



BLACK  
PEARL



SUSTAINABLE  
STYLE GUIDE  
FOR EVERYONE



Founded by Samata Pattinson, BLACK PEARL is a pioneering cultural sustainability organisation, redefining the landscape of sustainability and culture. We work across the realms of design, fashion, music, entertainment, and education. People and the planet are our priority. We systematically move with pure intentions behind everything we do, delivering precise strokes of genius and thoughtful, careful work. Like a black pearl, our output is rare, infused with respect for diverse cultures.

Strategically located between Los Angeles and London (our Founder being a British-born Ghanaian), we focus on offerings such as cross-sector collaborations, media production, storytelling content creation, educational programs, framework development, thought leadership, and textile and apparel merchandising. For BLACK PEARL, culture serves as a vital analytical tool, enabling us to assess the world and drive sustainable progress intelligently.

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# BLACK PEARL

EMPOWERING BRILLIANCE, CULTIVATING SUSTAINABILITY



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**Author:** Samata Pattinson

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**Contributing Writer:**

Lori Fuqua

**Technical leads and Coordination:**

Mandy-Doris Teye and Victoria Giannoccaro

**Communications:**

Melanie Hughes

**Design Lead:**

Anu Dhesi - Co:Brand Creatives

**Design Support:**

Lucas Willis - Co:Brand Creatives, Peter Scranney

**Guide Contributors:**

Omoyemi Akirele, Maxine Bedat, Jean Chung, Dominique Drakeford, Maurício Duarte, Micaela Erlanger, Shakaila Forbes-Bell, Kestrel Jenkins, Andrew Morgan, Arieta Mujay, Samata Pattinson, Evet Sanchez, Liv Simpliciano and Tara Swennan.

**Partners:**

Lisa Marie Rae and Getty Images

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Introduction  
Let's go...



## Welcome to the Sustainable Style Guide... For Everyone.

Welcome to the Sustainable Style Guide For Everyone, yes, everyone. If you wear clothes, this guide applies to you. This guide was written to represent challenges and, most importantly, solutions that work across age, race, gender, disability, geography, socioeconomics, values, and beliefs. We want you to know that what you are wearing reflects your values. Sustainable fashion solutions apply to red carpet events, our special occasions, and every day as well. Everything in this guide can be applied to how you shop, what you look for, and the conversations you have as an informed citizen.

Each day, we all engage in two essential acts—first, if we’re fortunate, we nourish our bodies, and second, almost unconsciously, we get dressed. Archaeological clues suggest that our ancestors began creating clothing 100,000 to 500,000 years ago. Today’s production of our clothing has evolved over the years into a distant and complex process that few of us consider when we’re in a store. Still, the harmful impact our clothing choices have on both people and the planet is growing exponentially.

It is time for us all to have a fresher, more relatable conversation about sustainable fashion—how sustainability doesn’t mean sacrificing style and how it can represent our identities, our culture, our creativity, our passions, and our values. We should be having these conversations with our family, friends, and communities.

Ones which consider the following:

- Who is making our clothes and under what circumstances?
- How are they being made?
- Where are they being made?
- What is being used to make them?
- Where do our clothes go when we no longer want or use them?
- What can we—as individuals—do to dress more sustainably?

Let's go



The background features a complex, abstract design in various shades of teal and green. It consists of several concentric circles and a central spiral-like pattern that radiates outwards, creating a sense of depth and movement. The colors transition from a lighter, almost white-green at the top to a dark, deep teal at the bottom.

# 01 What If You Knew?

## What If You Knew?

If you find the conversation about sustainability confusing, rest assured, you are not alone. We know that citizens around the world often find the language of sustainability hard to decipher. In fact, in the UK, the CMA Green Claims Code is now in effect, urging companies to be clear about their green claims to prevent greenwashing, the practice of exaggerating or falsely claiming the environmental benefits of a product, service, or company to create a deceptive impression, to avoid misleading citizens. This is one small example of the growing need for transparent honesty in the realm of sustainability.

We need to acknowledge that sustainability discussions can feel elitist, distant, and alienating. We believe that a shortfall in knowledge deprives people of the opportunity to make sustainable decisions—decisions informed by truth. Informed choices and citizen conscientiousness trump everything. Would you choose differently if you knew:

- Textile production for clothing causes 20% of global clean water pollution.<sup>1</sup>
- An estimated 98 million tonnes of non-renewable resources each year are consumed to produce our garments.<sup>2</sup>
- Around 80% of the people who make our clothes are women of colour.<sup>3</sup>
- There is currently enough clothing in the world to clothe the next six generations.<sup>4</sup>
- Every year 80 billion new items of clothing are purchased.<sup>5</sup>
- Some of the 3,000 chemicals used to make our clothes have been linked to harmful impacts on human health.<sup>6</sup>





Sustainable fashion should educate citizens about the impact of their choices, empowering them to make conscious and ethical decisions that align with their identities. By supporting sustainable fashion, we can collectively drive positive change within the industry. Would you choose differently if you knew:

- How to find brands, stores, and organisations committed to sustainability and accessibility.
- How to identify organisations committed to diversity, inclusivity, representation, and fair labour standards.
- Science is developing amazing textile and dye alternatives that are sustainable and beautiful.
- Technology and AI are helping reduce waste in design processes and improving transparency.
- There are tangible, actionable steps you can take to dress more sustainably.

Sustainable fashion is so many things to so many people. It is not binary; it is not all or nothing, vintage or second-hand, expensive or limited batch, plant-based or pre-loved, locally made or culturally representative. It is any of those things. By exploring the options, we hope you find ones that resonate with you, that show you—you belong in this space. Sustainable fashion is for everyone.



Let's embark on this journey together, exploring a fashion world that is not only stylish but also sustainable, ethical, and environmentally responsible. What can you do?

You can:

- Buy Thoughtfully
- Practise Cultural Appreciation
- Engage with Culture Through Fashion
- Honour Diversity with Cultural Sustainability
- Shop Pieces with a Past: Vintage & Second-hand
- Borrow from Friends & Libraries
- Re-wear, Reimagine, & Repair
- Discover Cultural Patchwork
- Repurpose & DIY
- Follow the Threads of Cultural Embroidery
- Pursue Fashion Archives
- Donate & Discard Responsibly
- Let Your Values Guide Your Sustainability Journey
- Find the Link Between Haute Couture & Sustainability
- Style Sustainably for the Red Carpet & Special Occasions
- Leverage Transparency for Sustainable Change
- Look for Certifications and Standards when Shopping
- Support Campaigns & Legislation
- Get Up to Speed
- Engage in a Fresh Sustainability Conversation





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## 02 Global Sustainability & Culture



Culture and sustainable fashion are intertwined in a fascinating way. When we put on our “culture goggles,” we gain a deeper understanding of how clothing isn’t just about style; it’s a reflection of the distinctive features that make up our societies and social groups. These features encompass art, literature, lifestyles, values, traditions, and beliefs. Our culture is influenced by a multitude of factors, including geography, upbringing, age, race, identity, socioeconomics, disability, religion, and education. We also get to see how sustainability has long been practised before.

“Hosting Conscious Chatter over the last 8 years, and interfacing with over 300 diverse guests has undoubtedly expanded my perspectives around fashion and sustainability. One recurring theme that has become more and more embedded into my mindset on sustainable fashion is the imminent need to listen and learn from Indigenous wisdom and resourceful ways of creating, as an avenue toward more sustainable and intentional design. Fashion as an industry has become overly obsessed with the ways that technological advances will “save us all” when truly, the most connected and thought-driven clothing design can come from Indigenous innovators from the past and present — approaches that are integral to culture.

Designer Angel Chang discovered this firsthand on an adventure to remote mountain villages in Guizhou Province, China, where she connected with Indigenous tribes, and learned how they were making clothing without electricity and using only nearby ingredients — truly zero carbon design. Development economist and director at SukkhaCitta, Denica Riadini-Flesch, unveiled the power of Indigenous wisdom in agriculture, when she returned to her home country of Indonesia and began working closely with women farmers. When giving one woman the freedom to design the farm, she watched her do it by memory, recalling the ways she had been taught by her grandmother. After everything was planted in its place, Denica quickly realized that this Indigenous way of planting is exactly what is being referred to globally as regenerative farming.”

- Kestrel Jenkins, Sustainability Storyteller & Co-Host, Producer Of Conscious Chatter Podcast

## Cultural Philosophies

Sustainable practises are not a new conversation, they are more often than not, a return to better ways from the past. Looking around the globe, we see clear examples of that through philosophical messages.



### **Ghanaian Adinkra Symbol:**

**‘Sankofa’ (Learning from the Past)** represents the idea of learning from the past to build a better future. The symbol, often depicted as a bird with its head turned backward, signifies the importance of embracing wisdom from previous experiences. The Adinkra saying for ‘Sankofa’ is ‘Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi,’ meaning ‘It is not taboo to go back and fetch what you forgot.’ It encourages us to draw from our past knowledge to make sustainable wiser choices today.

### **Chinese Calligraphy**

**‘Xue Ji Qian Jin’** (学史以知兴衰, 见今而知来) translates to “Study the Past to Shape the Future” in Chinese calligraphy. It embodies the idea that learning from historical wisdom is essential for progress. By understanding where we come from, we can make informed and sustainable decisions.

### **Japanese Philosophy**

**‘Mottainai’** (もったいない) signifies a sense of regret for waste. It encourages the mindful use of resources and promotes the idea that every object has inherent value.

### **Maori Culture**

**‘Kaitiakitanga’** represents guardianship, emphasising the responsibility of caring for and protecting the environment for future generations. It reminds us to be stewards of the Earth, safeguarding it for the well-being of generations to come.

### **Indian Philosophy**

**‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’** (वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्) translates to “The World is One Family”, this ancient Sanskrit phrase reflects the interconnectedness of all living beings, and highlights our need to learn from our shared global history for unity and sustainable coexistence.

### **Native American Wisdom**

**‘Seventh Generations Principle’** is an indigenous concept encouraging decisions that consider the well-being of the next seven generations for intergenerational responsibility.



"Dressing sustainably from an African perspective encompasses a holistic approach that extends beyond mere fabric choices and tailoring. It involves a profound consideration for the environment, cultural significance, and the socio-economic dynamics inherent in the continent's diverse communities.

In selecting fabrics, for example, the emphasis is often on locally sourced and ethically produced materials, supporting indigenous craftsmanship and fostering economic growth within communities. Traditional textiles, such as Ashanti Kente in Ghana or Shweshwe in Southern Africa, not only hold historical significance but are also celebrated for their durability, encouraging a sustainable approach to fashion.

Symbolism embedded in traditional wear further reinforces sustainability. These garments often tell intricate stories, reflecting cultural heritage, rituals, and identity. Choosing to wear and preserve these pieces becomes a conscious act of sustainability, fostering a connection to one's roots and contributing to the preservation of cultural diversity."

- Arieta Mujay, Cultural Curator, African Creative Economies, Industries Expert, & Multi Hyphenate Brand Marketer

If we can leverage these lessons, and utilise development regeneratively, less harmfully, we can reach a balance with people and planet, and find joy in the process.

These diverse perspectives help us see clothing design from various experiences and realities, and they offer us a unique opportunity to celebrate, learn about, and centre sustainability within these cultural contexts. Symbols and artisan techniques embedded in culture aren't mere commodities; they are keys to understanding each other better. Even elements like geography, socioeconomics, and philosophy can reshape our perspectives.

