing now is more exposure, leading to greater awareness. With social media and the internet, there is really nowhere to hide.

What's becoming more apparent is that there is no 'black and white', no 'my fault, your fault'. We are all part of the system and we all play a role in the issues, and we all must be part of the solutions: legislators, governments, international bodies, brands, manufacturers, and consumers.

An Interview With Paola Masperi of Mayamiko (Part Two)

November 14, 2016

Women and children are the majority of the exploited and violated work forces. What about the status of women's and children's rights as well?

Women, children, and the less abled are the most vulnerable people in society, and this exposes them to the greatest level of abuse and unfair treatment.

There is no excuse for this and it is one of the greatest reasons of shame for humanity.

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, to acquire an education, and to be self-sufficient. What is the relationship between the need to implement women's rights and children's rights, which have existed for a long time, in this domain of the working world?

Another very complex problem. We speak daily with women who are barely teenagers and have been pulled out of school to support the family and feel like they have no choice. Their families feel like they have no choice, and society feels like there is no choice. This perpetuates the cycle. For me, education is the way out this dark maze – education allows for choice and opportunities and this is what we try to offer with our training programmes.

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?

Yes, it is a great stain on humanity. It will take a great collective effort to change and more than that a recognition that this is everyone's problem, not just some remote country somewhere far away.

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?

The fashion industry is so complex and the vertical supply chain touches so many points, people, and places. It is very, very hard to get your head around it all. When I started, I wanted to do it all: follow from grower to sewer to seller to wearer...but in reality the world is a complex place and the global trade corridors and supply chains mean this is very hard to achieve.

Mayamiko entrepreneurship training delivered through Facebook and other accessible online platforms

So, personally, while I keep my eye on the end goal and keep lobbying and influencing for a holistic change on various aspects, I have to work within the current situation. Otherwise, I could be waiting a lifetime! So, my choice has been to influence and improve where I can, and be very honest about it all.

By setting up a social enterprise in Malawi, we ensure our team are well paid and protected. We contribute to the tax system. We are committed to buying local. It is tough because it means we have limited options available in terms of fabrics and trimmings, but more importantly it means

that at every step of our garment making process the local community benefits. For example, I have been working since day one with a group of lady traders to source all our fabric.

Also, our zero waste policy is very important to me. I can see in our small factory how much cutting room waste is produced, and with some creativity all of that can be turned into beautiful products for someone to love and cherish. Same with items that may have not sold as well as we had hoped. Instead of flooding the local second-hand market, we unpick and transform.

I have been recently talking to some larger factories in other places in the world about this concept. For example, the recycling and up cycling branded factory rejects or excess at factory level. I think there could be some interesting solutions to be explored, with benefits to the environment and also to the labour practices applied.

In my small experience at Mayamiko, we start from the main thing – the people who make the garments – how much do we need to pay them fairly so they can have a dignified and empowered life. Then we work it up from there. And you strike a balance between what buyers are prepared to pay. In the end, customers love the story about our garments, but first and foremost they have to love the products to make the decision to buy. You don't want to pull on the heart's strings – those customers are not likely to be happy and come back for more unless they love what they have bought. And the way the products are made, their story is important, but the key thing is to make products that people love to wear. Sustainability is the end game, and that's where my eyes are fixed on.

What topics most interest you?

I have a pretty varied range of interests: organic lifestyle, international development, NLP, yoga, the digital word, travelling and any new cool things my nieces and nephews introduce me to!

What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?

It's the reason I get up in the morning!

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

I am working with some large garment manufacturers to help them think about ways in which they can introduce new sustainable practices in their operations, and also how to communicate their sustainability efforts better and I am working with some small artisan groups on exciting new products. I am focusing on solar and renewable energy. And I am doing lots of yoga, including aerial and acro, which I love.

Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?

You asked me some very difficult questions! I hope I have answered them adequately.

Thank you for your time, Paola.

An Interview with April and Garrett of YSTR Clothing (Part One)

November 15, 2016

YSTR was founded to provide a better alternative to modern shopping.

Garrett Gerson, Co founder and CEO of YSTR first got into business at a young age from selling cars and MC-ing at events, to running family-owned restaurants and bars across LA county. Garrett pretty much did it all growing up in his driven, family-oriented household. Because of this, his interests weren't necessarily restricted by a particular medium or industry; instead, Garrett thrived on disruptive innovations and businesses that thought outside the box.

After working for several independent labels post-college, Garrett paired his knack for business management with an appreciation for the dynamic, rapidly-evolving nature of the fashion industry by launching his own line in 2009. After seven years of success, Garrett and his business partner April decided that it was time to disrupt their own careers. The two of them took the steps to exit the wholesale business and form a new e-commerce brand, YSTR, in hopes to change the way fashion is created and delivered in this modern era.

April Liang, Co Founder and COO is a California native who grew up in Malibu. April fell into the fashion industry at age 20 as a production assistant of a local contemporary line. In 5 short years, April rose from assistant to a full-fledged partner and director of development and production.

During this time, April's hands-on approach to every aspect of the company expanded her knowledge of the true ins and outs of fashion manufacturing and began to question the traditional, daresay outdated, way things were done in the wholesale business. In 2016, April and her business partner Garrett decided to start a new chapter in their lives and launch YSTR, a fashion e-commerce brand that aims to proactively adapt to the changing industry landscape by creating beautiful clothes whilst minimizing fashion waste. April continues to do what she does best and runs YSTR's production and overall operations.

How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?

We had a contemporary wholesale business than we ran for 7 years and followed the basic manufacturing process. The issues that came with this, is the overproduction that you would need to produce each season to hit minimums, allocate for exchanges, returns and damages. After producing, there is a limited time given to sell all this excess before markdowns, giveaways had to happen.

Taking our knowledge with everything we learned we decided to re structure the business. Realizing that if we were not willing to pay \$400 for something, most people would not either but also taking into consideration the environmental impact that fast fashion has and on carrying any type of inventory.

We decided to leverage technology and social platforms to create a more sustainable ecommerce direct to consumer marketplace. We create your basic essential silhouettes with a contemporary twist and not selling by traditional seasons. What fast fashion has created as the new norm with 52 seasons a year, we have gone back and shifted to what we believe fashion should be and release small drops with clothes that can be worn yearly and become your closet essentials. We

are not carrying an inventory of product, we minimize waste and it allows us to do single item orders.

People are starting to be aware of the affect this industry is having on the environment and making more conscious choices on what and why they purchase.

What is the importance of the idea of ethical and sustainable fashion to you?

The fashion industry has become a gluttonous, oversaturated industry where companies are overproducing garments in order to bring down costs (and therefore prices) on products that are disposable and will inevitably end up in landfills, polluting our earth. I don't think we're necessarily disrupting the industry, we just want to grow a company that celebrates what fashion used to be and what fashion SHOULD be: thoughtfully-crafted clothes that are responsibly made.

We don't want to make clothes just to satiate our desire to design or turn a profit – we want to approach the fashion industry in a way that will allow our daughters, sons, nephews, and so on to have a beautiful world to live in in the future. Our innovation doesn't come from looking at ourselves as a company that only cares about the bottom line – it comes from looking at ourselves as part of a community.

I think we're all just really proud to be a part of this shift towards sustainable fashion, and be able to tie our anti-waste method of manufacturing with really great, high-quality clothes that are sold at approachable price points. It's up to innovative companies and individuals to disrupt the industry's current norms, and we want to do what we can to support that.

What about ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?

People are starting to open their eyes to what's really happening in the industry and its films like *The True Cost* or brands like Tom's that are educating people and approaching business and creation as an extension of humanity – not just a way to capitalize on others. We believe that a good portion of consumers have gotten over the “razzle dazzle” of value-based trend shopping and are really starting to read between the lines – or threads – of the clothes they're purchasing and becoming more aware of their impacts.

But knowledge is just the first step – a consumer needs to have options. By having ethical and sustainable fashion designers jump on board, and giving individuals an alternative that makes sense for their lifestyle/budget etc. that's when they can actually make the choice to change their habits and then start sharing their knowledge with others

What is YSTR Clothing?

YSTR was founded to provide a better alternative to modern fashion shopping. We create beautifully crafted clothing, using sustainable cut to order technologies to combat the industry's alarming level of fashion waste.

What are some of its feature products?

YSTR carries out your basic essentials and daily needs that can be worn throughout the year. From our popular full look pieces the Anais apron dress and Hardy jumpsuit, to your classic oversized petal back Chloe blouse and your must have bodysuits and basics, these items are all closet essentials that can be dressed up for a night into town or worn out on a daily.

An Interview With April and Garrett of YSTR Clothing (Part Two)

November 15, 2016

Many factors come into the fold for consideration within this movement. It is international, moderate in size, and growing. Tragedies such as the [Rana Plaza collapse](#), 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 in 1911 and the Pakistan Garment Factory Fires in 2012. This implies human rights, worker rights, and, in many instances, women's and children's rights. What are the importance of human rights and worker rights in this new movement, and to the garment industry?

The problem that dictates this is the desire of people wanting to purchase cheap things and always wanting to have newness that has created this issue. The people that get squeezed out are the garment workers in 3rd world countries and by continuing to produce in this fast fashion type of manner; consumers are potentially contributing to human slavery without having the knowledge. They are contributing to the environmentally harmful and physical outcomes by purchasing these items.

There is a cycle that happens and by understanding this process you are able to create a solution. We have viewed this problem from the outside and have worked backwards. We start with paying our workers a fair living wage, we have a clean healthy environment for them to work in, we then purchase fabrics that would either be thrown away or are sustainable or ecofriendly, and from this we are able to create quality garments that will last more than ex 4-8 washes.

What fast fashion has created, is setting such a low price point that everyone feels the need to sell at and what we needed to figure out is how to meet that price point but also making it ethical. The solution was to leverage technology, educating our workers and streamlining manufacturing and sell direct to consumer. By cutting out inventory and all the middlemen that take a percentage before it gets to the end user, we are able to sell as a ethical alternative to fashion at a wholesale price point but also keeping the products at a quality price.

Women and children are the majority of the exploited and violated work forces. What about the status of women's and children's rights as well? 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, to acquire an education, and to be self-sufficient. What is the relationship between the need to implement women's rights and children's rights, which have existed for a long time, in this domain of the working world? 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?

The previous 3 questions we feel are relatable and can be tied together as a whole. It is initially a humanitarian problem and the only way to solve it is by educating the end consumer and having them choose to spend their dollars on brands that are making a difference. Prior to YSTR, there haven't been any brands that are creating a sustainable line with the contemporary design at the price point we are offering at.

