

The Hunter Briefing:

A Bird's Eye View on Sustainability in Fashion

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Colwyn Elder
Director of Planning & Strategy
The Hunting Dynasty



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Which is the bigger environmental threat? The materials and processes involved in clothing production, OR the fashion industry's obsession with new looks and ongoing mass consumption?

*"The **fashion** industry produces 3.1m tonnes of CO2 and 70m tonnes of waste water a year, not to mention the amount of herbicides, pesticides and toxic chemicals released into the environment. To dress ethically, we need to buy fewer clothes - even if the ones we do choose are Fairtrade and made from organic cotton".*

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2009/jun/24/uniform-project-one-dress-year>

1. Materials and Production

1.1 Upcycling

An innovative approach that re-uses old or waste products to create something new & desirable.



Ecoist's candy wrapper handbags are made from misprinted or discontinued snack bags, soda labels and candy wrappers. Material that would otherwise end up in landfills is folded into straps and woven into bags and clutches by Mexican artisans. Ecoist works with co-ops in Mexico and Central America that help people use recycled materials to create a living. The eco-friendly attitude doesn't stop at recycling: Ecoist also plants a tree for every bag sold.

In New Delhi, ragpickers are going after plastic bags that are littering streets and clogging sewage drains. Plastic bags are collected, washed, dried and sorted by colour. They're then thrown into a machine that presses them into thicker, more durable sheets.



These sheets are then cut, lined with cloth and sewn or molded into stylish bags, wallets and organizers, designed and sold by Rag Bag, which is based in The Netherlands.

Established by a former gym teacher, German Zirkeltraining sells a range of bags made from old German gym equipment. The handmade products reinforce their genuine heritage by promising to include a 'little bit of sweat'.

http://springwise.com/eco_sustainability/ecochic_entrepreneurs/

Worn Again, an eco-fashion, 'upcycle' initiative from UK-based Anti-Apathy has collaborated with Virgin Atlantic to help the airline meet its goal of halving its landfill waste by 2012. Worn Again has used family-run, small-scale workshops in Portugal to produce 2,000 limited-edition bags reclaimed from 1,000 old airplane seats.

Above + Below turns restored London Underground and London Bus seat covers into shoes.

<http://trendwatching.com/trends/ecobounty/>

The Elvis & Kresse Organisation (E&KO) has created an innovative and pioneering Fire-Hose range, made exclusively from genuine de-commissioned British fire brigade hoses which, after a distinguished career fighting fires and saving lives, were otherwise destined for landfill. 50% of profits from the fire-hose line are donated to the Fire Fighters Charity. <http://www.fire-hose.co.uk/>

1.2 Charity Shop/Vintage/ Recessionista Chic

Vintage and charity shop clothing has enjoyed a growing popularity. Though this is more driven by the recession and value as opposed to values, the environment still benefits. Shops such as Rokit (<http://www.rokit.co.uk/>) and Absolute Vintage

(<http://www.absolutevintage.co.uk/>) have helped second-hand clothing move beyond the Marie Curie shop image to represent a new kind of 'label'.

The uniform project - One Dress 365 Days.
<http://www.theuniformproject.com/>

One woman's pledge to wear the same dress for a year - with a different twist every day. "New York-based Sheena Matheiken has pledged to wear the same dress every day of the year. It's actually seven carbon copies of one dress, which she jazzes up with vintage accessories, thrift store finds and eBay purchases. "Think of it as wearing a daily uniform with enough creative license to make it look like I just crawled out of the Marquis de Sade's boudoir," she says."



<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2009/jun/24/uniform-project-one-dress-year>

The Art of **Swishing** involves getting your friends together to **swap** gorgeous **clothes** and party at the same time. <http://www.swishing.org/>

2. Transumerism

*"TRANSUMERS are consumers... who increasingly live a transient lifestyle, freeing themselves from the hassles of permanent ownership and possessions. *Moving from the fixed to the ephemeral* might just have some positive side effects for the environment. More services and less goods, more re-use by buying and selling second hand goods, more shared ownership... (Needless to say, if*



temporary becomes just another word for 'disposable', the outlook for the environment isn't as rosy.)"