In all of this, there is an opportunity to truly value and support the people who make our clothes more. Artisans, for example, are highly skilled labourers who often employ techniques passed down through generations and deeply rooted in cultural and family heritage. They infuse their creations with dedication and meticulous care, resulting in unique, high-quality items. Valued at over USD 32 billion, the artisan sector is the second-largest employer in the developing world employing an estimated 300 million people making significant contributions to their local economies.<sup>7,8,9,10</sup> The true craftsmanship it produces is a counterbalance to the fast design trend, as each piece requires hours, if not days, of focused attention.









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03 Buy Thoughtfully

A very real issue lies in the fast fashion culture, the rush to consume, and the unrealistic expectations placed upon us. It's time to slow down, embrace sustainable choices, and recognize that fashion doesn't have to come at the cost of our planet or our self-worth.

Movements against fast and disposable fashion embrace concepts like slow fashion, which prioritises sustainable, durable, and ethically produced garments. The emerging social media trend of de-influencing discourages consumers from buying certain products that the de-influencer has found to be indulgent, ineffective, or not worth the money. These efforts involve challenging the influence of fast-fashion trends and encouraging consumers to make mindful, long-term choices.

Authentic style transcends fleeting fads both in everyday wear and for special occasions such as the red carpet, weddings, and graduations. It isn't tethered to possessing the latest, trendiest, priciest items; rather, it revolves around your adeptness at seamlessly blending and showcasing your pieces. True personal style creates its own rules and is uniquely yours, so wear what resonates with your heart, exuding unwavering confidence.

Shopping for clothes brings joy to many, and sustainable fashion must challenge the notion that enjoyment is compromised, recognising that rewarding experiences, like shopping and dressing up, are meaningful to citizens around the world. From the uplifting effect of maximalist fashion with bright colours and prints, called dopamine dressing, to the real feelings of pleasure and reward linked with shopping, the thrill of discovering pieces we love should not be underestimated. This is why considering psychology for sustainable fashion is so important. According to a 2023 global consumer survey, more than 70% of respondents expressed a willingness to pay more for products with a social or environmental benefit, indicating a growing awareness of the joy

and fulfilment associated with environmentally conscious shopping practices.<sup>11</sup> Citizens can both rewire how they think about shopping, and make more mindful purchases.

"My Big Dress Energy rule speaks to the 4. 3. 2. 1 rule. It breaks down like this. Next time you're considering an item, think of yourself in four years' time. Do you see yourself wearing it? If not, leave it. Three stands for re-wearing something for at least three occasions, finding ways to wear it in a different way each time. Two refers to the time it takes to take two deep breaths and overcome the rush of adrenaline and dopamine that comes with shopping before engaging in purchasing an item. Finally, one refers to the need to reflect and sleep on it for one night. After that, a good decision can be made." -  
*Shakaila Forbes-Bell, Fashion Psychologist & 'Big Dress Energy' Author*





To effectively pull away from the throwaway mindset, think about how garments can serve multiple purposes or events. Knowing what to assess when making your purchases will help you adopt a savvy approach to investing in items you will love for a while, or in high-quality, enduring pieces meant to be worn repeatedly and, when cared for properly, are made to last.

## What to look for when shopping:

### Garment Construction

Pay attention to how the clothing is made. Look for choices in raw materials, style, cut, and manufacturing processes that prioritise sustainability.

### Material Composition

Give preference to natural fibres over synthetic ones. Choose textiles and components aligned with sustainable practices, such as organic fibres, recycled materials, and eco-friendly embellishments.

### Material Quality

Ensure that high-quality fabrics are used in the outfit's design. Quality materials not only last longer but also contribute to a more sustainable choice.

### Care Label Information

Check the care label for clear guidance on how to maintain the clothing, as well as available repair and re-use options.

### Multi-Functionality

Opt for outfits that offer versatility. Pieces that can be worn in different combinations with other clothes provide more value and reduce the need for additional purchases.

### Alteration-Friendly

Look for features that facilitate alterations, such as adjustable waistbands, generous seams, or extra buttons. This allows for customisation and ensures a longer lifespan for the outfit.

### Outer Fabric Quality

Examine the quality of the outer fabric and ensure that the lining and interlining are compatible for durability.

### Aftercare Services

Consider brands that offer specialist aftercare services, including mending and repair advice. This extends the life of your outfits.

### Classic Styles

If unsure, opt for classic styles, cuts, and colours that transcend fashion trends and remain timeless across seasons.

### Comfort and Aging

Consider comfort, ageing factors, and how the clothing feels when worn. High-quality choices in raw materials, cut, fit, and size contribute to comfort and longevity.

### Tips for Making Your Clothes Last:

- Take special garments to certified green dry cleaners.
- Wash garments at lower temperatures (such as 30°C/86°F or lower).
- Hang garments to dry on a rack instead of using the dryer.
- Use a soft bag to wash delicates instead of leaving them loose in the washer.
- Protect darker colours from fading by washing them inside out.
- Fold sweaters/jumpers instead of hanging them to reduce stretching.
- Use wooden hangers to maintain garment shape.
- Follow detergent instructions to avoid using more than necessary.

## Fashion Brand Rating Apps:

### Good On You

The Good On You app provides brand ratings and ethical fashion information. Whether you're looking for eco-conscious clothing options or researching the sustainability of a particular brand, Good On You provides valuable insights.

### Delve

The Delve app features a directory of conscious brands that have been vetted by independent certifications. A portion of each purchase made via Delve goes towards an Impact Fund. If you want to make informed, eco-friendly fashion choices and support renewable energy projects, Delve is a great resource.

### DoneGood

DoneGood featured brands pay fair wages and use eco-friendly practices. You can use search filter options, such as 'vegan,' 'toxin-free,' 'locally sourced,' or 'women/person of colour owned.' If you're dedicated to conscious consumerism and wish to discover ethical brands and discounts, DoneGood streamlines the process.

### Renoon

Renoon helps users merge style and sustainability values. Renoon also provides updates on brands' latest efforts and sustainability initiatives. Whether you're passionate about sustainable fashion and want to explore curated, conscious options or want to stay informed about brands' sustainability efforts, Renoon offers a wealth of information.



## How does this help the planet and people?

- Thoughtful buying reduces your donate/discard pile.
- Thoughtful buying pushes the industry to prioritise quality.
- Thoughtful buying slows down your consumption and works to reduce fast fashion production.
- Thoughtful buying supports brands actively committed to continuously improving their products and garments through multiple avenues, from transparent certifications across to honest communications.
- Thoughtful buying goes beyond purchase to take proper care of garments, extending their lifespan.

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04 Practice Cultural  
Appreciation



Cultural appropriation arises when a design or style is borrowed from another culture without acknowledgment of its roots, and symbolism. Understanding and respecting the origins of things goes hand in hand with showing appreciation for the culture that inspires the fashion you adore. It can be tricky to navigate, so here is a little guidance.

**Ask yourself the following questions to practice cultural appreciation:**

- Does the fashion item or style hold religious, traditional, or cultural significance?
- Do you understand the significance or meaning behind the design?
- Do you know the natural context for the garment?
- What message are you sending by wearing the style?
- Is or was the style used to stigmatise the person of the culture of its origin?



By gaining an understanding of the historical context and origins of specific items and the challenges faced by those who create and own them, it becomes easier to recognize potential offensiveness. Instead of appropriating, you can celebrate and honour the culture. If you realise that you've engaged in cultural appropriation, take the step to apologise and educate yourself to prevent it from happening again.

### **Here are some ways to do this:**

#### **Educate Yourself**

Learn about the cultural significance of the clothing, accessories, or styles you are interested in. Understand the history, traditions, and meanings behind them to appreciate their cultural context.

#### **Support Authentic Creators**

Choose items created by designers and artisans from the culture of origin. Purchase directly from brands and creators who belong to that culture, ensuring that your choices contribute positively to the community.

#### **Avoid Stereotypes**

Be mindful of perpetuating stereotypes or reducing a culture to a fashion trend. Avoid clothing or accessories that mimic sacred or ceremonial attire, as these items hold deep cultural significance.

#### **Respect Dress Codes**

If you're participating in an event or ceremony from another culture, adhere to any specific dress codes and guidelines provided. This shows respect for the traditions and values associated with the attire.

#### **Mix with Respect**

If combining elements from different cultures, do so with respect and understanding. Avoid blending items that hold sacred or specific cultural meanings, as this can lead to misrepresentation.

#### **Acknowledge Sources**

When sharing your fashion choices on social media or in conversations, acknowledge the cultural origin and give credit to the designers and cultures that inspire your style.

#### **Avoid Offensive Imagery**

Be cautious about wearing symbols, patterns, or imagery that may be offensive or sacred to a particular culture. Understand the meanings behind these elements to prevent unintentional disrespect.

#### **Embrace Inclusivity**

Celebrate diversity and inclusion by appreciating and supporting fashion from various cultures. Foster a genuine interest in learning about different traditions and styles, promoting a respectful exchange.

Remember, cultural appreciation involves understanding, respect, and responsible engagement with fashion from diverse backgrounds.

#### **How does this help the planet and people?**

- Avoiding cultural appropriation shows respect and appreciation for diversity, which fosters participation and innovation in sustainable fashion.
- Avoiding cultural appropriation is necessary to combat the economic oppression of marginalised cultures.
- Avoiding cultural appropriation is integral to establishing healthy cultural exchanges.

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05 Engage with Culture  
Through Fashion



# Engage with Culture Through Fashion



**Avoiding cultural appropriation does not mean you cannot embrace designs, styles, or accessories, inspired by other cultures. You can actively engage with multicultural fashion without appropriating. Expand your cultural lens of sustainable fashion whenever you travel. Here's how:**

## **Get something tailored**

When you travel, explore local tailors or dressmakers and consider getting a garment tailored to your specifications. This could be a traditional outfit or a modern piece, ensuring a perfect fit and a unique addition to your wardrobe.

## **Upcycling Local Textiles**

Discover local textiles in markets like woven fabrics or batiks. Engage with artisans to upcycle them into personalised clothing, collaborating with local tailors to create unique garments that blend your style with the cultural essence of the region. This not only supports local craftsmanship but also promotes sustainable fashion by repurposing existing materials, offering a hands-on connection with local culture and contributing to the preservation of traditional textiles in a modern way.

### Custom embroidery or embellishments

Seek out local artisans or embroidery shops, stalls and boutiques and commission them to add custom embroidery or embellishments to your clothing. This could be a great way to incorporate traditional craftsmanship into your wardrobe.

### Visit local markets for unique finds

Explore local markets and second-hand stores to discover unique, one-of-a-kind pieces that resonate with the culture of the place you're visiting. These items can become cherished additions to your wardrobe with sentimental value.

### Learn about traditional textile techniques

Take the opportunity to learn about traditional textile techniques specific to the region you're visiting. This knowledge can inspire you to appreciate the craftsmanship behind the clothes and perhaps even try your hand at incorporating these techniques into your clothing.

### Attend a local fashion or craft workshop

Check if there are any local fashion or craft workshops happening during your travels. Participating in such workshops can provide hands-on experience in creating or customising clothing, fostering a deeper connection with your wardrobe.

### Support local designers

Explore local boutiques and designers, and consider purchasing clothing from them. Ask them about the story, significance, technique, or inspiration of the garment. Supporting local designers not only adds unique pieces to your collection but also helps sustain and promote regional craftsmanship.

### Repurpose textiles into new garments

If you find interesting textiles or fabrics during your travels, think about repurposing them into new garments. This could involve combining different fabrics to create a patchwork piece or transforming a textile into a different style altogether.



Remember, the goal is to engage with clothing in a way that reflects the local culture, traditions, and craftsmanship of the places you visit, creating a more meaningful and personal connection with your wardrobe.