This problem only exists with the lack of educating the public of the manufacturing process and having no alternative options. We as a society need to educate ourselves and think about the purchases we make and demand a 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?

Fast fashion brands have created a norm and a foundation of what is being sold and at an unbeatable price point. At the end of the day, it is brands like us, even though we are small, we need to get the visibility and have people educated and address the change. The investments in our clothes go beyond just the garment lasting a long time but it is supporting every humanitarian aspect as well.

By stating the facts and giving the consumers an alternative option, they are able to slowly implement these changes into their daily lifestyle choices. Once brands start seeing a movement with sustainability, more companies will follow. We are the trailblazers in starting something new.

What topics most interest you?

Sustainability, the environment, technology, fashion, design, architecture

What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?

Being the change and being able to create and inspire people through our clothes and offering them a better alternative that is ethical

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

Only this, because this is what we believe in.

Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?

Sometimes it takes the power of one to make a difference to blaze a trail for others to see that there is opportunity to create change. The earth that we have is spaceship earth, the more we mind burn and pollute, there will be a point we won't have something that is beautiful and pristine, it is now that we need to do something about cleaning up the environment.

An Interview With Mandy Multerer of My Sister

November 17, 2016

MY SISTER's mission is to prevent sex trafficking, educate communities, empower the population, provide after-care for survivors and offer growth opportunities to at-risk women through the sales of our statement-making, ethically-sourced apparel and accessories.

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

I attended university in MN for advertising and marketing. There, I had a work study job where my boss started teaching me graphic design skills. It was a great way to add that skill to my more strategic studies in classes. After graduating, I spent quite a few years in the real estate industry at national corporations doing a mix of graphic design and managing the marketing efforts, then switched over to the spa industry to get some different experience.

On top of that, I started doing photography and had a small photography business where I met a ton of great people and got to exert all of that extra creative energy. I was friends with my now business partner, Wayne. He told me about a new business that he was working on and I offered to provide some marketing ideas. It quickly turned into me joining the team to launch MY SISTER. Having the opportunity to combine my design, photography and marketing skills in the fashion world with an empowering message, for a good cause, with MY SISTER, was an ideal fit and an opportunity I couldn't pass up.

Personally, I grew up in a smaller town in central WI. I knew from early on I needed to be somewhere bigger and more exciting, eventually leading me to Minneapolis. My boyfriend and I rent a beautiful duplex and have a little loving, but super hyper, Chihuahua named Ruthie. You can hear her barking all over town (she's very social) and she looks like a mini cow with black and white spots. (Maybe it's my inner WI farm girl that subconsciously chose a dog that resembles a cow.~)

How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?

I've always been concerned for the environment but, from the beginning, it was an initiative focused on by Wayne, the co-founder of MY SISTER, as he has a background in the ethical and sustainable food industry. Once I learned more about taking those values and applying them to fashion, I have become more and more invested. Plus, I believe we won't have an earth to fight against trafficking in if we don't take care of our resources (human and otherwise) and planet in a sustainable manner so these initiatives are as important as ever.

What is the importance of the idea of ethical and sustainable fashion to you?

Sex trafficking goes hand-in-hand with the ethical treatment of those working in the fashion/garment industry, so it's a #1 priority for me.

What about ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?

I so look up to and admire those who have paved the way, even when it wasn't as popular to do so. These are truly the change-makers.

What is MY SISTER?

MY SISTER is an apparel retailer fighting against sex trafficking. Through the sale of ethically sourced clothing and accessories, we're able to invest in an exploitation-free world. On a regular basis, we do things like: fund and partner with non-profits, empower and employ survivors, and educate and connect with communities.

What are some of its feature products?

Statement-making tees and sweatshirts – Make Herstory, Equality, Feminist, You're Not The Boss Of Me, Liberation, We are all human together, etc.

Many factors come into the fold for consideration within this movement. It is international, moderate in size, and growing. Tragedies such as the Rana Plaza collapse, 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 in 1911 and the Pakistan Garment Factory Fires in 2012. This implies human rights, worker rights, and, in many instances, women's and children's rights. What are the importance of human rights and worker rights in this new movement, and to the garment industry?

Sex trafficking is directly linked to worker rights in the industry. If we want to create a better world, this is a great place to make a huge impact with it being such a monumental industry. Every ethical fashion purchase can make a difference. We should all be asking ourselves if getting that cheap accessory or garment is worth a human being's health and wellbeing?

Women and children are the majority of the exploited and violated work forces. What about the status of women's and children's rights as well?

This is my mission – to create opportunities for these girls and women. These two populations (as well as many others) have been exploited in too many ways for too many years and our world is suffering due to it.

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, to acquire an education, and to be self-sufficient. What is the relationship between the need to implement women's rights and children's rights, which have existed for a long time, in this domain of the working world?

More women in the working world equals more thoughtful, impactful business and money being reinvested back into their families, in turn, providing more education and a better future for their children. More opportunity for children to become educated in schools as opposed to working in garment factories equals the world's future change-makers being given the chance to do so.

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?

There are a ton of great documentaries and books on these issues. Educating yourself and taking a moment to spread that bit of education on to others through conversation and social media to raise awareness can all really help. In addition to that, voting with your dollars and knowing what you're purchasing and who's being exploited in the process can make the biggest impact.

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?

Making thoughtful purchases and working with or donating to organizations that are in those countries taking action and working on solutions.

What topics most interest you?

Gender equality

Homelessness

Animal rights (I'm a long-time vegetarian.)

Creativity

Music

Yoga

What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?

I know that with everything I do for the company, it is making positive change for someone. I also just love it that we are an outlet for people – a way to speak up and take action against some of the things that need addressing in our world. Plus, being in a place where I can help offer vulnerable women opportunities is the best feeling no matter what else is going on.

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

MY SISTER is pretty all-consuming right now as we are focused on growth and employing more survivors as we move along into 2017. In my spare time, I like to get outside or create crafty and artsy things.

Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?

In a world where things can often feel overwhelming and uncontrollable, we each have the opportunity to take steps in the right direction. It doesn't have to be all at once. Even giving 5 dollars or 5 minutes of your time to a person who needs it, can make a difference. Take action.

Thank you for your time, Mandy.

An Interview with Drakshan Khan of Purple Impression (Part One)

November 21, 2016

Purple Impression is a Fair trade brand that aims to bring people together through art and fashion. They work with women artisans in Pakistan who hand embroider the designs. Their goal is to provide them with employment, fair pay and direct access to broader market giving them an opportunity to educate their children and become financially independent.

Young girls learning how to embroider and sew their own clothes at an artisan's home

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

I like to introduce myself as a mom and a global citizen who is a hybrid of many cultures. I was born in Pakistan, and grew up in Dubai and the United States. I studied Finance and Economics from Kent State University, Ohio and started my career in banking, and then moved to Marketing Strategist role for an interior design firm in California. After having children, I took a break from work while keeping myself involved in philanthropic work that benefited women and children.

How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?

I believe that the concept of conscious consumerism was something that was brewing inside of me since childhood. Having lived in different countries around the world, I have witnessed firsthand the loss of traditional crafts, exploitation of workers and the effects of fast fashion on the factory workers and the planet. [Rana Plaza](#) was a wake up call that shook me to the core. I knew I had to take action and do something. I channeled my anger into doing something about women's development. This led me to my parents' hometown in Pakistan that has a rich culture of hand embroidery done by women, who despite an amazing talent find it hard to make ends meet often due to exploitation from local middlemen.

Asma, the maker of the Asma boyfriend shirt. The mission is always to connect you with the makers of your clothes so there's always a name and a face with your pieces connecting you with it.

What is the importance of the idea of ethical and sustainable fashion to you?

My background in economics has turned me into an activist for conscious consumption and socially responsible businesses. I am a big fan of Muhammad Yunus and would like to quote one of his sayings:

In my experience, poor people are the world's greatest entrepreneurs. Every day, they must innovate in order to survive. They remain poor because they do not have the opportunities to turn their creativity into sustainable income.

The Fashion industry employs 57.8 million people globally. Imagine the impact on these lives if every garment worker was paid ethically for their work. This is why ethical and sustainable fashion are extremely important and there is a need to push for more education and transparency in this industry.

What about ethical and sustainable fashion designers and companies?

It is so wonderful to see the amount of ethical companies growing. Consumers are asking for variety and it's nice to be able to provide people with alternatives that cater to their taste while benefiting the makers. So I am really excited to see this industry grow.

What is Purple Impression?

Purple Impression is a socially responsible high fashion brand that employs women artisans in Pakistan who hand embroider our designs.

What are some of its feature products?

Our hand embroidered scarves definitely stand out anywhere because of their craftsmanship and vibrant colors. They make the perfect accessory because the rich embroidery of the scarf really draws people, which makes it a statement piece. Additionally, we just launched our Nomad Tee with the intention to bring people together through art and fashion. It is a collaboration of three different artists. A San Francisco based designer Elaine Hamblin, Iranian Calligrapher Arash Shirinbab, and our artisans work has been fused into the tee to spread the message of Peace, Love and Unity.

What makes it unique?

Everything we design and create always has a meaning and a purpose. By fusing the traditional hand embroidery from one of the oldest cities in the world (Multan, Pakistan), our designers in San Francisco are able to create exclusive, hand crafted pieces while preserving this dying art. Each garment comes hand signed by its maker, often showing the construction through videos. We want our customers to build a sense of connection with their garment, which adds meaning to their wardrobe.

Also, in line with our commitment to sustainability we try and work with natural, recycled fabric, create minimal to zero waste by using hand cutting techniques that utilize selvage edge within the design and incorporate creative hand embroidery techniques that make use of leftover fabrics.

Who tend to be the customer base?

We have a global customer base. Women who are well traveled. That care about the rights of other women and want to support the global artisan sector.

What advice would be of use to new business owners?

For new business owners, you should definitely have a component of education in your business strategy because even though the ethical fashion movement is growing there is still a need to educate consumers about why it matters and the impact sustainable fashion has on its makers and the planet.

An Interview with Drakshan Khan of Purple Impression (Part Two)

November 21, 2016

How can fashionistas, and fashionistos, become more informed on the rights of garment workers, the violations of those rights, and the general sources of their clothes?

I think a good place to begin is by doing some research about how your clothes are made. A platform such as yours is an amazing resource for this. If people want to get more specific information about a brand, then a good starting point is reading the ethos of a company and what they stand for. Know how transparent they are about their production and how much information do they share about their garments.