<http://trendwatching.com/trends/transumers.htm>

At [Bag Borrow or Steal](#), the designer handbag rental firm, TRANSUMERS pay a monthly fee, pick and order handbags online and borrow them for as long as they like. Also check out [Be A Fashionista](#), [From Bags to Riches](#) and [Shoulder Candy](#).

Bag Borrow or Steal now offers [jewelry](#), too, competing with ventures like [Borrowed Bling](#) and [RK Jewellery Hire](#).

And yes, you can rent that dress to go with your handbag: from [One Night Stand](#) and [Estella's Wardrobe](#) to [Salon Muare](#).

3. The Slow Fashion Movement

'Fast fashion' was the result of a democratization of style, where runway collections were reproduced as quickly as possible making high fashion available at high street prices. These knock-offs aren't made to last and don't have to, since fashions change so quickly. Clothing becomes disposable as a result.

"Used clothing is the fastest growing waste stream in (our) country. For every eight new garments sold, only one gets sent on for re-use – though the net energy saving has been worked out to be as high as 97.4% for second-time-round cotton clothes."

<http://www.forumforthefuture.org/greenfutures/articles/rags-to-riches>

As with food, there's little emphasis on how a garment is made and by whom, or the social and environmental effects of production. The slow food movement focused on making these connections between where food comes from, how it is grown, how it tastes, and as a result made people reflect on how consumer choice relates to human and eco impacts through transparency about origins.

At London Fashion Week, designers at the Esthetica exhibit used similar language to describe design and production processes.

Slow fashion means clothing and accessories that start with thoughtfully-chosen beginnings, are constructed by well-paid individuals, and are meant to remain wearable for years to come.

http://www.treehugger.com/files/2007/04/slow_food_slow_1.php

3.1 Origins

Origin-oriented labels look at re-connecting people with where clothes come from by being transparent about the garment's origins.

Most garments produced by [Icebreaker](#) now feature a unique 'Baacode' which can be entered on Icebreaker's website to trace the wool in a garment to one of 120 sheep stations in the Southern Alps of New Zealand. A customer can then view the living conditions of the animals that produced their wool, meet the farmers who run the stations and find out about their production process.

Makepiece takes "natural yarns, raised sustainably, spin them as locally as possible, knit in our community, using the minimum chemical processes possible to produce a finished product that can be treasured for years. It's part of a story which knits a community with a landscape".

<http://www.makepiece.com/pages/about.aspx?pageid=3>

Eloise Grey's collection of tweed coats, jackets and skirts seeks a more considered quality that embodies respect for the makers, the land, the art of weaving and tailoring. Her inspiration and starting point is the Isle of Mull Weavers at



Ardalanish Organic Farm in Scotland which aims to sustain and develop the traditional art of weaving of the Hebrides whilst simultaneously pioneering organic practices. Their organic tweeds were the first Soil Association Certified wool textiles in the UK.



<http://www.eloisegrey.com/about-eloise-grey.php>

3.2 Clothing Made to Keep

Slow fashion presents people with a fashion conundrum, encouraging them to slow down consumption in a culture which is all about keeping up with changing styles and latest looks.

Eloise Grey's line: "*Clothing Made to Keep*" refers both to her tweed fabrics which are made to last a lifetime and her approach to her collection, which she refers to as a product to be "*treasured rather than lusted after guiltily... wear your garment year after year and hand it on*".

Welsh clothing brand Howies offers a line of super-durable clothing called Howies' Hand-Me-Down that features jackets, backpacks and messenger bags designed specifically to last for 10 or more years. The company crafts its products painstakingly and uses high-quality components like organic tweed and ventile—an extremely tightly woven cotton fabric that is inherently water-resistant and uses 30 percent more yarn than conventional fabrics.

<http://trendwatching.com/trends/ecobounty/>

Internet fashion retailer Ascension Online sells products that are 'trans-seasonal' and made to be kept, with all materials organic, recycled or fair trade. 'Slow fashion is not just about responding to trends,' says chief executive Adam Smith. 'It is a mentality that involves thinking about provenance and buying something that won't look unfashionable after one season.' <http://www.ascensiononline.com/>

Hand:

about us

Hand offers a world of beautiful and timeless treasures to wear, live with or just admire. All are handmade in natural materials and created with great care to enjoy forever.