### How does this help the planet and people?

- Engaging with culture through fashion fosters respect, relationships and learning.
- Engaging with culture through fashion facilitates innovation in sustainability.
- Engaging with culture through fashion invites learning and sharing the multitudinous ways that communities, cultures, countries are contributing to sustainability.



## Honouring Cultural Diversity with Cultural Sustainability



So, how do we honour these diverse cultures in the realm of fashion? Organisations like BLACK PEARL and Cultural Intellectual Property Rights Initiative® are passionate about cultural sustainability—here are some of the key points to consider:

- **Respect and celebrate culture:** Rather than appropriating, celebrate and learn from different cultures.
- **Raise indigenous voices:** Amplify the voices of indigenous communities and marginalised groups who have a wealth of knowledge about sustainable practices.
- **Raise creatives from around the globe:** Support and uplift creatives from diverse backgrounds, ensuring a global representation in the fashion industry.
- **Educate yourself and acknowledge:** Educate yourself to understand and acknowledge the origins and influences behind designs and techniques.
- **Champion fair remuneration:** Advocate for artisans and creators to receive just compensation for their work and cultural contributions, and be willing to pay fairly.

By recognising the intrinsic link between culture and fashion, we can foster a more inclusive and sustainable fashion world where the stories behind our garments are honoured.





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06 Shop Pieces with a Past:  
Vintage & Second-hand

# Shop Pieces with a Past: Vintage & Second-hand

Shopping for vintage and second-hand items is a sustainable choice and encourages us to celebrate individual style and uniqueness. It facilitates personal expression while challenging the culture of fast fashion that promotes homogeneity. Any second-hand garment, regardless of brand or design, is identified as vintage if it is older than two decades. Each second-hand or vintage piece tells a story and contributes to the rich tapestry of fashion history.

The typical person keeps their clothes for about 3 to 5 years, but when it comes to event-specific outfits, such as festival and concert fashion, the lifespan is much shorter. In 2019, British concertgoers spent around £307 million to buy 7.5 million new outfits for music events. These garments are often synthetic and purchased with a single-use mindset.<sup>12</sup> Re-loving what already exists is a small change that creates a big impact.

Addressing the stigma and shame endured by individuals regarding second-hand clothing, particularly those from low-income communities, or AAPI, Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, Latina/o/e/o/x, and other People of Colour backgrounds is essential. The socio-economic and wealth disparities associated with second-hand shopping can't be ignored. While second-hand shopping was stigmatised, thrifting was being gentrified. In reality, there's nothing wrong with wearing pre-loved clothing. These practices respect what's already been created and contribute to a more sustainable fashion world.

Second-hand shopping isn't just about fashion; it's about discovery. It's a treasure hunt for unique, vintage, or one-of-a-kind pieces that can add a special flair to your wardrobe.



## Luxury Consignment and Pre-owned Marketplaces:

- **The RealReal:** The RealReal is a prominent luxury consignment platform known for authenticated second-hand designer clothing and accessories.
- **Vestiaire Collective:** Vestiaire Collective is a certified B Corp global designer fashion resale marketplace focusing on pre-owned luxury items with a wide selection of authenticated products.
- **Rebag:** Rebag is a platform to buy, sell, and trade luxury handbags, jewellery, watches, and other leather products either in one of their retail stores or online. Rebag specialists personally vet and certify each product.

## How does this help the planet and people?

- Vintage and second-hand shopping often supports local businesses and charitable organisations, fostering community connections and contributing to various social causes.
- Shopping vintage and second-hand challenges unsustainable fashion attitudes, reduces carbon emissions, conserves water, and encourages individuality.
- By extending the life of existing clothing through vintage and second-hand shopping, we can push back against the tides of overproduction to conserve water and reduce water pollution. It takes approximately 2,700 litres of water to produce one new cotton t-shirt.<sup>13</sup>
- By purchasing pre-owned items, we divert clothing from landfills, extending their lifespan and reducing textile waste.
- This practice significantly reduces the demand for new production, which in turn lessens the environmental impact.
- When we choose vintage or second-hand pieces, we help curb the demand for energy-intensive manufacturing processes and the excessive use of natural resources. To put this into perspective, the fashion industry is responsible for an estimated 1.8% of global greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>14</sup>

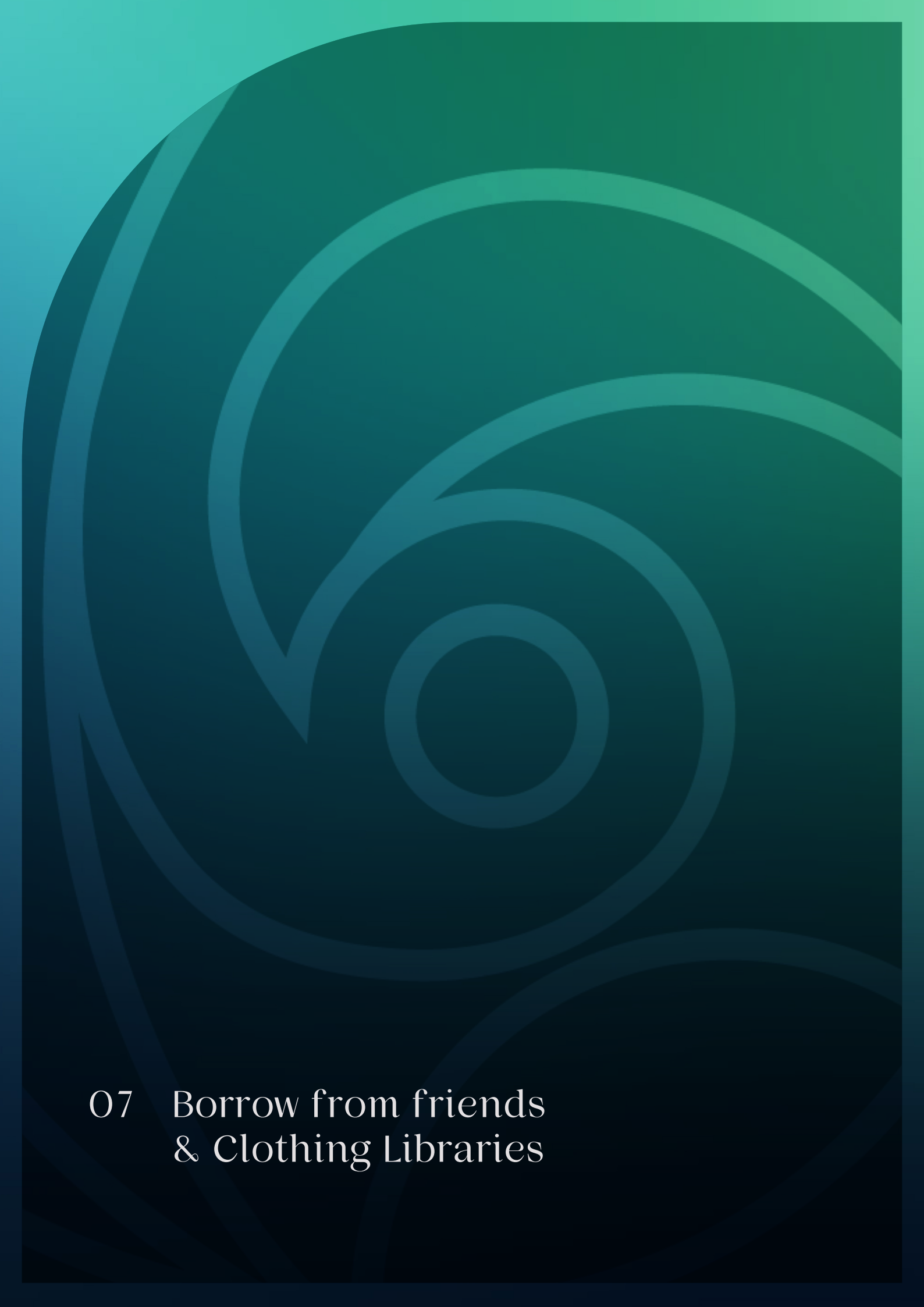
## Virtual Clothing Swapping and Resale Apps:

- **Depop:** Depop connects people to rent, buy and sell rare and unique fashion items from around the world, including preloved, vintage, and reworked garments and independent businesses.
- **Beyond Retro:** A vintage retailer with stores in the UK, Sweden, and Finland, Beyond Retro is committed to keeping textiles out of landfills through vintage retail and their in store exchange programme.
- **Thrift+:** Thrift+ offers a charity shopping experience comparable to the best online retailers, enabling users to resell clothing or shop second-hand from a global community, promoting the joy of preloved fashion.
- **Nuw:** Nuw is a virtual clothing swapping platform where your clothing is your currency, responsibly rehoming garments you no longer wear and adding new-to-you pieces to your wardrobe.
- **Shpock (UK/Austria/Germany):** Shpock is a local marketplace for buying and selling second-hand items in the UK and Germany, reducing waste and supporting local economies. Whether you're seeking furniture for your home or looking to declutter by selling gently-used items, Shpock connects you with local buyers and sellers.
- **Wallapop (Spain):** Wallapop is a second-hand marketplace that connects buyers and sellers locally in Spain, promoting sustainable consumption. If you're in Spain and want to buy or sell preloved items within your community, Wallapop provides an accessible platform.
- **ThredUP:** ThredUP is one of the largest online thrift stores and consignment shops, offering a vast selection of second-hand fashion items suitable for various styles and budgets.
- **Poshmark:** Poshmark is an online platform for users to buy and sell second-hand clothing, accessories, home decor, and more.
- **Swap:** Swap is an online thrift store selling second-hand shoes and clothing for people of all ages.
- **Goodwill Industries International:** Goodwill second-hand stores sell clothing, household goods, books, accessories, and more. The non-profit also has an online auction platform.
- **eBay:** Users of this global online marketplace can sell new and used items either by fixed prices or auction.
- **Etsy:** Etsy is a global platform for both buying and selling new, used, and vintage clothing, shoes, art, accessories, niche items, and more.







The background features a gradient from light teal at the top to dark green at the bottom. Overlaid on this are several concentric circles and a spiral shape, all rendered in various shades of teal and green, creating a layered, organic effect.

07 Borrow from friends  
& Clothing Libraries

# Borrow from Friends & Clothing Libraries

Haven't we all had moments where we fell in love with a garment or an outfit that we have seen on a friend or family member? Do you have pieces in your closet that people have remarked upon? Borrowing between family and friends can be a fun and efficient way to temporarily extend your wardrobe and do it sustainably.

When borrowing within your circle, be sure to determine who is responsible for cleaning the garment and accept responsibility for repairing any damages that may occur when you wear it. Sharing fashion treasures not only builds stronger bonds but also adds a touch of sustainability to your style.

Similarly, organising exchanges, or swaps of clothing, shoes, and accessories in your community or among friends promotes extending item life cycles and changes up your wardrobe in a sustainable way.

If you've ever thought about borrowing clothes from friends but for one reason or another it isn't practical, you still have options: clothing libraries. This concept has risen in popularity over the last five years as a sustainable and budget-friendly option to combat fast fashion.

As is the case with many other sustainability strategies, clothing libraries are not without challenges. When looking for a clothing library, look for ones near you geographically. This choice simplifies logistics and reduces the carbon footprint. For those interested in online platforms, delve into their sustainability commitments and ask the following questions:

- Do they address sustainability in transportation and logistics?
- Do they use certified green dry cleaning businesses or have environmentally responsible cleaning policies in place?
- Do they use sustainable or recyclable materials in their packaging?

By opting for clothing libraries and making informed choices, you can enjoy a sustainable and stylish approach to fashion.