Soft and lightweight tunic made with cotton khadi fabric that is completely natural and un-dyed with embroidery and mirror work.

Many factors come into the fold for consideration within this movement. It is international, moderate in size, and growing. Tragedies such as the Rana Plaza collapse, 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 in 1911 and the Pakistan Garment Factory Fires in 2012. This implies human rights, worker rights, and, in many instances, women's and children's rights. 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?

I truly believe that the longer a supply chain gets, the more difficult it becomes to have a good control over the rights of the workers. As designers, we should always look for ways to keep the supply chain as small as we can. Visit the factories and meet the makers of your designs. Ask questions about worker rights and how much they are getting paid, and then do some research about the actual cost of living for workers in that country yourself. We cannot simply rely on the numbers reported by local governments because most often those do not give a true picture of how much it costs for a worker to sustain a livelihood for a family.

Women and children are the majority of the exploited and violated work forces. What about the status of women's and children's rights as well?

It is true that women and children are often the most exploited and sadly most often it is those women and children who are going through some extreme hardships in life who have no choice and are forced to give in to the abuse. The recent news about Syrian refugee children being used by Turkish garment factories is an example of this. There needs to be more accountability from these factories, especially the smaller second tier ones – where the abuse most often goes unreported.

The almond tribal scarf is lightweight and made from Cotton Khadi fabric known to keep you cool in the summer and warm in winters.

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, to acquire an education, and to be self-sufficient. What is the relationship between the need to implement women's rights and children's rights, which have existed for a long time, in this domain of

the working world? 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?

First of all, we have to put more pressure on the bigger brands who have the production quantity to bring a change in this industry. These companies have the power to reach out and influence local governments to improve worker conditions. Additionally, question every purchase you make. Educate yourself on where what you are buying was made, and by whom. What are the ethos of the company you are choosing to buy from? As consumers, we can do this by our dollar and by choosing to support fair trade companies across all industries. Share your knowledge with friends and family, because what I have found out in my own experience is that it's not that people don't care about the rights of others, but they don't know about its negative impact.

Asma button down shirt is made with breathable cotton Khadi and designed with all day comfort in mind.

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?

It is very important to be well aware of the culture of the country where you are operating. Being well acquainted with the culture gives us a lot of information and ability to pick up on things and people who can be exploited and are vulnerable. We, for example, operate in the remote villages of Pakistan where men in the same field of work feel that women don't deserve to be paid as much as them because they work out of their homes and don't have much responsibility. Being aware of this, we not only make sure that the women are paid equivalent as their male peers, but also educate and empower them to value themselves and their work.

An Interview with Drakshan Khan of Purple Impression (Part Three)

November 21, 2016

What have been honest mistakes in the foundation and development of Purple Impression?

I would say too much flexibility and lack of future planning in the running of the business. The plan with Purple Impression initially was to connect with an NGO to get our designs produced, but, when we travelled, we found ourselves in the heart of the area known for hand embroidery. It didn't make sense to go through an NGO in a different city so we decided to set up our own production. It was an "in the moment" decision. We had to face many challenges of running a production facility in a place we have not spent much time in before. People had a different way of working and different work ethics – which can be frustrating, but I guess with time you learn and are more prepared as you move on.

What lessons can you impart to new business owners from them?

It is good to be flexible, but flexibility without a plan can be stressful. Whatever decision you make in your business make sure to have your short and long term goals figured out and try to chart all the scenarios that you might run into to get to that goal and decide ahead of time what decision you will lean towards if you were to run into that situation.

What have been the greatest emotional struggles for you?

The greatest struggle I'd say has been while choosing the artisans. We try to reach out to artisans that are skilled and deserving, but sometimes we are faced with the challenge of choosing between the women's skills or their need for work. This was a struggle initially, but we decided to create a program where lower skilled women could still get employed. But worked on smaller, less detailed designs that perhaps don't need the mastery that some of the other designs might require. This gives them the ability to build up their skills, being able to take on other work as time goes by.

With respect to fair trade practices, what is the importance of them to the garment industry workers, especially those in some of the poorer areas of the world?

I believe fair trade is the key to lift many workers out of poverty. Most often, workers in developing countries live under poverty not because they do not work, or are unskilled, but due to lack of a living wage. At exploited wages, a worker is barely able to put food on the table for his family and pay rent, but a fair wage can mean education for their children and health care.

What can effectively attenuate the negative effects of pollution, climate change, and human rights abuses?

The move toward a more ethical production and sustainability is a step forward in the right direction but there is still work to be done. We have to educate the consumers more about the effects of fast fashion and give practical solutions to how a shift in their consumer habit can have a positive impact on the people and the planet.

What can reduce the rate of modern slavery and improve the status of women?

A fair living wage is step one in reducing modern day slaves and this can only be done by educated consumers who put pressure on bigger companies across all industries holding them

accountable for their operations. As for the women, we can definitely do more by supporting causes and businesses that work towards women's development and girls' education. We should definitely support the artisan sector which is the second largest employer of women after agriculture. Supporting these causes means more education and financial independence for women which enable them to empower themselves and stand up for their rights.

How can men become more involved on-the-ground in the implementation of international women's rights?

Men can be more involved by supporting and being present at causes that are working towards the betterment of women worldwide. They can also help spread awareness about issues that affect women's rights, especially of those in developing countries.

What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?

I really think that I have found my calling in this work. I have always been very passionate about women's rights. As a child, I would hear some of the women share their stories about their difficulties of living under poverty and a patriarchal society during my summer visits to Pakistan and I could only feel helpless and listen, but it's really rewarding and fulfilling now to be able to do something for them and know that the work you are doing is making some impact in their lives and that slowly, but surely we are able to change things for them.

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

With another baby on the way, my time right now is divided between Purple Impression and family. To raise the next generation that has compassion and love for all is not at this time and so just struggling between being a mom and entrepreneur quiet honestly as this time.

Any feelings or thoughts in conclusion?

If you are a consumer reading this then know that your dollar has immense power to make an impact. With every dollar we spend, we are supporting and promoting at least five different values and these are the values of the company you choose to spend your money on. So be mindful and dig deeper into the products you consume.

Thank you for your time, Drakshan.

An Interview with Sica Schmitz of Bead and Reel (Part One)

November 27, 2016

Bead & Reel is your one-stop shop for ethical fashion. Founded by stylist and costume designer Sica Schmitz, Bead & Reel is the woman-owned, vegan-owned boutique committed to helping women love themselves and others through empowered and empowering fashion.

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

I grew up in a very small town in Washington state and then studied art and art history in Oregon followed by fashion design in New York. After graduating, I was hired on an independent film in Seattle as the Wardrobe Assistant and just fell in love with filmmaking and the power of clothing to tell stories. There weren't a lot of costume opportunities in Seattle so I packed up my car and drove to Hollywood, where (with a lot of hard work) I then spent the next 8 years working in Costume Design for film and television, including the indie hit *Safety Not Guaranteed* and ABC's *Castle*. For about 2 years during that time I was living in a small RV I had renovated, traveling around the country on my way to different costume jobs. It was a very exciting life, and one I gladly gave up for Bead & Reel.

How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?

The first costume designer I worked under was interested in sustainable fashion long before I'd heard anyone else talk about it. She was very conscientious about including sustainable brands in her projects and it definitely sparked an interest in me, though it would be many years before I got very serious about it. The real shift happened for me in 2013. I had gone vegan around the same time as the Rana Plaza collapse, and both events were making me question what I was wearing. I started trying to avoid leather, wool, and other animal products, while also learning more about what was happening to garment workers around the world. The more I learned about the many, many costs that went into what I was wearing, the more I decided I couldn't participate in it. I've been working in sustainable fashion ever since.

How did your educational/professional experience inform fashion work?

Fashion has always been at the center of my life. I studied it in college and had jobs and internships in every aspect of it throughout adulthood (retail, PR, editorial, fashion design, costume design, and now the founder of a start-up). I don't think a history in fashion is required to work in fashion, but a passion for it definitely is.

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

If there aren't better options (better brands, better stores), then customers can't make better choices. Sustainable fashion designers and retail companies are vitally important in offering good options to those who are trying to make more ethical purchases.

Sustainable companies are the ones leading the way in textiles innovations, workers rights, animal rights, and business models that benefit the greater good.

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

I'm a huge fan of Kate Black from Magnifico, though the sustainable fashion world is so full of inspiring people that I could list dozens!

What is Bead & Reel?

Bead & Reel is a one-stop shop for ethical fashion. It is an online boutique focused on eco-friendly, cruelty-free, sweatshop-free fashion, carrying over 60 conscious brands and hundreds of styles. But more than that, Bead & Reel is a lifestyle around bettering our world through our purchases and actions, and we provide the brands and ideas for how to do that.

What are some of its feature products?

We have a broad range of products from clothing, shoes, handbags, jewelry, accessories, and gifts for homes and babies. We feature 13 searchable ethics including Vegan, Made in USA, Gives Back, and Female Founder. Obviously I love all of our products but I especially adore our organic cotton [V Bralette](#), modal [Harem Jumpsuit](#), and organic cotton [Bootcut Jeans](#) because of their quality, comfort, and flattering cuts.

What is your customer base – the demographics?

Our customer is an educated, caring woman who values style. She doesn't shop with us accidentally, but instead because she is actively seeking to make better choices.

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 are the importance of human rights and worker rights in this new movement, and to the garment industry?

Human rights is one of our main focuses at Bead & Reel and also a pillar of ethical fashion. I don't think it's a new movement – people have been fighting for garment workers rights for generations, but the massive growth in population and in our consumption of fashion means that now more than ever we must protect the lives and livelihoods of those who make our clothes.

I also view human rights as necessary for self love. If we are not honoring the bodies and lives of others through our purchases, how are we ever going to be able to honor our own body and life? So if you want more confidence, higher self esteem, and to feel more love, start with what you buy. By showing it to others, we are able to show it to ourselves.

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?

Women make up over 80% of global garment workers, and study after study has shown that when women are treated and paid well, it empowers entire communities. The impacts of basic worker rights are far-reaching and necessary for a more peaceful, more just world.

Similarly, when children – especially girls – are in school (instead of working) it lowers rates of child marriage, leads to fewer pregnancies and less complications, and correlates to lower adolescent diseases and mortality.

If we want to uplift communities and end poverty, we must start by uplifting women and children.

An Interview with Smita Paul of Indigo Handloom (Part One)

October 6, 2016

Tell us about yourself, some personal story and how you got involved in ethical and sustainable fashion.