The emphasis is on design and quality, together with a full commitment to support the artisans and communities with whom we work - be they local or further afield.

<http://www.handshop.co.uk/pages/about.html>

4. Other trends in Sustainable Fashion

4.1 Clean DIY power

Made of Bavarian leather, Noon Solar's Corland Solar Powered Bag incorporates a flexible solar panel into the body of each bag, which allows for charging a cell phone or iPod. Collecting energy with the bag is simple. The bag can be placed in a window with the panel facing towards the sun at work, home, at a café, or while walking/biking around town. Even on cloudy or rainy days, energy is collected through the UV light of the sun. The battery pack has a green indicator that lights up when it's charging. The current Fall 2008 collection of the Corland Solar bag retails for USD 383, but is already sold out. Other solar bags from Noon Solar are the Willow (USD 274) and the Logan (USD 412). Check out these other solar bag makers, too: Reware,



Eclipse, Picard and Voltaic.



Italian design house **Zegna** created the ZegnaSport Solar Jacket with built-in solar cells in its collar to charge the wearer's iPod and mobile phone. The electricity is transferred via conducting textile cables to a small Li-ion storage battery, or directly to a device.



<http://trendwatching.com/trends/ecoiconic.htm>

4.2 Open Source Design

"Open source" is a term that's familiar to many in technology, but much less so in the fashion world. A new German label, however, has embraced the principles of open source in its launch of a new line of eco-conscious clothing.

Berlin-based Pamoyo (www.pamoyo.com) designs are published under the Creative Commons license for non-commercial use—a first, if the company's blog is to be believed. Other designers and artists are invited to enrich the label with their own creations, and Pamoyo pledges to ensure the high-quality and sustainable production of every product made under its name. The company is currently preparing designs and patterns for download from the Pamoyo site, and

ultimately it aims to make it possible for customers to share their own creations and patterns as well.

Eco clothing lines are increasingly common, but Pamoyo's focus on sharing takes it into new territory in the fashion world. One to watch!

http://springwise.com/fashion_beauty/open-source_label_for_green_fa/

4.3 Crowd F(o)unding

Nvohk is an eco-friendly, surf-inspired clothing manufacturer with a crowd-funded business model. Hoping to build a brand from scratch, the Los Angeles-based company launched a drive to recruit 5,000 "owner managers" who will each contribute USD 50 annually. In exchange they'll get a voice in deciding everything from the clothing styles to the advertising of nvohk's line of environmentally responsible clothing. Plus, they'll receive discounts along with 35 percent of the company's profits, the latter doled out in the form of reward points that can be used to buy clothing items.

Nvohk's crowd-funded approach appears to have been right on the money. The company recently announced that 1,250 people have signed up to become members. An appealing and perhaps unexpected element to nvohk's approach is that the brand will be global from the start. "With about 40% of future members coming from outside the US to date, nvohk is a great example of how the internet and globalization are changing the business landscape forever," comments Brendan T. Lynch, co-founder of nvohk.

http://springwise.com/fashion_beauty/crowdfunding_an_eco_clothing_1/



Appendix

Forum for the Future's Fashioning Sustainability Report (March 2007) identifies the following 8 key issues in terms of the social and environmental impacts of the clothing industry.

- 1) Fashion consumption – the increasing number of fashion items that we buy and then dispose of.
- 2) The intensity of cotton production requiring lots of energy, water and pesticides.
- 3) Working conditions across the supply chain from cotton production to sweatshops.
- 4) Energy consumed when we are washing our clothes contributes to climate change.
- 5) Chemicals in the working environment can be toxic and damage workers health and the local environment.
- 6) Unsustainable man-made fibres can take longer to degrade in landfill sites.
- 7) Fashion miles that burn carbon as fabric and clothing are transported around the world.
- 8) Animal welfare – ensuring that good standards are upheld during leather and wool production, and avoiding fur.

"It covers UK consumption and global production. It is a comprehensive overview rather than a detailed analysis, but will point you in the direction of more in depth information".

<http://www.forumforthefuture.org/library/fashioning-sustainability>

Download the report here:

http://www.forumforthefuture.org/files/Fashion_sustain.pdf