## How does this help the planet and people?

- Borrowing or renting reduces the demand for new clothing, thereby contributing to efforts to slow down production.
- Renting reduces garment waste by extending the life of clothing items.
- Borrowing or renting grants access to a wider, more diverse range of clothing choices.
- Expensive garments are more accessible through renting or borrowing, which allows you to enjoy high-end fashion without the hefty price tag.







### **Subscription-Based Rental Services:**

**Le Tote:** Le Tote offers a personalised and diverse range of clothing and accessory rentals for women, allowing you to update your wardrobe regularly without the commitment of ownership.

**Gwynnie Bee:** Gwynnie Bee focuses exclusively on plus-size clothing rentals for women, providing a rotating wardrobe of stylish and inclusive clothing options.

**MyWardrobeHQ:** MyWardrobeHQ specialises in high-end designer clothing rentals for special occasions and everyday wear, allowing you to enjoy luxury fashion without a long-term commitment.

**Nuuly:** Nuuly, by Urban Outfitters, provides a wide selection of styles and brands for wardrobe refreshes with on-trend and sustainable fashion options.

**Stitch Fix:** Stitch Fix offers clothing rental options alongside personalised styling, providing a comprehensive way to refresh your wardrobe.

**Rent the Runway:** Rent the Runway offers personal styling and a rotating closet of designer looks with a monthly subscription plan.

### **Peer-to-Peer and Eco-Friendly Rental Platforms:**

- **HURR Collective:** HURR Collective is a UK-based clothing rental platform that promotes sustainability through peer-to-peer rentals, facilitating the borrowing of fashionable items from others' wardrobes.
- **Tulerie:** Tulerie is a peer-to-peer clothing rental platform that encourages wardrobe sharing among individuals and often features high-end designer pieces, fostering sustainability and an eco-friendly fashion community.
- **By Rotation:** By Rotation is a peer-to-peer fashion rental app that enables users to access designer fashion pieces and rent out their own wardrobe while promoting a sharing economy.
- **Rent My Wardrobe:** Wardrobe is a peer-to-peer rental app that facilitates borrowing from closets of influencers, fashion lovers, and celebrities, creating a sharing economy with access to luxury and vintage clothing.
- **Nuw:** Nuw is a virtual clothing-swapping platform that lets users add new-to-you preloved pieces to their wardrobe while giving others the opportunity to enjoy pieces no longer needed.
- **Dopple:** Dopple is a clothes-swapping app created for students, connecting them to swap their closets sustainably within their university and college communities.
- **Swapping Chain:** Online ecosystem platform that facilitates the swapping of goods and services among users encouraging interconnectivity and promoting accessibility.

The background is a gradient of teal and green, transitioning from a lighter shade at the top to a darker shade at the bottom. It features several concentric circles and a central swirl-like pattern, creating a sense of depth and movement.

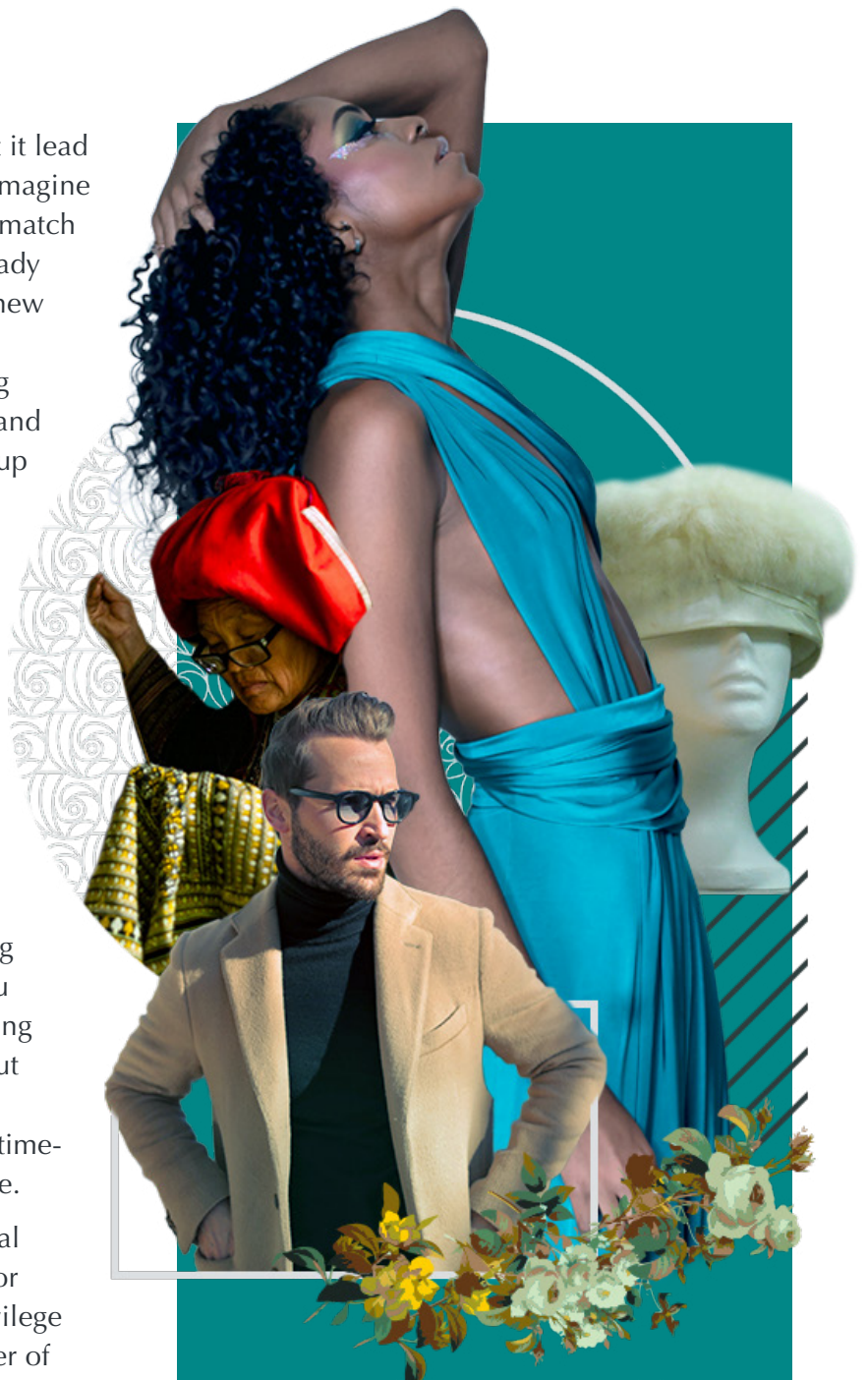
08 Re-wear, Reimagine & Repair

## Re-wear, Reimagine & Repair

Embrace your creativity and let it lead the way as you re-wear and reimagine your fashion choices. Mix and match pieces from various outfits already in your closet to craft a brand-new look. Experiment with different accessories, shoes, and layering options like jackets or shawls, and tweak your hairstyle and makeup to curate a personalised style that gives you the same sense of satisfaction as acquiring something new.

Revisiting a garment or outfit doesn't have to entail keeping it exactly as it is. Visit a tailor or seamstress to discuss ideas for how to reinvent or alter a piece and make it new to you again. By breathing new life into your garments and tailoring them to suit different looks, you can relish the thrill of discovering a new fashion statement without the accompanying guilt of contributing to the pile of one-time-only garments in your wardrobe.

Even formal garments for special occasions can be transformed or reinvented. If you have the privilege of knowing the original designer of one of your pieces, consider engaging with them to explore how the garment can be modified to create a fresh appearance, all while staying true to your commitment to sustainability. Even if the designer isn't currently emphasising sustainability, this presents an excellent opportunity to share your passion and encourage them to partake in a meaningful venture, potentially inspiring them to join the community of sustainability-minded creators.



Many sustainable practises we celebrate today are not new! During the Edo period (1603-1868) in Japan, a cherished philosophy of mend-and-darn prevailed. 'Shikkaiya,' skilled fix-and-mend textile experts from the high-season Kimono days, performed a range of services, including patchwork, cleaning, unseaming, and mending. Shikkaiya evolved with Japanese kimono culture, but as people stopped wearing kimonos every day, these experts largely disappeared, except in silk-producing areas like Kyoto and Niigata.



What should you do with that beloved sweater that has a hole in the pocket or those boots with a broken heel? You don't need to possess DIY expertise to address these issues. There are specialised professions dedicated to solving such problems. Consider hiring a skilled seamstress to mend your clothing and a professional cobbler to fix your shoes.

You can also learn a new skill. In urban areas, contemporary DIY movements involve people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds coming together for clothing repair workshops and mending events. These gatherings promote sustainable practices, community engagement, and the sharing of skills across different income groups, whilst in rural or artisanal communities, mending traditions may be deeply ingrained in daily life. Families or local artisans often pass down repair techniques, contributing to a culture of resourcefulness and sustainability, especially in regions where textiles are produced locally.

If repairing an item isn't an option, ponder these questions before relegating the item to the rubbish bin:

- Can it be creatively repurposed?
- Could it potentially transform into something entirely different?
- Can it be donated to a textiles recycling centre?



### How does this help the planet and people?

- Re-wearing, reimagining, and repairing your clothes extend their lifespan and reduce fashion waste.
- These actions contribute to slowing fashion down by reducing your consumption. As they become habits, so deepen their effect on your sustainability contributions.
- Frequenting a tailor, seamstress, or shoe cobbler supports the economy of crafters and ensures the survival of various methods of skilled crafting.

### Clothing and Shoe Repair Service Platforms:

#### SHOEBER™ (USA)

SHOEBER™ allows users to schedule pickup and delivery for repairs with shoe repair services in the Los Angeles area, enabling them to extend the life of their shoes, reduce waste, and contribute to a more sustainable fashion ecosystem.

#### Cobblers Direct (USA)

Shoe repair service encouraging people to repair instead of discard their shoes and leather items by making shoe repair more accessible through their online ship and repair services.

#### SOJO (UK)

SOJO offers clothing alteration and repair services in the UK, encouraging users to repair and refresh their clothing instead of disposing of it.

#### Fix That Shirt (France)

Fix That Shirt (FiTS) is a Parisian app that helps you schedule repairs, alterations, or an upcycling project of your clothes with ease.

#### MendIt app (USA)

MendIt app is a Houston-based app that aims to support small local businesses that specialise in mending clothes by offering them a marketplace to connect with people who are interested in using their services.

## Discover Cultural Patchwork & Craft

Numerous communities around the world have embraced sustainable practices, including the use of patchwork styles in fashion. While specific examples may vary, here are a few instances of communities or initiatives that have successfully incorporated sustainable patchwork and craft traditions:

### **Boro in Japan**

Boro is a traditional Japanese mending technique that involves patching together layers of indigo-dyed fabrics. Originally used by peasants to extend the life of garments, it has evolved into an art form. Japanese artisans and communities, particularly in regions like Aomori and Tohoku, have preserved and celebrated the Boro tradition.

### **Amish quilting communities in the United States**

Amish quilting communities in the United States, particularly in states like Pennsylvania and Ohio, have a rich tradition of creating intricate and carefully crafted quilts using patchwork techniques.

### **Artisans in Rajasthan, India**

Artisans in Rajasthan have a long-standing tradition of creating patchwork textiles, known for their vibrant colours and intricate designs, that are both eco-friendly and culturally significant.

### **Highland tribes in Southeast Asia**

Various highland tribes in countries like Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos have a history of creating traditional clothing with patchwork elements. Hmong communities, for instance, incorporate patchwork into their traditional clothing, often utilising scraps of fabric to create visually striking and sustainable garments.

### **African quilting communities**

Various African countries have a rich quilting tradition, with communities creating colourful and patterned quilts

using patchwork techniques. In South Africa, the Amafu Women's Group engages in quilting, incorporating rich hues and geometric patterns that reflect the rich cultural heritage of the Zulu people.