Before Indigo Handloom, I was a journalist. I didn't work in the fashion industry at all. I got an assignment to do a story about textiles in the silk weaving industry in India. Once I arrived there, I went to all these different places from the silk worm farms to the auction houses to the spinning-reeling factories to weaving-textile mills. I also went to a place where they made silk by hand.

I started asking questions about the people making the cloth. I discovered that the weavers were subsidized by the government and that this subsidy was soon going away. I wondered how they were going to feed their families and felt encouraged to help.

It was this social calling that led me to leave journalism. I thought I'd be more effective if I could help these weavers get work and live among their families rather than limit my contribution to a news story.

Although I didn't start out with a goal to change the fashion industry, as I dug deeper I realized some changes needed to be put into place. Maybe, the old fashion way is a better way of doing things, which provides a better product that doesn't exploit people. And that's when I fell in love with handloom.

What is the importance of ethical and sustainable fashion to you?

The ethical and sustainable fashion movement is certainly important because the fashion world has so many unethical practices. For one, it is the second largest polluting industry after the oil industry.

People don't really understand how it became this way. The whole industry has made a few people very rich and many others very poor because of the lack of transparency. When working with artisans, many large fashion houses won't pay in advance – which is against fair trade policies. This creates a huge liability on small factories whose order could be cancelled over one phone call.

Since 2003 Indigo Handloom has worked with artisans in rural India to preserve traditional handloom and khadi techniques that maintain the livelihoods of many as well as bring a new appreciation for handmade textiles.

Bargaining and bidding wars are also prevalent allowing large companies to use their power to go country to country seeking the cheapest price. Completely unregulated, it is no longer 'we're in a business together'. There's nobody watching this. Unless, of course, something like Rana Plaza happens.

Also, the fashion industry has access to thousands of chemicals and washes -some known carcinogens- and they are being sprayed onto our clothing. The chemical ridden water waste is then being dumped back into our riverways.

With very few watchdogs, there is simply no transparency. There are efforts. Some brands are making efforts to be transparent by checking out factories and compliances, and making sure the people that make their products are not in dangerous situations. As for an ultimate solution, I don't know the precise answer, but I am glad that there are people taking up the cause to do things in a different way.

An Interview with Sica Schmitz of Bead and Reel (Part Two)

November 27, 2016

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 women play a vital role in changing the fashion industry and the world. According to MIC, women make up 80% of fashion purchasing power and yet account for 0% of apparel Fortune 500 CEOs. Women need more leadership roles and to have their voices heard, and other women can demand this with how they shop by supporting women owned businesses. I believe that by having more equality in positions of power it will lead to more concern for garment workers and benefit the entire supply chain.

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?

I think it’s up to us as individual to fix this until we are able to get legislation to catch up. Fortunately we live in a time where there are a lot of information and resources out there, including [Trusted Clothes](#), [Project JUST](#), and a variety of Fair Trade [certifications](#). These are great places to pick up information, find sharable articles, and discover brands to support. But before worrying about others, make sure you are using your own purchasing power to make responsible choices that exclude child labor, both supporting the brands that don’t use child labor, and avoiding the ones that do.

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?

Everyone should remember the power of their dollars. Every time we purchase something, we are voting for or against the practices it supports. If we want to protect vulnerable populations, we have to support companies that empower them, and take our money away from companies that exploit them.

If you’re a consumer, write to the companies you like and ask them “Who Made My Clothes?” If you’re a designer, get involved in your supply chain. We each wear clothing everyday, so we each have a role in fixing the fashion industry and protecting the vulnerable.

What topics most interest you?

I’m fascinated by textiles innovations and passionate about vegan fashion, empowering women, and giving back. As a Costume Designer, I am also very interested in the stories we tell with our clothing, and specifically, how we can tell more loving stories about ourselves through what we wear (hint: ethical fashion plays a huge role in this!).

Handmade dolls by Jessie's Place, a Fair Trade Nonprofit community center in Rwanda that educates and employs mentally and physically disabled individuals, teaching that a disability of the spirit is far worse than one of the body.

Did you have a mentor in this work?

I didn't really know anyone in sustainable fashion when I first started working in this space, so I figured it out myself as I went. I'm sure a mentor would have definitely helped!

Have you mentored others?

I have never had a designed mentee, though I have advised many students and individuals wanting to get into sustainable fashion, and try to remain a source of information for my customers, clients, and anyone who wants to join me in changing the world.

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

Mentorship is a wonderful concept, and I think especially in the small (but growing) world of sustainable fashion, the more we can help and encourage each other, the more it will benefit all of us.

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

Women are the dominant employees and spenders in fashion, though men still hold the most positions of power. I think there are a lot of reasons for this. So much of a woman's worth is placed on our physical appearance, and what we wear is a part of this. It's deeply ingrained in us starting at birth that our identity and value is tied to how we look. Billions of dollars are spent trying to get women to buy fashion (specifically women, since they spend more on fashion than men do), and so I think a lot of women do develop deep feelings for it. We all "love" fashion.

Additionally, culturally, women are not typically encouraged to pursue STEM careers, and jobs within fashion are easily accessible to those with degrees and backgrounds in art, design, sales, or marketing.

What personal fulfilment comes from this work for you?

Ethical fashion is the most fulfilling career I've ever had. Getting to devote my time, money, and life to helping empower women, protecting our environment, saving animals is an absolute dream come true. Every day, I get to hear personal stories about how ethical fashion has changed someone's life – or many lives. And it changes my life every day too.

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

Bead & Reel is my full time job, though I still do [personal shopping and styling](#) for sustainable clients. I'm a writer for [Vilda Magazine](#) and the Fashion Editor the [Ethical Style Journal](#). Through Bead & Reel, I am active in various projects including our quarterly [clothing drive for vulnerable women](#) and our annual [Fair Trade Fashion Show](#). This week, I'm focusing on our [#EthicalBlackFriday](#) initiative.

Any recommended authors or fashionistas?

I actually recently wrote a [blog post](#) about this! I highly recommend Kate Black and Elizabeth L. Cline, and also definitely encourage everyone to out the [Ethical Writer's Coalition](#) for great bloggers and writers in sustainable fashion.

Any recommended means of contacting Bead and Reel?

I'd love to continue the conversation! You can write me at hello@beadandreel.com or [sign up for our newsletter](#) to stay up to date on events, blog posts, and what's new.

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

Thank you so much for the honor of getting to talk about sustainable fashion! Fashion is only as beautiful as the values behind it, and I'm so thrilled to be a small part in changing the values.

Thank you for your time, Sica.

An Interview with Jameela of Alora Boutique (Part One)

November 29, 2016

Alora was founded in 2013 in the beautiful city of Calgary, Alberta. Co-founders and mother-daughter duo of Emilyn and Jameela, began handcrafting jewelry on their kitchen table with the belief that jewelry should be beautiful, personal and meaningful.

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

My name is Jameela and I was born and raised in Calgary, Canada. My father, who passed away when I was 7, was from Ghana, and my mother is from Jamaica. I went to school in Canada and did two years of schooling in Ghana. I went to Mount Royal University and accomplished two things: obtained a Bachelor of Business Administration and met my husband! After graduating I travelled throughout West Africa where I learned a lot about my heritage and embraced the rich, and colourful culture of that region.

Upon coming home, I got a job in insurance, and not even a year later, my husband and I were expecting our first child. After having my first child I decided that I wouldn't be going back to work. My mother and I had been making jewelry as a hobby, so the only logical course of action was to turn my hobby into a business!

I now have two children, am living in Canada, and pursuing my dream of owning an ethical and sustainable business.

How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?

When I went to Ghana I was intrigued by the way that people reused what, to the untrained eye, looked like rubbish. I immediately fell in love with the recycled glass beads that are vibrant and meaningful. Turning waste into something beautiful resonated with me. It seemed like a renewal to me.

This translated into my jewelry design because I grew frustrated with "handmade" jewelry just being various made in China items put together in the West. There was total disregard for the people who made the items, and it undermined the true nature of handmade items. I didn't think that buying and selling cheap items was good for the environment or the economy in the short or long term.

How did your educational/professional experience inform fashion work?

That is a great question! My mother and I have taken two jewelry making classes (one in wirework and one in silversmithing) and our skills have enabled us to create various new designs. We mostly make the things that we like, but we are influenced by our professional relationships with our retail customers. They inform us about the kind of styles that their customers are looking for. We try to balance our sustainable values with current trends. At the end of the day, we balance what we like and what our customers like.

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

The importance of sustainable fashion designers at this point and time is two things: 1) to help educate customers about the importance of sustainable and ethical fashion and 2) to care about people and the environment when other companies turn a blind eye.

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

I am currently looking up to Stella Jean as a fashion icon. She believes that fashion can “become a vehicle for...economic, social and ethical growth and enfranchisement.” She has a global platform for change and she uses it well.

What is Alora Boutique?

Alora Boutique is a meaningful jewelry brand that gives back. We create jewelry from recycled brass and recycled glass beads that are fair trade from Ghana. In addition to creating beautiful jewelry from sustainable materials we give back to two local charities in our community via special collections. Alora creates special collections twice a year and \$10 from the sale of each piece goes towards poverty reduction strategies. We also host networking events and skills workshops for disadvantaged women in our city, so that they can have opportunities that are not readily available to them normally.

What are some of its feature products?

Alora Boutique’s feature products are our recycled brass pendant necklaces specifically our feather necklaces, antler necklace and key necklaces (where \$10 from the sale goes towards poverty reduction in Calgary). These are all available online at www.alora.ca.

What is your customer base – the demographics?

Our customer base are women who truly care about giving back and making their community a better place. They are between 28 -45, volunteer in their community, have typically started a family and believe that we can change the world through our lifestyle and purchase decisions.

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 are the importance of human rights and worker rights in this new movement, and to the garment industry?

Worker’s rights are everyone’s rights. I think the people forget that when there are standards in labour it has a positive effect for all workers, even those that sit behind a desk. As the rights of the marginalized progress, the rights and expectations of all others is also increased.

For example, because of unions and their wage bargaining power, there is a certain expectation of wages for everyone. The simple fact that unionized workers are paid more than the average person has an effect of the labour market that creates a floor for certain professions and sectors.

In the garment industry, I think that with better worker rights we will all benefit. As consumers, we will likely get better product. When it comes to the workers, we can probably see a decrease in the need for aid and charity to certain countries since the people will be able to take care of themselves. As long as people are paid a fair and living wage in their countries they become self-sufficient. We forget that people don’t need charity, they need proper laws and systems in place to protect them from greedy and unscrupulous people in addition to systems that give them the freedom to create their own destiny.

An Interview with Jameela of Alora Boutique (Part Two)

November 29, 2016

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?

Where to begin! As we create safe conditions for women and children, we create a better society. In North America, we may not think about it because we enforce rules against child labour and women have pretty amazing rights compared to other countries.

The truth is that the rights of women truly help a society to grow. Women's labour force participation is crucial to the growth and innovation of any industry and economy. In the sustainable world, I believe that as we champion women's labour (and paying them fair wages, not discriminating against them if they have children etc) and reject products made by children, we send a message to other people that there is a better way.

I don't think that we can pressure any country to enforce or enact laws that protect their citizens, but we can reward specific businesses and organizations that are in line with what we think is right. As those businesses start to do well, others will take note and follow.

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?

The relationship between women's rights and children's rights is a close one. As women start to gain equality they are in a better position to take care of their children. As a mother of two I understand this. If a woman is getting paid 70% less than a man, as is possible in other countries, then she may HAVE to ask her children to work to pay the bills. Now, if the same woman is getting paid a decent wage, she will ALWAYS put her children first: send them to school, buy them decent clothing, give them great food.

I think that women's rights are children's rights. I would say the 95% of mothers do the best that they can with what they have. They would never put their children in harm's way unless they were forced to. As women gain more equality and power, their children will do better. This is not to say that we don't need children's rights. All I am saying is that as long as a mother has the tools she needs to care for her family (or have access to proper family planning) the better off children are.

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?

I can't say that I have the full answer for this question, but what I would do is talk to the people around you about these issues – get them thinking about it. Personally, I would call up CBC and ask them to do a story on this issue. The media has a lot of power (rightly or wrongly). If you find an organization that is doing good work in this field share their message and consider supporting their cause through your time or financially. I would also implore people to really do

their research before sending money to a charity. Check how they spend their funds and inquire about their long-term plans.

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?

Ask questions! If you are a designer, ask your suppliers about the materials they use, ask about the labour conditions. Request to see the facilities that the products are made in. Source as local as possible. That way you know exactly who made your items.

As a consumer, I always shop local for clothing and other household items. If I do buy clothes that are made overseas I shop consignment. I do my research before I buy things. I will go online, look up the company, and then go back and buy the thing I want.

Another thing you can do as a customer is write a letter (seriously, no one gets mail anymore, so it makes it special!). I once wrote a letter to my car maker complaining about their sponsorship of the World Cup in Qatar. There are some serious human rights violations going on with the construction of facilities. I told them that my last car was a Hyundai, I just bought a new Hyundai, my sister drives a Hyundai, and they could be sure that if they don't review their sponsorship they would be losing a customer.

I did get a response back from Hyundai Canada saying that they would take up the issue with the global office. I really appreciated the response. I know that my personal lifetime spend with the company isn't big, but at least they know that someone, somewhere is watching. If I care and took the time to tell them, then at least 10 other people care!

At the end of the day, it really comes down to a morality thing. Do you care? If you do care, do everything in your power to change a situation or fix a problem.

An Interview with Monica Rojas of Belvele LLC

November 30, 2016

Belvele's founder, Monica Rojas, became fascinated with fashion at a young age. She has worked in the industry for 10 years in various roles, including management, merchandising, and buying. Read more about our interview with her.

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

I was born in Switzerland, and my family is from Ecuador. I spent six years living in each country before moving to the United States at age 12. I became fascinated with fashion at a young age, but I decided to study business management in college, and completed a Master's in Business Administration a few years later. I have worked in the fashion industry for 10 years in various roles, including management, merchandising, and buying.

How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?

I became interested in sustainable fashion once I realized I was contributing to all the negative hidden costs associated with this industry. Just a few months after the Rana Plaza garment factory collapse, I decided to finally take sewing lessons, as making and designing my own clothes had been a dream of mine for years. I apprenticed with Cherry Barthel in Kansas City, and it was evident to me very quickly that the amount of labor it takes to produce a garment is not reflected in the price.

How did your educational/professional experience inform fashion work?

As I began trying to shop more consciously and make my own clothing, I learned more and more about the devastating effects on the environment due to the production and overconsumption of clothing. Eventually, I realized the best way to leverage my experience and skills to improve this industry would be by creating a platform to promote ethical fashion designers.

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

We believe in showcasing the people behind the clothes– the entrepreneurs, designers, and artisans who turn a concept into wearable art. They represent fashion, or what we believe fashion SHOULD be: design, craftsmanship, and sustainability.

One of the reasons people consume mindlessly these days is that there is an assumption that producing these things is easy, that there must be a machine making them. The fact is that in 2016, there is still a person cutting and sewing your shirt, attaching sequins to your dress by hand. They deserve safe working conditions and fair compensation for their labor.

We believe that when people know the story of the people behind the products, they find more value in those items. They are more willing to invest in pieces of higher quality, and to take better care of those items. Fashion is not disposable.

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

There's a multitude of inspiring and influential people in the sustainable fashion world. I would say one of my favorites is Emma Watson. She realized how much influence she has, how much exposure she gets on every action she does, every dress she wears to an event. She is using that

platform to inform her fans of issues that matter to her. This is especially meaningful to me in contrast to so many other celebrities out there, who accept sponsorships from any fashion brand or participate in product collaborations without paying any attention to the production process of the garments they are helping to promote.

What is Belvele LLC?

Belvele is a carefully curated online boutique featuring men's and women's garments that are responsibly sourced, while maintaining a fresh, contemporary aesthetic. By supporting designers who use responsibly sourced materials and manufacturing processes, we help small businesses flourish, and stop contributing to the demand of products that hurt the environment and put people's lives at risk.

What are some of its feature products?

We feature men's and women's clothing made with organic, natural, or recycled fibers. All products are either made in the US or fair trade certified. Designers include: Amour Vert, Apolis, Emerson Fry, Elise Ballegeer, Esby, First Rite, Groceries Apparel, Jungmaven, Maison du Soir, Miakoda NY, Micaela Greg, Make it Good Apparel, Threads 4 Thought.

What is your customer base – the demographics?

Our customer base consists mainly of millennials in the United States, who are interested in supporting independent designers and/or ethical fashion.

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 are the importance of human rights and worker rights in this new movement, and to the garment industry?

I believe that although technology has brought about many ways to distract ourselves from things that matter, at least part of our generation is using technology to learn more about how the world works and connect with people around the globe. The garment industry has been profiting through the exploitation of people who have few or no other options to survive, and they have used flashy marketing and cheap prices to distract people from their actions. It is up to us to shed a light on these issues and give a voice to these people, while also highlighting those few in the industry who are doing it right.

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?

Women and children are clearly more vulnerable and depend on this work to survive, as they have few or no other options. It is up to us, the consumer, to demand that the brands we support provide fair wages and safe working conditions.

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?

I am not an expert in this subject. I would recommend that consumers change their shopping habits to shop less, shop better, make it last. The first step is to shift our culture away from consumerism. If people start INVESTING in items of better quality, they will have more emotional connection, gain more satisfaction from them, and will be more likely to use that item for an extended period of time. Consumers must also demand transparency from brands that they would like to buy from. All retailers depend on buyers, so in the end, the consumer makes the rules. Designers and fashion brands must take accountability for their production process.

What topics most interest you?

My interests range from economics to literature, music, and any form of art. The reason that Fashion is interesting to me is its ever-changing nature, and the juxtaposition of art and function.

Did you have a mentor in this work?

I try to learn something from almost every person I come in contact with, but Cherry Barthel, my mentor in design and construction definitely had a major impact in my vocation and career path.

Have you mentored others?

I have been in management and leadership roles for over a decade, so I have mentored many people along the way. It is very rewarding and a multifaceted learning experience for me as well.

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

I believe that any time people can exchange information and points of view on subjects that interest them, it is highly beneficial to all those involved. It also opens the opportunity for greater creativity.

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

I am more interested in questioning why, even though more women are involved in the fashion industry, it is still usually men holding the highest executive positions at many of these companies. Something doesn't add up there.

What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?

Aside from a creative outlet and the satisfaction of working in a field that interests me, I enjoy feeling like my efforts will serve a higher purpose. I had become disenchanted with the fashion industry when I learned about all of its negative effects on our world. I am able to continue being a part of it, as long as I feel that I am part of the solution to these problems.

Any recommended means of contacting Belvele LLC?

We can be contacted at info@belvele.com. To stay in touch, you can sign up for our newsletter, or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Pinterest](#).

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

We just want to thank you for being part of this movement, bringing awareness to these issues, and helping to highlight designers and brands that are trying to make a difference.

Thank you for your time, Monica.

An Interview with Marcia Admettler of Blue Dolls (Part Two)

December 17, 2016

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?

The maxim, since we do not conceive child exploitation, it is something that must be eradicated. All children must have the right to be educated and right to a childhood, to be children, to play, to be formed, to be happy, this would be a fair world, does a child have the same value as a garment? And not only in the world of fashion, child exploitation is present in many industries, and is regrettable.

Equally, in the case of women, no human being should be exploited under any circumstances.

For these are very important to the work of many organizations of labor with women who have been exploited, which seems to us a great initiative to give them a better life, so that they have access to decent work.

In regards to Blue Dolls®, we have made the complete production process internally since the year 2013, in our own company. We create fair and decent jobs. We respect everyone who collaborates with us.

Previously, we made our collections in local factories with the same philosophy.

We have always supported decent work.

Ethical fashion doesn't include exploitation of any kind.

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?

In my view, if in the most vulnerable societies the wages and rights of women were to be equated with that of men, they would not resort to child exploitation, since conjugal family income would be sufficient for family support.

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?

I think many designers and independent brands are already that way. The problem is with the large fashion industries, unfortunately is a matter of margins and benefits, can the large industries change their attitude?

I think that today there is a lot of information about exploitation in the fashion industry. There are a lot of documentaries. There is talk about it in television programs, in the television news, and so on.

There are constant publications on this subject, but we still see long lines in the mega stores of brands of mass clothing that are still full of people buying in their stores.

If the final consumer is informed and refuses to buy manufactured clothing under exploitation, that would be the end of the problem.

On the other hand, it is true that more and more people are interested in knowing how the garments they buy have been made. That is our public.

What to do? Not to be part of it, not to manufacture in a situation of exploitation. As a brand, we have the responsibility to inform ourselves, to know exactly where and how our garments are made. As a consumer, we must do the same.

What topics most interest you?