### **African American quilting communities**

African American communities in the United States have a rich quilting tradition, often rooted in the history of enslaved individuals who used patchwork techniques to create quilts for warmth and storytelling. The quilts created by the women of Gee's Bend, a rural African American community in Alabama, are renowned for their bold and improvisational patchwork designs. These quilts gained recognition as both functional art pieces and cultural treasures, whilst artists like Bisa Butler and Faith Ringgold are known for creating "story quilts" that blend quilting with narrative elements from African American and African history, folklore, or personal experiences, using patchwork as a storytelling medium.

### **Indigenous communities in Guatemala**

Indigenous communities in Guatemala, such as the Mayans, are known for their vibrant traditional clothing, which often features intricate patchwork designs.

These examples highlight how communities across different cultures have integrated patchwork styles into their fashion traditions, demonstrating a commitment to sustainability, resourcefulness, and cultural preservation.

The background is a gradient of teal and green, transitioning from a lighter shade at the top to a darker shade at the bottom. It features several concentric circles and a central swirl-like pattern, all rendered in a slightly darker shade of the background color, creating a subtle, layered effect.

09 Repurpose & DIY



When the option to repair your beloved garments becomes impractical, flex your creativity muscle and start a do-it-yourself repurposing project. Transform yourself into a prosumer, someone who not only consumes but also produces by customising, repurposing, creating, or crafting from scratch. The concept of prosumerism has been a prevailing trend, exemplified by the proliferation of DIY television shows spanning various domains, from fashion to gardening and home renovation, along with the tremendous popularity of platforms like Pinterest.

Many social media platforms are bursting with inspiring, carefully crafted project ideas and tutorials. A word of encouragement: it's important to focus on the purpose (sustainability and creativity) and the process (you're doing it yourself!) rather than the finished result, which may or may not be exactly as you imagined. Incorporating these small-scale DIY practices not only adds a touch of sustainability to your lifestyle but also sparks your creativity and resourcefulness, contributing to a more environmentally-conscious way of living.

### Here are a few inventive ideas:

- Repurpose an old sweater into tea cosies, coffee cup sleeves, or slippers.
- Convert shirts into versatile tote bags, stylish headbands, cosy pillowcases, or even charming quilts.
- Give old cotton garments a new life as eco-friendly makeup removal cloths or infinity scarves.
- Old ties can be reinvented as zippered storage pouches for pencils, makeup, and other odds and ends.
- Transform worn-out jeans into effective door draft stoppers, or reupholster a footstool.
- Refresh the look of your cardigans and coats with the different styles and colours of new buttons. Check the buttons of other unusable garments before you buy new.



It can be easy to get caught up in DIY projects, and you may find that some require materials or items that you don't have on hand. Remember, the spirit of repurposing is to reduce waste, so be thoughtful about sourcing new things for your project and try to use what you have on hand. Here is a list of items to hold onto for customising your clothing instead of throwing away:

**Here is a list of items to hold onto for customising your clothing instead of throwing away:**

- **Ribbons:** Different colours, patterns, and textures can add flair to your clothing.
- **Buttons from old clothing:** Buttons come in various shapes, sizes, and styles. Keep them when discarding old clothes to use for future projects.
- **Laces:** Lace trims or whole pieces can be used to embellish sleeves, collars, or hems.
- **Stray Sequins:** Add a touch of sparkle to your garments by keeping sequins from old clothing or accessories.
- **Jewellery:** Broken or outdated jewellery pieces can be repurposed as unique embellishments for clothing, such as brooches or buttons.
- **Fabric for pocket squares:** Save scraps of interesting fabrics to create unique pocket squares that complement your outfits.
- **Embroidery floss or thread:** Great for adding embroidered details or patching up worn areas.
- **Fabric scraps:** Small pieces of fabric can be used for patches, appliques, or creating unique patterns on your clothing.
- **Beads and precious stones:** Whether loose or from old accessories, beads can be sewn onto clothing for added texture and style. Small rhinestones can be used to embellish clothing items, giving them a glamorous touch.
- **Patches:** Collect interesting patches from old clothing or events to personalise and revive plain garments.
- **Fabric paints, inks or markers:** Use these to create custom designs, patterns, or lettering on your clothing.
- **Trimming:** Save decorative trims, such as pom-poms, fringe, or braided cords, to enhance the edges of your clothing.
- **Old scarves:** Repurpose scarves into belts, headbands, or use the fabric for other creative clothing customisations.
- **Broken belts:** Salvage buckles or interesting details from old belts to use as embellishments on clothing. How does this help the planet and people?



Remember, the key is to get creative and experiment with different combinations of these items to add your personal touch to your clothing!

**How does this help the planet and people?**

- Repurposing reduces textile waste.
- Repurposing instills respect and appreciation for crafting skills.
- Repurposing challenges the disposable mindset.



## Follow the Threads of Cultural Embroidery & Prints



Embroidery, a timeless art form, embodies the essence of cultural identity and exposes the complexity and diversity present in humanity's cultures across the globe. Within this art form, we encounter a kaleidoscope of motifs, colours, techniques, and patterns, each weaving a unique narrative rooted in its culture and tradition. Each stitch, a testament to centuries-old traditions, carries within it stories of artisans and their communities. But beyond its aesthetic allure, these age-old techniques hold a key to sustainability in couture.

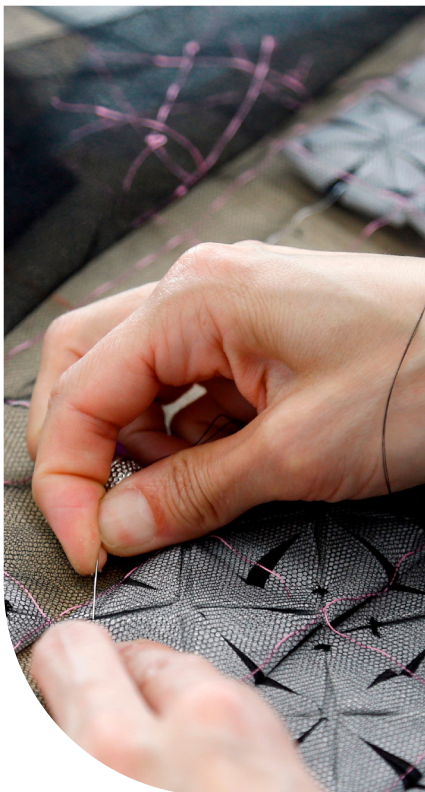
Take, for example, Sashiko, a Japanese embroidery technique that translates to "little stabs." Beyond its visual appeal, Sashiko embodies the very essence of Japanese values—frugality, resourcefulness, and an appreciation for simplicity and imperfection. It's a testament to how a craft can mirror a society's ethos and way of life.

In Mexico, the Otomi Embroidery tradition stands out with its vibrant and intricate designs that depict animals, plants, and traditional symbols. This embroidery is not just about aesthetics; it's a visual representation of cultural narratives and our profound connection to nature. Every stitch in Otomi Embroidery tells a story, celebrating the intricate relationship between humans and their environment.

Venturing to Ghana, we encounter the Adinkra symbols, a treasure trove of cultural wisdom and philosophy. These symbols, often stamped, embroidered or printed, convey profound concepts and proverbs, each carrying deep cultural and philosophical significance. Many of them emphasise sustainability at their core, echoing the importance of harmonious coexistence with the natural world.

From Japan's Sashiko to Mexico's Otomi Embroidery and Ghana's Adinkra symbols, these diverse embroidery traditions and symbols illustrate how art, culture, and sustainability are intricately intertwined. They serve as reminders of the beauty that emerges when creativity is deeply rooted in cultural heritage and when sustainability is embraced as a way of life.

As we weave through the rich tapestry of cultural embroidery and craft, our journey takes an intricate turn, guiding us toward the intersection where tradition meets the avant-garde, where threads of heritage intertwine with the sustainable ethos of couture.









The background is a gradient of teal and green, transitioning from a lighter shade at the top to a darker shade at the bottom. It features several concentric circles and a central swirl-like pattern, all rendered in a slightly darker shade than the background, creating a subtle, layered effect.

10 Fashion Archives

Fashion houses traditionally maintain archives of their previous collections. These archives offer a unique window into the evolution of design and style, showcasing the narratives, world events, cultural shifts, and artistic inspirations that influenced their creations. Archive collections serve as both a witness and a demonstration of a brand's history, revealing the signature elements that define its identity.

An archive piece is an item from a prior collection which can be as recent as a year or two ago. In some cases, an archive piece can also be vintage if it meets the age criterion. However, an archive piece carries the added significance of being part of an influential collection or designed by a renowned creator. When you wear an archive piece, you are celebrating the enduring essence of fashion—an attribute designers strive for but one that often gets overshadowed by the relentless pursuit of the next big trend.

As sustainability becomes a dominant theme in fashion, archival fashion is poised for growth, aligning with sustainability by tapping into the rich history of fashion, allowing people to rediscover and appreciate timeless pieces. If you're intrigued by the allure of archive fashion and have a particular piece in mind that has left its mark on you, embarking on the journey to find it can be a rewarding pursuit. Identifying the name of the garment and its designer is the initial step.

The pursuit of archive pieces has evolved into a niche hobby, demanding dedicated effort in scouring online marketplaces, reaching out to vintage stores, and establishing connections within the fashion industry. Be prepared for the investment, both in terms of time and finances, as archive fashion is rarely thrifty. Moreover, it's a passion that not everyone in your social circle might comprehend. Nevertheless, once you obtain that coveted piece, your journey to ownership and the stories it carries become integral to the garment's own narrative, making it a truly remarkable addition to your fashion repertoire.

## How does this help the planet and people?

- The pursuit of fashion archives encourages an element of education and reflection on fashion history and an appreciation for the dedication and work of designers.
- Fashion archives often spotlight quality production and durability.
- Wearing fashion archives extends the lifespan of the garments, reducing fashion waste.
- Investing in fashion archives encourages a disengagement from the consumption mindset and fosters an ethos that values existing design and craft.





The background features a series of concentric, overlapping circles and a central swirl-like pattern, all rendered in various shades of teal and green. The colors transition from a lighter, almost white-green at the top left to a dark, deep teal at the bottom right. The overall effect is a sense of depth and movement.

## 11 Donate & Discard Responsibly

# Donate & Discard Responsibly

On the brand and organisation front, the fashion industry has slowly started to recognise extended producer responsibility. From in-store recycling bins, to take-back schemes, we're beginning to see brand accountability for the entire life cycle of products, including waste management and disposal.

Notable examples include ReMUJI, launched in 2014, where used MUJI clothes are dropped off, sorted, and wearable items washed and dyed with indigo. Another initiative, JEPLAN's BRING™, converts unsalvageable textiles into bioethanol, showcasing global efforts for creative and sustainable solutions in fashion recycling. The ECONYL® process by Aquafil regenerates nylon waste, such as discarded fishing nets and fabric scraps, into new nylon yarn, addressing plastic waste in oceans and providing an alternative material source for swimwear and activewear.

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation, committed to eliminating waste and pollution, advocates for circularity and investments in technologies for recycling various textile fibres, contributing to a more sustainable and closed-loop fashion ecosystem.

On the citizen side, while many individuals generously donate their unwanted garments, shoes, and purses, it's crucial to remember that donations should ideally be made when these items are still in good condition. Donations can typically be made at local charities or second-hand shops in your community; contact them for drop-off details. Additionally, donation bins may be found in supermarket or shopping mall parking lots.