Personally, I am interested in topics related to art. I like to enjoy a good exhibition. A good book, music, movies, and everything that nourishes my soul and my mind; on the other hand, I am also informed of the current policy. It is important to be up-to-date, especially when in our country we are going through a somewhat “moved” stage in that aspect, and of course, I am interested in the world of fashion, in all its aspects.

Did you have a mentor in this work?

A specific mentor...no, I have 18 years of experience in the fashion business, during my stages I have learned a lot in different companies, colleagues, department heads, etc., my own experience has been my mentor.

Have you mentored others?

During a stage of my life. I was working as a teacher of fashion design. I don't know if this can be considered mentoring, but it is closest as I've been to it.

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

I imagine that if you have a mentor it should be something important and special, someone to guide you and avoid some mistakes, facilitate the way... but I think this figure of the mentor is not very common in Spain.

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

Personally, I don't have that opinion. At least, in the environments in which I have seen, in the companies that I have worked, the factories with which we have collaborated, I have always seen men in this profession...Perhaps less than women, but it happens in many professions, more women than men, and vice versa.

What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?

For me, it is a complete personal fulfillment. It isn't only a job. For me, and my business partner, it is a way of life. We feel proud of our work. We feel full with what we do. Our motor is the illusion, motivation, and love we feel for our work.

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

In addition to our Fashion Brand Blue Dolls®, we also have a little clothes factory, AD&LOP, in our factory we give support to independent designers and author fashion brands like ours.

Since we don't demand a high minimum of productions, as this is a problem with which the independent design is found, many factories demand lots of clothes to manufacture, that the independent designers cannot assume, in our workshop they find the support and the advice to carry out their productions of limited edition or to initiate their first collection.

We carry out the processes of design of garments, pattern construction, confection, cut, everything that involves the development of a collection. We also have many customers who make sustainable fashion, because in our small factory we work with an ethical development.

Any recommended means of contacting Blue Dolls?

All stores, and customer who wants to buy ethical fashion, made with love, passion, and respect for this work.

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

The feeling that we are doing a good job, that we are many who think that another way of doing things is possible, that there are many people who want change, that is very positive.

Thank you for your time, Marcia.

Thanks to you for this opportunity, Scott.

An Interview with Snow Bibico (Part One)

December 4, 2016

Bibico is an ethical clothing brand renowned for its simple effortless style. Their clothes are made from the best quality natural materials and produced in fair trade cooperatives, certified by the World Fair Trade Organisation. Read more about Bibico with our interview with Snow, Bibico's founder and designer.

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

I am a 39-year-old mother of 2 little girls. I come from the north of Spain, but have been living in the UK for the last 10 years. I did my fashion degree in France and worked for major high street brands, including ZARA, for over 12 years before I started with BIBICO on 2008.

How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?

After working for over 12 years on high street fashion, I got very disappointed on the speed and heartlessness of the fashion world. When I started to work on the fashion business in 1997 with Zara we used to produce 1 collection every 6 months. By the time I finished working for the high street fashion in 2008 for Topshop London, we were producing new collections every week and putting big pressure on price and on the whole production chain....it was too unhuman for me to be part of it so I quit my job in the fashion industry to prove to people that making slow high street fashion at good prices was possible.

How did your educational/professional experience inform fashion work?

I've been working in the fashion industry since I was 18. I've seen with my own eyes lot's of changes in the fashion world. The information is there, the problem is some people don't want to see it....I used to get really down when I was working in London for a major high street brand and used to give instructions to mature Chinese ladies working from a garage in London and getting pay less than £5 per hour

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

Show to the high street world that ethical fashion is possible. Be transparent and inform people...most of the people don't know what is behind their clothes...they just consume....we need to educate people...hard work in this high spending society!!!

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

The ladies that work for us are my heroines...The Spanish lady that set up the cooperative I work with in India. She started to work with underprivileged people in the 60's...she was the pioneer of the ethical world...She did change the lives of thousands of ladies...

What is BIBICO?

An ethical company that wants to prove to people that every day ethical clothing is possible

What are some of its feature products?

Our hand knitted jumpers are always very popular. I guess it is hard to find a hand knitted jumper out there, and people can really appreciate the amount of work behind one hand knitted

jumper...someone has been knitting for 3 to 5 days to finish one jumper, and each piece is unique and made with pure wool.....amazing!

What is your customer base – the demographics?

40- to 60-year-old ladies that believe in good quality products and prefer to buy less but good.

Did you have a mentor in this work?

No, I wish I had one. I come from a family of hard working self-employed people, so I guess they were my mentors.

Have you mentored others?

No, but I will do...I think it is amazing to give back...experience is everything...you can learn lots from book, but the advice of someone that comes from the same background is priceless.

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

Always great to have mentors, but they must come from the same background as you, and from a hand-on experience...There are a lot of mentors out there but they are academic mentors...a good mentor is someone that has done it, not someone that has studied it!!!!

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

I guess us ladies are more into fashion than men. We like to feel good and look good. And for centuries we have been told to knit, stitch, and fix things around the house...For example, 99% of the knitters that make our hand knitted jumpers come from rural Nepal where knitting has always been a necessity and pastime skill. In Nepal, ladies are knitting everywhere, for the house it is necessity, but also as a pass time craft, chatting with their friends over some tea!!!!

An Interview with Snow Bibico (Part Two)

December 4, 2016

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). Women and children are the majority of the exploited and violated work forces. 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?

In BIBICO, we work with WFTO organizations, see link: <http://wfto.com/>. The ladies' organization that we work with in India and Nepal make sure that all of the principals of fair trade are applied every single day.

The core of our business is social, really making sure that no kids are involved in the production of our clothes, and making sure that there is zero discrimination. 99.9% of our staff are ladies. Ladies that come from the street and thanks to working with the cooperatives they get the chance to come out of poverty through work and lots of social coaching to try to bring them out of the poverty chain.

The fact that some of the major high street brands have been abusing people to produce their low cost clothes ranges is unhuman. Everyone should know that behind a t-shirt that cost £5 there should be someone on the other end been exploit.

The story behind kids and ladies exploitation on the fashion world is a long one that cant be explain on an interview...I've seen myself how desperate mothers prefer to send their kids to work to earn some money rather than send them to school...

We are really talking the bottom of the human pyramid....but it really exists. It is there!!!! To make those mothers understand that education is the way to get them out of poverty is hard to understand when you don't have anything to eat.....but it all comes from education, and in our ladies' cooperatives we not only educate the mothers, but we also offer a free in-house kindergarten for all ladies' kids, and schooling service for mature kids.

Women's and kids' right are a must...everyone in this world should have rights...but in these societies we are talking about how they divide themselves in the caste system, and depending on what caste you are born you have rights or not.... It is not just up to us in the West to help them with their rights. It is their own developing society that needs to change. They need to support each other and bring some balance.

What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?

With all the work that I've done, and the super long hours that I put into the business, I often forget what is behind BIBICO. We are not a charity, we are a business so often I forget all the social work and care that is behind each product. But deep down I feel super proud of helping others with my work, I wish I could help more, but we are only a small company trying our best to change the way fashion works.

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

I've started to work with a supplier in India that work with a charity of underprivileged kids. In India, life could be very harsh for lots, and more for families with disabled kids. This organization gives them schooling and work. It is a really great organization and I am proud to be part of it.

Any recommended authors or fashionistas?

We are not into the crazy fashion work. I've been there already when I started to work on fashion at the age of 18. Now, I just believe in nice, simple, wearable quality products to wear now and in 10 years. We are not a fashion lead company.

Any recommended means of contacting BIBICO?

You can contact us through our website. We are always there to discuss and give advice.

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

I just wish more people could see the effort behind any ethical brand. Still to this day, people don't know the amount of extra work involved behind in any of our products. I am working with people that don't come from a fashion background. People that don't wear the same clothes as us in the western world. People from a completely different culture and background...so every new design, every new piece needs to be discussed and made 10 times before getting it right. So, I will really hope that people could have the time to read more about what is behind each piece of clothing...I really hope the clothes could talk!!!!

Thank you for your time, Snow and Tim.

Thanks to you, Scott.

An Interview with Rita Summers of Gone Rustic (Part One)

December 6, 2016

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

I am happily married to Ian, and have 2 adult children and 1 grandchild. I was born in Canada to Dutch parents, but have lived in Tasmania Australia since I was in highschool. It's a great place to live and work! I have a Bachelor's Degree in Education, with an Art Major. In later years I also gained a Diploma in Art Craft Design. I own and operate a gallery and studio in the northeast country town of St Marys, which I opened in 2003. I rented a building to begin with, and the following year my husband and I purchased and renovated the current premises. I have worked in education at various levels as a teacher; I have also worked in management in community organisations.

How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?

When I was young, I was always drawing and designing clothes. I made clothes for my dolls and my sisters' dolls, and later for myself and then my children. There were no opportunities in Tasmania to follow fashion as a career, so my life took a different path for many years. I have always been interested in fabric and sewing, and since opening my gallery have established myself as a textile artist, focusing on both hand and machine techniques. In the process I have been fortunate to win a number of awards and have my work exhibited widely.

I have been eco dyeing fabrics for my textile art since 2008, but after learning from fellow textile artist Aukje Boonstra that vintage nylon could be dyed naturally my imagination took off and I was able to indulge in my first love – fashion! I often use upcycled materials in my textile art, so it was only a small step to upcycle clothing. I now also have a new Blue Label range which includes clothing I've made myself, using found and eco dyed fabrics. I still continue to expand my upcycled clothing range with eco dyeing as well.

How did your educational/professional experience inform fashion work?

Many people have a narrow view of what art is. My fine arts background has given me the confidence and knowledge to push the boundaries of this perception. Art can be made with any medium – artists of the past have shown us that! I bring the principles of fine art to my work, but reinvent it and make it my own. I don't only enter textile art exhibitions; I also enter mainstream art exhibitions, and have been juried into them a number of times. I also won a national art award which was very affirming! Hopefully there will be more ...

It has also been extremely useful to work in management and in community organisations. I believe we need to invest in the communities we live in, especially rural areas, and this has been my focus in opening my business. The result has been that my arts practice has also benefited in unexpected ways!

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

I believe it is extremely important! People in this industry often work in substandard and dangerous conditions, and some have lost their lives because of this. The industry is also very wasteful, and in our consumer society we throw out so many clothes after wearing them only a

few times. This leads to land fill problems. What also concerns me is that the processes used to manufacture and dye commercial fabrics are often detrimental to the environment and to workers' health. I am only one person with a very small business, but it is important to me to do things in the right way, and to give cast off garments a new life and prevent them from being wasted. In this way I feel that I am honouring the work of some anonymous textile worker by giving a garment a new life by reinventing it. I also hope I am making a difference to perceptions about fashion, and try to lead by personal example.

When I use new fabrics, I mostly use remnants, i.e. the leftovers from other people's sewing, or the 'end of roll' bargains in stores and online. Again, I am salvaging something that is deemed to have little or no value, and giving it a new purpose, I also do not import natural dyes. I use what is available around me, so that I don't add to my carbon footprint. This includes plants and leaves from our own property, from the roadside, other people's gardens (with permission) and even onion skins from our local supermarket which would normally be thrown out!

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

There are many people I admire, most of whom are not famous or even hugely successful. I follow them on Instagram, go to their workshops when I can and network with them online and face to face whenever possible. Recently I attended a Sustainable Living Festival in Hobart, and had a stall there in company with other Tasmanian ethical and sustainable fashion designers and makers. We also featured our clothing in a Fashion Parade during the event. It was an inspiring time, and these grass roots artists are the people I truly admire.

Having said that, I have a collection of books by authors who I greatly respect and from whom I've learned so much in relation to eco dyeing but also other processes. Two that come to mind are Alice Fox and India Flint. I have also attended workshops by Tasmanian tutor Aukje Boonstra (mentioned above), whose practices, art and garments are exceptional.

Eco dying by Gone Rustic- Two tops, a scarf and a tunic eco dyed with native cherry + copper; wrapped around iron springs or bars. Layered with 2 kinds of eucalyptus leaves.

What is Gone Rustic?

Gone Rustic is my studio and gallery, based in a renovated building in the main street of our town. This is where I create and display my art and fashion. Until recently, I have also hosted regular exhibitions of other artists, particularly local and regional, to encourage them and bring their work into the public eye. After 13 years, I feel it is time for a change of direction, so the building is on the market. I will keep the business, but will operate it in a different way. I have had an online presence for a number of years and want to build on that, as well as hosting workshops and retreats on some land we have purchased and are building on. My other aim is to participate more in events and markets, which I can only do occasionally now because of my business commitments. I am looking forward to being more flexible, but I will miss the studio and gallery!

What are some of its feature products?

My sign says it all! The jewellery and skin care products are sold on consignment from local makers, but everything else is my work.

What is your customer base – the demographics?

It is mainly women, but the men sometimes come in and buy things for their wives, or attend exhibitions that I host. I sell to the local population, the tourists who visit our area and increasingly online. These days, I am not limited by my geographic isolation.

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 are the importance of human rights and worker rights in this new movement, and to the garment industry?

I think these rights are important across the board, not just in the garment industry. Everyone deserves respect, fair treatment and fair pay. We all need to be appreciated for our skills, and what we earn and how and where we have to work must reflect this. I also believe there are financial benefits to employers and society in general – workers who are paid and treated well will often work harder and show more commitment to their jobs. They will tend to stay longer in the same job, and remain in their local communities. By treating them fairly, workers can invest financially and emotionally in their places of residence. The health benefits are also potentially immense, with less job dissatisfaction or fear of the future. This would improve physical and mental health I'm sure. Call me an idealist, but we underestimate the value of happiness and contentment in our work.

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?

As a woman, and a mother and grandmother, I believe the rights of women and children are vital. We have still not come far enough in treating people of all ages and gender in an equitable and fair manner. This includes western society, but especially those living and working in third world countries.

Continued in part two...

An Interview with Rita Summers of Gone Rustic (Part Two)

December 6, 2016

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 they are inextricably linked. Women are still the main caregivers, and are thus in a very good position to make informed decisions on what is ultimately good for them and for their children. It is important to give women the opportunity to have a say at all levels in the light of this.

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?

First, we need to *care*. We have become somewhat desensitized due to an overload of media and information. We need to consider the impact of certain practices as happening to real human beings. We also need to do our best to make a difference in our own communities and work practices to start with. One person can make a difference. We also have more opportunities to share information about inequalities through the internet, but it is getting harder to verify the sources and accuracy of information. I guess the key thing is, change needs to start with ME.

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?

As I said earlier in this interview, people in the industry and consumers will actually benefit from changing their attitudes and practices, including financially. One online business I have looked at is providing housing and education to its workers, and the payback is better productivity and standard of product. (www.shopvida.com)

What topics most interest you?

Fashion, art, design, sustainability, natural dyes, stitching in all its forms – not necessarily in that order!

Did you have a mentor in this work?

Over the years, I have attended many workshops with both local and international tutors. They have all played an important part in mentoring me, but I do work alone a lot.

Have you mentored others?

Yes, by hosting and/or tutoring workshops, hosting exhibitions, and working with small groups and individuals. This has taken place mostly at my business, but also sometimes at other venues and events around Australia.

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

I think it is important, so that good ethics and practices can be shared. Sometimes people have a certain mindset, and having a mentor can help them to see new possibilities and make attitudinal changes.

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

This could be because people think that the fashion industry isn't an acceptable masculine line of work. Having said that, we have a male couturier and teacher in Launceston, so it can happen! I think we should focus more on talent and opportunity for all, rather than just gender.

What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?

I find it immensely satisfying. I love doing what I do, and I'm very content with where I am and where I am heading.

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

I am on a local committee which has just established a local handmade market this year, focusing on the talents of our local artists, makers and producers. I handle the publicity, and I also participate as a stallholder. (www.facebook.com/thestableshandmademarkettasmania)

From time to time I also write for magazines. My most recent published article is 'Collaborating with Nature', in the current issue of Down Under Textiles (produced by Practical Publishing Pty Ltd).

Any recommended authors or fashionistas (or fashionistos)?

I am intrigued by Julian Roberts' subtraction pattern cutting ideas, and would like to pursue my own designs using his methods. I also love India Flint's work, particularly her costume designs.

Any recommended means of contacting Gone Rustic?

I can be contacted via email or online:

gonerustic@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/gonerusticstudiogallery

www.gonerustic.com

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

One thing I would like to stress is that it is never too late to follow your dreams. Age is not an issue – energy, ideas and enthusiasm are not limited unless we limit them. Often it is our own mindset that we need to overcome.

I really appreciate your giving me the opportunity to talk about what I do via this interview – thank you!

Thank you for your time, Rita.

An Interview with Noorin Khamisani of Outsider

December 16, 2016

Outsider was launched in 2009 with a mission statement that set the scene “Ethical fashion should just look like fashion”. Read more about our interview with Noorin Khamisani and her views on the fast fashion.

I was born in London to a Polish mother and Indian father. I grew up speaking both English and Polish. I was raised knowing some of my family were Muslim, some were Roman Catholic. I found Buddhism in my twenties.

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

I studied Fashion Design at UCA Rochester, upon graduation I worked for independent designers such as Jessica Ogden, Ann-Sofie Back, Susan Cianciolo and Jonathon Saunders. I then worked for more conventional brands including Debenhams, Hobbs and Ted Baker. These differing companies gave a strong grounding in understanding the fashion industry.

How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?

I was always interested in natural fibres and vintage fabrics and a slower approach to design as championed by Jessica Ogden and Susan Cianciolo back in the late 90s early 00s. Then as I worked for bigger high street brand I learnt about the challenges of managing large international supply chains. So for me it was a slow process over a number of years as I learnt about the ethical and environmental impact of the fashion industry my interest grew and developed.

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

By working with consideration for ethics and sustainability they/we offer an alternative. It’s a demonstration that fashion can be designed, manufactured, marketed and sold in a different way. This is essential to lead by example and hopefully inspire more and more companies to work in more responsible ways.

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

It’s not strictly speaking “fashion” but it is clothing related, so Yvon Chouard of Patagonia is a hero for me. He has been trailblazing and leading by example for many many years. Their bravery and openness is very inspiring and has pushed many other large companies to make changes to their supply chains.

What is Outsider?

An ethical and sustainable fashion label specialising in timeless versatile womenswear.

What inspired the title of the organization?

It is a reference to offering an alternative. We create fashion items but from different materials and with more focus on ethics, so we are on the periphery of the conventional fashion world. Or at least we were when we launched in 2009. Happily, we have seen many changes in the industry over the last 7 years, although there is a long way to go. The name Outsider was also a reference to the impact we can have by choosing an alternative to fast fashion – “It just takes one Outsider to make a difference”.

What are some of its feature products?

We specialize in dresses as they can be so versatile as part of your wardrobe. Our favourite style is the shirt dress as it is so timeless and can work from desk to dinner with just a change of accessories.

What is your customer base – the demographics?

Women from a wide age range, we have customers from their early 20s to 60s. Currently our main customer base is in the UK but we are reaching more and more European customers now we have launched a site in Euro.

What topics most interest you?

Sustainable fabric innovation is my passion. I love the amazing solutions coming through to the challenges faced by the fashion industry. It's incredible how waste streams from milk, oranges and pineapple have been used to create new fabrics.

Have you mentored others?

I teach part-time at London College of Fashion and have interns working with me, so I have mentored fashion students. I really hope to ensure the next generation of fashion designers are better informed, so they can make more ethical and sustainable choices.

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

Fashion is such a competitive industry, mentors can help to guide and encourage persistence which is so needed for success.

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?

These tragedies highlight how much more work needs to be done by large brands to ensure their supply chains are ethical. The main issue is the separation that has been created between brands and factories. But when these tragedies occur and we see they are producing for well-known brands, it reminds us all that they are responsible for ensuring that working conditions are safe. Without those skilled people there would be no clothing to sell.

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?

It is crucial we keep moving towards equal rights and pay for women and that all workers are paid a living wage to ensure that children can attend school (and not have to work). This is a key consideration for all fashion brands to ensure they are monitoring their supply chains.

Child labor and slavery are problems, major ones. These include children throughout the world. Tens of millions of children in the case of child labor. A few million children in the case of child slavery. According to the [Minimum Age Convention](#) (1973), labor before the age of 14, 15, or 16, dependent upon the country, is child labor. [The Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (1989) represent the importance of children's rights on the

‘international stage’ in Article 2(2), Article 3(1) Article 3(2). In addition, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966) in Article 24(1-3) and *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966) in Article 10(3) delineate the importance of children’s rights too. These stipulations about equality remain violated in the fashion industry, especially the manufacturing sector or the garment industry. How can individuals get the word out about these extreme children’s rights violations?

In this area social media can be extremely powerful in sharing information and highlighting issues which the mass media often chooses to ignore. Starting petitions, sharing stories and questioning brands are all good starting points.

What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?