Some clothing and shoe brands offer recycling or take-back programmes where you can take your unwanted items to the store or mail them in. Some brands only accept their own branded products back, while others accept any textiles at all.

Alternatively, you can search for a textile recycling centre near you. Not all recycling centres accept textiles, so it's a good idea to ask before you pack a bag. If they do not accept textiles, they may be able to refer you to where to go or who to contact. Unfortunately, donated clothes can form part of a bigger social impact issue, detailed later on in this guide.



### How does this help the planet and people?

- Reduce textile waste—one garbage truck's worth of clothing is burned or buried in a landfill every second.<sup>15</sup>

### Textile Recycling Resources:

- **Blue Jeans Go Green™(USA):** This program recycles old cotton denim back into its original fibre. Denim donations can be made in participating stores or mailed in.
- **The Bra Recyclers (USA):** A social enterprise textile recycling company that accepts donated used bras at physical locations and by mail. Bras are sorted and donated to non-profit organisations around the world or taken for textile recycling.
- **Terracycle® (Global):** The Terracycle® Zero Waste Box™ for fabric and clothing can be filled with unusable textile products in any condition and sent back to Terracycle® for recycling.
- **The Renewal Workshop (Global):** The Renewal Workshop at international logistics provider Bleckmann offers brands renewal and restoration services for their take-back programmes.
- **iRecycle (USA):** iRecycle helps users find recycling centres for various materials in the USA, making recycling more accessible and encouraging responsible waste disposal.
- **RecycleSmart (Australia):** RecycleSmart offers Australians recycling pick up services directly from the doorstep, including textiles in any condition.
- **Trashion Kenya (Kenya):** An organisation dedicated to transforming recyclable materials into contemporary fashion, embracing the concept of “trashion” — fashion with a conscience.





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12 Let Your Values Guide Your  
Sustainability Journey

Shopping with sustainability values means making mindful choices as a consumer. It involves selecting products and supporting brands that prioritise ethical practices, environmental responsibility, and social consciousness. For some of you, it may also mean advocacy or involvement with initiatives. What are your sustainability values?

Here are some examples to consider.

- Frugality & Discernment
- Women-Led
- Diversity, Inclusion, & Representation
- Indigenous Voices
- Elevating Voices from Disability Community
- Faith Representation
- Climate-Focus
- Cruelty-Free
- Respect & Dignity for Labour
- Fairness & Equity

As the challenges of sustainability in fashion are varied and complex, so too are our individual values. By aligning our shopping habits with values that resonate with each of us, we contribute to a more ethical and eco-friendly world, one purchase at a time, while encouraging businesses to adopt responsible practices.



## Frugality & Discernment

Frugality and discernment in sustainable fashion involve rethinking our approach to clothing consumption. It emphasises the importance of making thoughtful, informed choices on our purchases, encourages the practice of re-wearing clothing, and directly challenges the harmful—to both people and the planet—societal aversion to repeating outfits by embracing the idea that garments can be worn multiple times for different occasions. Re-wearing is not only environmentally responsible but also financially sustainable for many individuals.

Frugality encourages individuals to explore their existing wardrobe, rediscovering and mixing pieces to create new looks. This practice promotes creativity and minimises the need for constant new purchases.

Frugality for some may mean shopping for pieces with a past, either vintage or second-hand. Extending the lifespan of a garment by at least nine months can significantly reduce its environmental impact, including water usage, waste, and carbon footprint by 20-30%.<sup>16</sup>

Frugality and discernment are not only represented by re-wearing but by emphasising the enduring qualities of clothing. The quippy and slightly condescending hashtag “buy less, buy better” in itself isn’t necessarily helpful. Nevertheless, it does confront the notion that clothing is disposable.

Discernment is supported by shopping brands and products that are certified. Certifications in the world of fashion and textiles are like beacons of light in a vast sea of options. They guide us toward products and brands that meet rigorous standards to ensure sustainability, ethical practices, and environmental responsibility. Certifications provide us with the confidence to wear or use products that align with our values.

### Exercising frugality and discernment in sustainable fashion is:

- Buying pieces that you love and will wear over and over again.
- Shopping for quality over quantity—pieces that will endure.
- Buying, renting, and swapping pieces with a past—extending the life of garments and reducing textile waste.
- Purchasing garments that can combine with what you already have in your closet.
- Buying clothing that is constructed from recycled materials, alternative and organic textiles, and low-impact materials.
- Reflecting on the reasons behind discarding certain items to serve as a lesson in making informed purchasing decisions to avoid future clothing choices that may lead to waste.

### Organisations and Initiatives that align with this value:

#### Slow Fashion Movement (Global)

A volunteer movement dedicated to promoting slow fashion with their annual Slow Fashion Season campaign.

#### Fashion for Good (Global)

A global platform that supports innovation in sustainable fashion and encourages slower, more sustainable consumption through their interactive Fashion for Good Museum.

#### Global Fashion Exchange™ (Global)

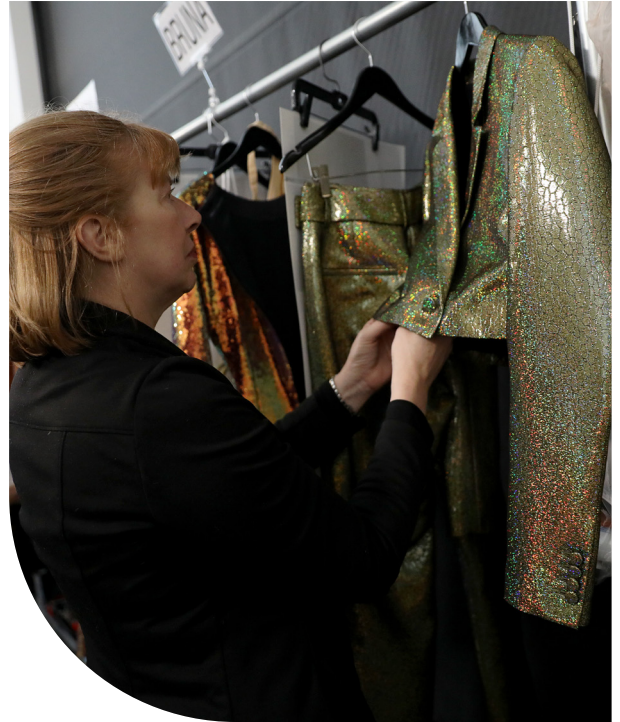
An international platform that creates educational content, hosts community swap events, and forums.



## Women-led

Gender inequalities persist across the fashion supply chain, where the majority of the 40 to 60 million garment workers, predominantly women, endure low wages, human rights violations, and unsafe conditions.<sup>17</sup> This extends to a significant gender wage gap, limited opportunities for women's advancement, and a lack of representation in top fashion leadership positions, reflecting the existence of "The Glass Runway" in the industry.<sup>18</sup>

Yet, when it comes to sustainability, studies have shown that women-led organisations and businesses across industries are more likely to adopt environmentally friendly practices and are more transparent in disclosures of greenhouse gas emissions and carbon footprints.<sup>19</sup> Women leadership plays a crucial role in transforming the industry with their commitment to ethical and sustainable practices.



### Supporting women's leadership in sustainable fashion is:

- Choosing to buy from and promote sustainable fashion brands, boutiques and stores owned or led by women, contributing to the economic empowerment of female entrepreneurs in the industry.
- Promoting initiatives and policies that ensure equal opportunities for women at all levels of the sustainable fashion industry, addressing barriers to advancement and challenging gender-based discrimination.
- Supporting women entrepreneurs in the fashion tech sector who are developing innovative solutions, such as apps and platforms to reduce waste and enhance sustainability.

### Organisations and Initiatives that align with this value:

#### 50/50 Women on Boards™

This initiative is part of the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) and aims to achieve equal representation of women and men in fashion leadership roles, fostering a more inclusive industry.

#### Go Beyond Gender program

Initiative launched in 2021 by CIEL Textile with a targeted vision for management positions to be 35% women by 2030 across CIEL's business groups in Mauritius, India, Madagascar, and Bangladesh.

#### Financial Alliance For Women

Although not specific to the fashion industry, this global network of financial organisations is championing women's economic development and entrepreneurship through proprietary data and research and peer-to-peer learning.

#### Fashion Impact Fund

Funds women-led fashion skills training programmes for women that implement sustainable practices, promote financial independence, and combat discrimination and gender-based violence.

## Representation, Diversity & Inclusion

Our world is rich in cultures, races, ethnicities, and body types, all of which contribute valuable perspectives to the industry. Embracing diversity, inclusivity, and representation at every level is essential to fostering a truly sustainable fashion ecosystem because it invites meaningful participation through belonging and brings varied perspectives, knowledge, and ideas to innovation.

The fashion industry relies on the collective efforts of individuals across various roles, from sales associates to designers and photographers, to bring representative fashion to people worldwide. Token attempts at representation, such as having a single seat at the table, which can be taken away at any time, are not genuine diversity.

Supporting fashion designers and brands from around the world promotes creativity, cultural sustainability, and the fashion industry's overall strength. The diversity and varied perspectives offered by designers from different backgrounds, languages, and cultures enrich the fashion landscape and contribute to innovative solutions. By shopping for clothes from these creators, you not only contribute to their success but also celebrate the global tapestry of fashion.

Cultural representation is of paramount importance to the industry's success. It brings forward essential perspectives, mirrors our diverse world, and fosters meaningful dialogue. This inclusivity can lead to growth, innovation, accessibility, and transformation in the sustainability sector.

Failing to advocate for these connections means overlooking the fact that the current unrepresentative fashion industry, entrenched in outdated systems which, for example, allots less shelf space to Black-owned businesses. This not only impedes the creation of generational wealth but also perpetuates inequality.

"In the rich tapestry of global design, African creativity emerges as a beacon of ingenuity. Elevating the brilliant solutions crafted by African designers on the international stage is not just a choice: it is our way of being and imperative for forging a truly sustainable fashion industry. Couture, once confined to the ateliers of Paris, now finds new definition in the vibrant landscapes of Africa. It's a paradigm shift, a celebration of diversity, and a collective journey towards a more inclusive and sustainable future for fashion. Let us champion the brilliance that transcends borders, redefining the narrative and proving that sustainability as a culture, scalable creativity, and refined couture know no geographical limits. Together, we weave a narrative of global style that honors every thread of creativity." - Omoyemi Akerele, Founder & Director, Style House Files



A sustainable fashion industry means diversity being represented in the sales workforce, models, corporate offices, advertising campaigns, magazines, design teams, apprenticeships, internships, and much more. Examples of diversity include the following:

- **Race and ethnicity:** Embrace racial diversity and various racial and ethnic backgrounds across creative and professional spaces. For instance, representation should include African, Asian, Hispanic, Indigenous, and Middle Eastern communities, among others.
- **Age:** Age diversity recognises that access to fashion is not limited to a particular age group, and neither should opportunities be. The industry should support inclusive casting, design sustainable fashion for all ages, and engage in age-positive advertising, for example.
- **Size and body type:** The fashion industry should promote a variety of body shapes and sizes to include plus-size and petite models and designers, as well as a range of clothing sizes to meet the diverse needs of consumers. This involves ensuring that the design and fit of clothing are tailored to different body proportions.
- **Abilities and disabilities:** Fashion should be accessible and inclusive, offering not only adaptive clothing for people with disabilities but also ensuring representation across the industry for creatives and industry professionals with various disabilities.
- **Sexual orientation:** Recognising and including individuals from the LGBTQIA+ community in creative and professional space, to foster a sense of belonging for everyone in the fashion world.
- **Ethnic and cultural diversity:** Beyond race, ethnic and cultural diversity highlights the importance of representing various cultural backgrounds and traditions in fashion. This includes supporting individuals from different cultures and regions.
- **Socioeconomic background:** The sustainable fashion industry should not remain inaccessible due to socioeconomic factors. It should extend opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds to engage in work, creative endeavours, and self-expression. This inclusivity should also encompass the affordability of sustainable fashion itself, ensuring that these offerings are not exclusive to the privileged.
- **Religion and belief systems:** Representation should encompass a variety of spiritual, religious, and belief systems, ranging from providing equitable career opportunities to ensuring access to culturally sensitive fashion choices and designs.
- **Neurodiversity:** Individuals who perceive and interact with the world in different ways should be represented and included in various roles throughout the fashion industry.
- **Gender and gender identity:** Recognise non-binary, transgender, gender-neutral, and gender-fluid identities. Individuals from these communities, including those identifying as LGBTQIA+, significantly contribute to their own representation and empowerment, both as creatives and professionals.

In grasping an individual's identity, it's vital to acknowledge that every strand is intertwined within the historical fabric. Context matters—it narrates the story of struggles, oppression, triumph, and more. To understand an individual's identity, we must delve into the historical context, recognising the resilience and beauty shaped by a complex past, challenging present, and uncertain future.



## Supporting diversity, inclusion, & representation in sustainable fashion is:

- Purchasing from designers and brands representing a range of races and ethnicities contributes to financial empowerment and job creation within minority communities. Your support also encourages major brands and retailers to create space for the work of AAPI, Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, Latina/o/e/o/x, and other People of Colour.
- Avoiding cultural appropriation by appreciating and supporting designs and fashions representing diverse cultural identities.
- Showing curiosity about what designers from other countries are creating and exploring fashion beyond your country's borders to appreciate the richness of global diversity.
- Drawing attention and support to organisations and independent designers across the globe who are working to develop and support talent within their own borders.
- Shopping brands that collaborate directly with artisans across the globe, producing hand-made items while prioritising fair wages and safe working conditions. By doing so, these brands empower artisans to enhance their economic well-being on a global scale, levelling the playing field more.
- Giving your support to independent artisans whose cultural heritages inform alternative methods of craftsmanship, resulting in inspiring accessories, jewellery, and adornments.
- Examining the advertising campaigns, assessing the diversity of their staff, and determining commitment for representation of your favourite designers and brands.



“As a Black woman on American soil, I have had to unlearn the mainstream discourse and re-engineer definitions, frameworks, and embodiments of what sustainability truly means. The erasure of Black Indigenous sustainability rubrics has created a lexicon where we omit the physical and spiritual footprints of how we’ve understood sustainability from history to modernity.

It’s in the LAND - our inherent connection to soil and space. It’s in JOY modalities - our song, our dance, the connection to community healing rituals as rhythms of resilience. It’s in our INGENUITY that we’ve been able to design and innovate most of the tools and technologies we use today.

Since the monopoly of indigo, or “blue gold,” in West Africa, Afro-Indigenous/Black regenerative fashion has been commercialized to create the blueprint for unsustainability. However, sustainability is a conduit for our voice, armor, and ecstasy. We just have to find creative ways to reclaim while re-educating the world for planetary health and societal survival!

We have to reimagine the beauty and experience of sustainable fashion, knowing that we are connected to every fiber and its gravitational pull.”

- Dominique Drakeford, *Sustainability Vanguard* (Educator, Author & Content Creator)



### **Organisations that align with these values:**

**Sustainable Brooklyn:** An organisation that provides education on sustainability from an African Diasporan perspective, with a focus on fashion, agriculture, and wellness, through resources, events, workshops and curriculums.

**Fashion Minority Alliance:** The Fashion Minority Alliance is a non-profit organisation committed to increasing the visibility and opportunities for minority individuals in the fashion industry. They work to address issues related to diversity and inclusion.

**The Diversity Coalition:** Founded by fashion icon Bethann Hardison, The Diversity Coalition aims to address the lack of diversity on the runways and in the fashion industry at large. They call out designers, brands, and agencies that lack diversity and encourage more inclusive practices.

**Model Alliance:** The Model Alliance is a non-profit organisation dedicated to improving labour standards for models in the fashion industry. They focus on issues like model diversity, fair treatment, and inclusivity.

**Black in Fashion Council:** Founded in 2020, this organisation is committed to promoting the representation of Black individuals in the fashion and beauty industries. They work to hold brands and companies accountable for their diversity and inclusion efforts.

**The Fashion and Race Database™:** An online learning platform filled with open-source tools that challenge dominant narratives in fashion history and analyse the intersection of race and fashion.

**BLACK PEARL:** A cultural sustainability organisation, redefining the landscape of sustainability and culture through education, resource provision, collaborations and brand activations, media production and storytelling content creation. They work across the realms of design, fashion, music, entertainment, and education.

**National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP):** A non-profit grassroots organisation that advocates for civil rights and social justice also works to ensure diversity and inclusivity in various industries, including fashion. They often advocate for equal representation and rights for underrepresented communities.

**Latina Fashionista:** Organization seeking to address the under-representation in key roles in the fashion industry by providing workshops, school presentations, and youth conferences.

**Council for International African Fashion Education:** Think tank committed to decentralising fashion education to grow Africa's fashion ecosystem and advance sustainable development.

**Egyptian Fashion Design Council:** Group of designers aims to promote Egyptian fashion and design talent through education, connections, technology, and support of local platforms.

**Fashion Design Council of India:** A non-profit organisation committed to supporting the growth of Indian designers and furthering the cause of Indian fashion.

**Asian Couture Federation:** A self-financed pan-Asian organisation that promotes Asian Couturiers.

**African Fashion International:** Marketing, retail, and development platform dedicated to growing Pan African designers and promoting African apparel and accessories.

**Style House Files:** A fashion business development agency committed to the advancement of Nigerian and African textile and apparel industry through talent discovery, advocacy, mentorship, marketing, and providing opportunities.

**African Fashion Foundation:** A non-governmental organisation that empowers fashion designers and creative professionals from Africa and its diaspora to succeed in the global fashion industry.

**Chicago Asian Women Empowerment:** Volunteer-led non-profit organisation dedicated to empowering and growing the next generation of AAPI women leadership. Initiatives include free workshops, the Miss Asian Chicago pageant, and the Asian Fashion Show Chicago.

"One of the most incredible things that happens, when we adjust our lens globally, culturally and beyond, is that our conversations get more interesting. As we learn about different expressions, other ways of creating, creatives we can be supporting, it all becomes richer. I think that is one of the biggest things missing from this conversation. How much we gain, when we search for representation in the fashion industry."

- Samata Pattinson, CEO, BLACK PEARL, and Cultural Sustainability Pioneer

## SPOTLIGHT





## Indigenous Voices

Indigenous voices in sustainable fashion bring forth unique perspectives rooted in deep connections to nature, culture, and heritage. Indigenous-owned and operated fashion initiatives prioritise sustainability, traditional craftsmanship, community values and cultural preservation.

How does an indigenous perspective on sustainable fashion manifest? Indigenous fashion designers frequently approach their craft with a distinctive perspective, often characterised by the following:

- **Cultural preservation:** Prioritising the preservation and celebration of their cultural heritage. Traditional symbols, motifs, and techniques are incorporated into designs, ensuring the continuation of cultural narratives and artistry.
- **Sustainable practices:** Utilising eco-friendly materials, engaging in traditional and low-impact production methods, and emphasising longevity in garment design, steering away from the fast fashion cycle.
- **Community involvement:** Involving their communities in the design process. Collaborations with local artisans and craftsmen ensure the incorporation of traditional skills, fostering economic empowerment within indigenous communities.
- **Storytelling through fashion:** Telling a story through designs that may carry historical, spiritual, or cultural significance, allowing wearers to connect with the narrative behind the garment and fostering a deeper understanding of indigenous cultures.
- **Empowerment and representation:** Challenging stereotypes and promoting positive representation. Their designs often empower indigenous communities by showcasing a rich tapestry of identities and challenging mainstream perceptions of indigenous peoples.
- **Connection to nature:** Drawing inspiration from the natural world by incorporating elements like flora, fauna, and landscapes. This connection to nature reinforces sustainable practices and a profound respect for the environment.
- **Customisation and individuality:** Prioritising individuality and customisation, the handcrafted details, unique patterns, and personalised touches contribute to garments that are distinct and reflective of both the designer's vision and the wearer's identity.
- **Ceremonial and ritualistic influences:** Designing garments to align with specific cultural practices, emphasising respect for sacred symbols, ritualistic traditions, and ceremonies.

"Everything is done with lots of love and respect for my culture and the strength of my ancestors. preserving our ancestral knowledge. respecting the land and the environment. and employing people who make a living from fashion."

- Maurício Duarte, Indigenous Designer





### Supporting indigenous voices in sustainable fashion is:

- Purchasing from designers and brands representing indigenous voices contributes to financial empowerment and job creation within minority communities. Your support also encourages major brands and retailers to create space for indigenous designs.
- Fostering collaborations between indigenous artisans and more established fashion brands. These partnerships can offer a platform for indigenous creators to share their stories, techniques, and designs while introducing them to wider audiences.
- Embracing ethical sourcing by incorporating materials sourced directly from indigenous communities. This not only ensures fair compensation for their work but also promotes the use of sustainable, locally produced materials, reducing the environmental impact of fashion production.
- Establishing mentorship programmes or educational initiatives that connect indigenous artisans with aspiring fashion designers. This exchange of knowledge can empower the next generation of designers to integrate sustainable and culturally respectful practices into their work, fostering a more inclusive and responsible fashion industry.

#### Examples of Indigenous Voices in Sustainable Fashion:

**Indigenous artistry:** Indigenous designers and artisans incorporate traditional artistry, such as beadwork, weaving, and hand-painted textiles, into contemporary sustainable fashion. These designs celebrate indigenous culture and heritage.

**Cultural education:** Indigenous voices in fashion often serve as educators, sharing knowledge about indigenous cultures, histories, and issues. They help citizens understand the importance of preserving indigenous traditions.

**Collaborations and partnerships:** Collaborations between indigenous artisans and non-indigenous fashion brands can promote cultural exchange and create economic opportunities for indigenous communities.

**Indigenous fashion shows:** An increasing number of cities are hosting fashion shows dedicated to First Nations or indigenous fashion designers.





### **Organisations that align with these values:**

**Evea (Global):** A social enterprise that extracts resin from the Shiringa tree without harming it and uses the resin to create sustainable biomaterials and products for the fashion industry. The dual aims for this enterprise are forest conservation and empowerment of the indigenous communities in the Peruvian Amazon.

**First Nations Fashion + Design (Australia):** First Nations + Fashion Design is a platform that promotes and supports indigenous fashion designers, highlighting their unique and culturally inspired creations.

**Amano Artisans (Global):** Works with artisans from various indigenous communities worldwide. They offer connections to master artisans in Latin America, raw materials sourcing, virtual artisan experiences, and other services.

**Indigenous Fashion Projects (Australia):** Provides development programmes, mentorships, resources, and promotional events to support indigenous Australians working in textiles and fashion.

**Indigenous Fashion Arts (Canada):** Led by indigenous women, Indigenous Fashion Arts (IFA) is committed to the amplification and empowerment of indigenous-made fashion, textiles, and craft by fostering connections, curating exhibits, and hosting events including workshops, runways, lectures, panels, and hosting their biennial Indigenous Fashion Arts Festival which features indigenous artists and designers from around the world.

“In essence, indigenous fashion designers approach their work holistically, considering cultural, environmental, and community factors. Their designs serve as a form of cultural expression, social activism, and a bridge between tradition and contemporary fashion.”