I have always loved fashion but when I learnt more about the issues surrounding sustainability and ethics I had to reassess that love. For me creating a fashion item responsibly and consciously and then seeing that item picked up by a customer is very fulfilling. Even more so when that customer wears their item for a long time and in many ways. That is how we fight fast fashion, but developing long term relationships with our clothes.

Any recommended authors or fashionistas (or fashionistos)?

Sass Brown has written some great books and also compiles fantastic information on her website all about ethical and sustainable fashion.

Any recommended means of contacting, even becoming involved with, Outsider?

We are on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and share ethical fashion news through our blog.

Thank you for your time, Noorin.

An Interview with Fatim of Fatim Bahh

December 16, 2016

Fatim started Fatim Bahh brand as a socially conscious line, to help young girls get access to primary education in Kassa, Guinea, West Africa and to help women in the rural areas of Guinea, showcase their artisanal skills to the contemporary market place and be financially independent. Read more about our interview with her below.

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

My name is Fatim Bahh, I was born and raised in Guinea, West Africa. Both my parents were highly educated and I remember my father always saying that Education was the only thing a man would never take away from a woman, therefore we should really focus on education.

I Moved to US on my 18th birthday to go to college and get a better educational opportunity. I studied Fashion Design and Social work at University of Los Angeles, where I received my BA in both fields.

After working as a Social worker for low income families and working in the fashion industry for over 10 years as a personal stylist, assistant designer and wholesales rep. It was time for me to get my own business.

How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?

Conscious Fashion is a global movement, I have always admired respecting nature, caring for social justice and making beautiful things. It was a Natural fit.

The One Girl At A Time Foundation raises funds to pay for school supplies and tuition.

How did your educational/professional experience inform fashion work?

My education and professional influence my decision making today, the type of business I want to own and the impact I would like to make in society. You have to have a voice, and I don't think I would have known all the things I now know if not for these experiences.

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

We are a vehicle for a change in today's society. People look up to us, they want to understand what they are buying, who is making their clothes and where the materials are coming from.

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

I like brand like Krochet Kids INTL for their social impact and Everlane for their Radical transparency.

What is Fatim Bahh?

We are a socially responsible Brand made in USA with the mission to support young girls' education in Guinea, West Africa.

What are some of its feature products?

Every product features a hand-woven/hand-dye African textile accent, a signature design for our clothes. We have a wide range of tops and dresses.

What is your customer base – the demographics?

Women living in urban areas age 25-55, we are building a movement and welcome anyone to join the community of like minded.

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 are the importance of human rights and worker rights in this new movement, and to the garment industry?

Companies should be taken accountable for poor working conditions in factories.

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?

the right to a healthy and safe working environment; the right to a minimum wage and the prohibition of firing a worker without a valid reason. The right to freedom from discrimination.

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?

the prohibition of forced or compulsory labour; the prohibition (or limitation) of child labour; the right to leisure and rest during work; the right to equality of treatment between home workers and other wage earners; the right to an 8-hour day or a 48-hour week.

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?

As global citizen, we all need to get involve in our community, organizations and share our knowledge. Use your social media outlets to spray the world on child labor, human right.

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?

I think its important to join forces, buy for companies that are transparent in their process and conscious brand, like Fatim Bahh.

Fatim Bahh brand contributes 10% of the proceeds from every purchase to an education fund the One Girl At A Time Foundation.

What topics most interest you?

Girls education and women empowerment.

Did you have a mentor in this work?

My Mother.

Have you mentored others?

Yes, I am the co-founder of One Girl At A Time foundation, a US Non-profit organization that help put young girls to school in Africa and I am an active member of UN global class room committee, in San Diego.

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

If you get the right mentorship, it's priceless what you can learn.

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

Interesting you mentioned that because despite the fact that most fashion brands are catering to women, very few are let by them, men still on the top of the industry, even though women are entering the industry at the bottom, they are not rising proportionally to the top. Things are still moving slowly for us.

What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?

It so rewarding to know at the end of the day that you help made a difference somewhere, no matter how little. The more we grow our movement, business the better chances we have to share our movement with others and help make a bigger impact in our society.

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

My foundation, One Girl At A Time, helps provide education opportunity to young girls in Africa.

Any recommended authors or fashionistas (or fashionistos)?

Eco Fashion by Sass Brown.

Any recommended means of contacting Fatim Bahh?

Join our movement of helping girls attend school and get the basic primary education.

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

Yes, don't be afraid to start something, follow your heart and find your true calling. Just because you don't have people's support does mean you are not doing it right, it takes time.

Thank you for your time, Fatim.

An Interview with Leonie Daignault-Leclerc of Gaia & Dubos

December 17, 2016

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

I always knew I wanted to be a fashion designer. I began my career at the age of 12, where I learned how to draft patterns and sew for myself. Then, I started my own business at 15 years old, designing made-to-measure garments for customers and people around me.

I decided to pursue my dream and study fashion in order to get as much knowledge as possible. I have a College Diploma in Fashion Design, a Bachelor in Fashion Merchandising and a Master of Arts in Fashion, where I specialized in sustainable fashion. Internships in Paris, Madrid and Toronto really helped me forge my identity as an entrepreneur and designer and my approach towards the fashion industry.

How did you get interested in ethical and sustainable fashion?

People and the environment were always very important to me. I always knew I wanted to make a difference in the world, and I chose to do it through fashion. It is unconceivable to me to create garments that don't make a difference. It just seems nonsense to me!

How did your educational/professional experience inform fashion work?

The most influential part of my path was definitely my master degree, in which I was able to focus on sustainable fashion and research every possible way of making ethical and ecological garments.

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

It is primordial! I still don't understand how some fashion brands decide to exploit other human beings and pollute our wonderful planet. I hope that some day, we won't even have to mention that a brand is *sustainable*. I wish it will just be a given.

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

Kate Fletcher is definitely one of my favorites! She is the pioneer of slow fashion and she is a great activist and researcher.

What is Gaia & Dubos?

Gaia & Dubos is a sustainable fashion brand that designs, produces and sells high-end ecological and ethical clothing for women. We also offer online sewing courses to allow everyone to learn the basics of clothing and accessories repair, and we act as an informant by posting videos and articles on sustainable fashion in order to educate the public.

Our mission is to change the face of the fashion industry by offering products and services resulting from sustainable development. We also want to give the power back to consumers by giving them an education on ecological and ethical fashion.

What are some of its feature products?

We are currently working on our first clothing collection, which will be launched next spring. We are developing high quality everyday and professional garments for women, and they all comprise transformable or customizable options in order to deepen customers' emotional attachment and increase versatility. We only use eco-friendly materials and all of our products are ethical handcrafted in Quebec, Canada.

Gaia & Dubos also offers online mending courses in order to teach people how to fix their clothes and accessories. People can subscribe and download the course videos directly to their computer!

What is your customer base – the demographics?

Our target audience is women aged 35 to 55 who demonstrate an interest for sustainable clothing. They prioritize quality and classic styles and are willing to pay for a product that is entirely ethical and ecological.

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 are the importance of human rights and worker rights in this new movement, and to the garment industry?

Human and worker rights should always be a priority when hiring people. It is unconceivable to me to offer such horrific working conditions to the people who work for you and make it possible for you to make a living.

The problem is highly complex, but I think we should bring fashion brands, governments, manufacturers and customers together to find tangible solutions.

I believe it is the responsibility of fashion brands to ensure they ask for decent deadlines and pay enough money to the manufacturers they do business with. This way, the manufacturers will be able to offer more decent conditions to their employees.

I also think we should all work together toward the right to unionize. In most garment factories, it is strictly forbidden to form a union, which doesn't help them get better working conditions...

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?

I think everyone should be equal, not matter what. I don't believe the solution to child labor is to ban it completely, but rather to offer better wages to adults so that children don't have to work at all. Also, I think that bringing women to higher positions within the industry could help them get better conditions. In developing countries, most lower lever positions are occupied by women, whereas men occupy managing positions.

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?

They are directly connected! By offering better conditions to women, they will be able to better care for their children: send them to daycare or school, have more time and energy to be with them, and have enough money to feed them, buy clothes, school supplies, etc. By increasing women's wages, children might not need to work at all and may be able to attend school and attain higher career goals, ending this poverty cycle once and for all!

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?

I believe it is the responsibility of fashion brands, designers, bloggers, activists, researchers, etc., to first educate consumers on this topic. This is what we have been doing at Gaia & Dubos and we really see an increase of awareness among our community! By having the knowledge and developing their awareness on the topic, consumers will be able to make sensible decisions when buying and to share what they know with others.

When fashion brands will realize that consumers do care and do vote with their money, they will be obliged to make some changes. Some big ones! They will invest more money and efforts toward ethical working conditions and won't think of profit the same way: it's not by cutting expenses that they will make more money; it's by making their customers happy, trusting, loyal and content with what they offer.

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?

I think I just explained that in the previous questions! J

What topics most interest you?

- Creating a positive impact on the humanity and the planet.
- Empowering customers through education.

Did you have a mentor in this work?

Yes! Dr. Lu Ann Lafrenz, one of my favorite teachers ever! She knows a lot about sustainable fashion and helped me complete a thorough research on this topic for my master essay.

Have you mentored others?

Yes! I am always willing to help people who want to work in the sustainable fashion industry. I offer them advice and guidance in their process since I have a strong background in the field.

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

I would not stress the importance of *mentoring* per say, but rather of sharing and exploring together. I share openly with many other people involved in the sustainable fashion industry, and even other fields related to the ethical/ecological movement, and it always brings me a lot!

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

I think fashion is viewed as more feminine in our society. It is associated with looks and appearance, and I just think more women relate to this topic!

What personal fulfillment comes from this work for you?

Every day, it is an enormous pleasure for me to work on Gaia & Dubos! I am combining my passion for fashion and my desire to make a difference in the world, and I feel incredibly fulfilled by my work!

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

Raising my baby! Juggling with all the projects we have at Gaia & Dubos and taking care of my beloved son is enough for now! However, I really want to work on a book project in the next year or so. I want to gather all the knowledge I have around sustainable fashion and create a reference book for the consumer who wants to make a change and buy better.

Any recommended authors or fashionistas (or fashionistos)?

Kate Fletcher and Micheal Lavergne for the fashion professionals, and the book *Cradle to Cradle*, by McDonough and Braungart, for everyone who wants to have a different perspective on how our everyday objects are made and used.

Any recommended means of contacting Gaia & Dubos?

Email is always good for us! Info@gaiadubos.com

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

I really wish we are moving towards a better world where respect and equity are at the forefront of every decision we make!

Thank you for your time, Léonie.

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