- Kestrel Jenkins, Sustainability Storyteller & Co-Host, Producer Of Conscious Chatter Podcast



## Elevating Voices from the Disability Community

Inclusive sustainable fashion recognizes the importance of amplifying disabled voices within the industry. These initiatives prioritise accessibility, adaptive designs, and fair treatment of disabled individuals within the fashion ecosystem.

### Elevating voices from the disability community is:

- Focusing on creating clothing that is inclusive and accessible. This involves designing adaptive clothing with features like magnetic closures, adjustable straps, and easy-to-use fastenings, ensuring comfort and ease for people with different abilities.
- Featuring diverse models with disabilities in marketing campaigns and media representation. This representation not only promotes inclusivity but also challenges societal norms and beauty standards within the fashion industry.
- Engaging disabled designers and individuals in the design process ensuring that their lived experiences and unique perspectives are incorporated into the creation of fashion lines. Collaborative efforts can lead to innovative and functional designs that cater to a broader spectrum of needs and preferences.
- Advocating for fair treatment and representation within the fashion ecosystem. This involves promoting inclusive hiring practices, providing opportunities for disabled individuals in various roles within the industry, and ensuring equal pay and fair working conditions.
- Supporting initiatives that raise awareness about the challenges faced by disabled individuals in the fashion world is crucial. Educational programmes, workshops, and awareness campaigns help foster understanding and empathy, encouraging the industry to embrace inclusivity as a fundamental value.

### Organisations and initiatives that align with this value:

- **Cur8Able:** Lifestyle platform for people with disabilities to learn style guidance from disabled celebrities and influencers, founded by Stephanie Thomas.
- **Runway of Dreams:** A non-profit organisation founded by Mindy Scheier, a mother of a child with muscular dystrophy, advocates for clothing designers to create more accessible designs for people with disabilities.
- **Disabled Models Agencies:** Agencies such as Zebedee Management, Kello Inclusive, and Models of Diversity actively promote and represent models with disabilities. They advocate for inclusive representation in the fashion world, challenging stereotypes and promoting diversity within the industry.
- **Global Disability Innovation Hub:** While not solely focused on fashion, this initiative promotes innovation and design solutions for people with disabilities across various sectors, including fashion. By fostering collaborations and advancements in design, they aim to create more inclusive products and services for individuals with disabilities.
- **The Disabled List:** A disabled-led organisation dedicated to creating possibilities, justice, and accountability in design. Their program #CriticalAxis collects, analyses, and evaluates the representation of people with disabilities in the media and publishes their critiques on their website.







## Representation through Faith

In the world of fashion, a growing number of initiatives are finding inspiration in the rich tapestry of faith traditions, seeking to weave together spirituality, ethics, and sustainability into the fabric of contemporary style. This is rooted in a profound commitment to aligning fashion choices with deep-rooted religious values.

Drawing from the tenets of the Ahimsa philosophy, a spiritual doctrine present in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, the commitment to avoiding harm extends from the sourcing of materials to the manufacturing process. A dedication to cruelty-free principles shapes the ethos of these brands as they incorporate leather alternatives, cruelty-free silk, and plant-based materials.

Modest fashion is another example of the intersection of spirituality and fashion. In this realm, the emphasis is not only on

aesthetics but also on respecting and providing for a community that seeks to express its faith through clothing. Longer hemlines, higher necklines, and looser fits become design choices that echo values of humility and demureness for some practitioners across faiths such as Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Through this prioritisation of modesty, fashion becomes a canvas for cultural expression and religious identity.

It is essential to ensure the representation of diverse faiths in fashion advertising. Not merely as a marketing strategy, but as a commitment to showcasing the inclusivity and cultural richness of fashion. Breaking stereotypes by featuring models from various religious backgrounds, some brands challenge preconceived notions and foster a sense of togetherness in the diverse tapestry of humanity.



### Examples of initiatives supporting faith representation in fashion are:

- **Visible spokespeople:** Designers, models, and other professionals in the fashion industry, being vocal about their faith. This includes designers incorporating religious symbols, models wearing religious attire, and the presence of faith-based fashion brands.
- **Modest fashion weeks:** These events are taking place in cities around the world, celebrating modest fashion from various cultures and faiths, showcasing designers who create clothing adhering to modesty standards. It provides a platform for designers to display their creations, promoting inclusivity within the fashion industry.
- **Modest fashion platforms and design workshops:** Online modest fashion platforms such as Modasty, The Reflective, and The Modest Online, are making modest fashion more accessible. While design workshops are facilitating exploration and learning about contemporary modest fashion.

### Examples of representation through faith in fashion:

- **Modest fashion:** Many faith-based sustainable fashion brands specialise in modest clothing that adheres to religious dress codes while also embracing ethical and sustainable principles. These brands offer a wide range of modest options, from everyday wear to special occasion attire.
- **Ethical supply chains:** Faith-driven fashion often emphasises the importance of ethical supply chains, ensuring that garments are produced in a manner consistent with religious values, such as fairness and respect for workers.
- **Eco-friendly practices:** These initiatives often integrate eco-friendly materials and practices into their designs, aligning with the belief in responsible stewardship of the Earth.
- **Charitable initiatives:** Faith-based sustainable fashion may allocate a portion of profits to charitable causes, reflecting the principles of giving and compassion present in many faith traditions.



### Organisations that align with this priority:

- **Modest Fashion Runway:** A global platform dedicated to showcasing established and emerging modest fashion designer luxury collections.
- **The Council of Modest Fashion (COMF):** Global organisation founded to empower and unite members of the industry while advocating for inclusion and cultural diversity within the fashion industry.
- **Baptist World Aid:** Conducts research into brands analysing data for supply chain, living wage, sustainable materials, climate action strategies, and more. The data is then published in their Ethical Fashion Guide.

## Climate Focus

Sustainable fashion initiatives with a climate focus place the environment and climate change at the centre of their mission. These initiatives recognize that the fashion industry is a significant contributor to environmental degradation and climate change, and take deliberate actions to mitigate these impacts, which disproportionately affect under-resourced and climate vulnerable communities. They take a holistic approach that involves reducing emissions, conserving resources, promoting circularity, educating citizens, and collaborating with stakeholders to create a more sustainable and climate-resilient fashion ecosystem.

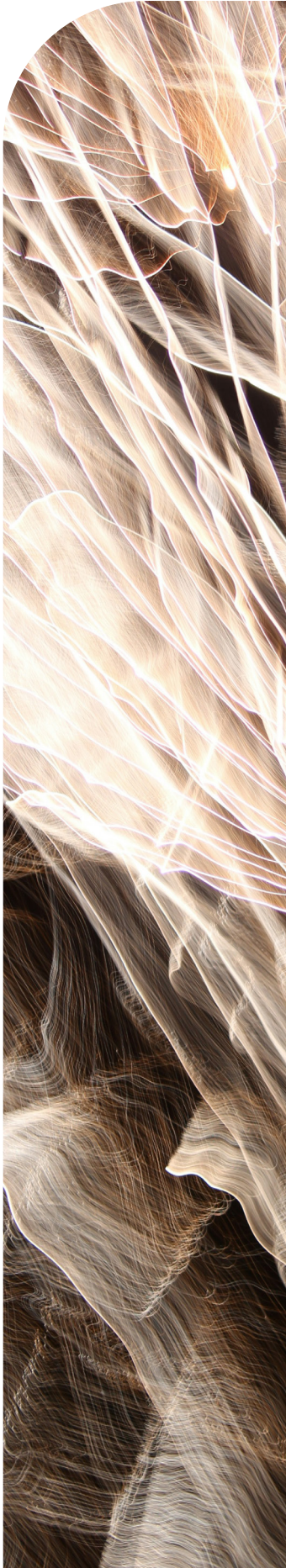


### Supporting mitigation of climate change in sustainable fashion is:

- Shopping brands and designers that are committed to reducing carbon emissions, evidenced by transparent certifications, standards and processes.
- Supporting designers who incorporate sustainable materials, waste reduction and climate education into their offerings.
- Frequenting brands that are transparent about their progress on climate impact goals.
- Doing your part by reducing over-consumption, extending the lifecycle of your clothes, looking after them and discarding them responsibly.

### Examples of climate-focused sustainable fashion initiatives:

- **Reducing carbon footprints:** Climate-focused sustainable fashion brands are committed to reducing their carbon footprints. They often conduct life cycle assessments of their products to identify areas where emissions can be minimised. This may involve sourcing materials locally to reduce transportation emissions, using renewable energy in production, and optimising distribution logistics.
- **Low-impact materials:** These initiatives prioritise the use of low-impact materials, such as organic natural fibres and recycled fibres. These materials require fewer resources and generate fewer greenhouse gas emissions during production compared to impactful materials derived from fossil fuels.



- **Circular fashion:** Circular fashion models, which emphasise the longevity and recyclability of products, are central to climate-focused initiatives. Brands encourage customers to repair, reuse, and recycle their clothing. Some also take back old garments to be repurposed or recycled into new items, reducing textile waste.
- **Educating citizens:** Climate-focused sustainable fashion brands educate citizens about the environmental impact of the fashion industry. They provide information on the benefits of sustainable choices, such as buying fewer items, opting for high-quality garments, and choosing eco-friendly materials.
- **Supporting conservation:** Some initiatives align with environmental conservation organisations and causes. They may allocate a portion of their profits to projects that protect and restore ecosystems, combat deforestation, or support biodiversity.
- **Sustainable practices across the board:** Climate-focused initiatives often extend their sustainability efforts to include adopting energy-efficient technologies in stores and offices, minimising packaging waste, and promoting eco-conscious transportation for employees.
- **Advocacy and collaboration:** These brands engage in advocacy efforts and collaborate with other stakeholders in the fashion industry to drive systemic change. They may advocate for industry-wide carbon reduction targets and work together to find innovative solutions to reduce fashion's carbon impact.
- **Transparent reporting:** Climate-focused brands prioritise transparency in reporting their environmental impact. They share data on their carbon emissions, water usage, and waste generation. This transparency allows citizens to make informed choices and holds the brand accountable for its sustainability commitments.
- **Sustainable supply chains:** These initiatives go beyond the final product and focus on the sustainability of their entire supply chains. They assess the environmental practices of suppliers, ensure fair labour conditions, and seek to minimise waste and emissions at every stage of production.
- **Climate-positive goals:** Some climate-focused fashion brands aim not only to reduce their negative impact but also to become climate-positive. They implement regenerative practices, such as regenerative agriculture for raw materials, which can sequester more carbon than is emitted during production.



## Organisations and initiatives that align with this value:

- **Apparel Impact Institute:** A global non-profit organisation dedicated to identifying, funding, scaling, and measuring environmental solutions with proven impact in the apparel and footwear industries.
- **Slow Factory Institute:** A school and lab focused on regenerative design, education, and innovation to advance sustainability.
- **United Nations' Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action:** A work program driving the industry to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
- **Global Fashion Agenda:** A non-profit organisation with a vision for a net-positive industry, invites collaboration for sustainability in fashion with global events, implementation of impact programmes, educational guidance, and thought leadership publications.
- **OVERHEATED:** An immersive experience bringing together climate activists, musicians, and designers to discuss what can be done to address the climate crisis, and how individuals and communities can make a difference.



For brands, manufacturers, farmers, retailers, and others committed to climate action, Textile Exchanges' tools and resources consider the greenhouse gas impacts associated with raw material extraction and initial processing, whilst tools such as the Sustainable Apparel Coalition's Higg Index, support designers and brands in measuring, tracking, and advancing their sustainability goals in their products and design processes from resource extraction (cradle) to the factory gate (i.e., before it is transported to the consumer).

In addition to the organisations, initiatives, and campaigns, another valuable resource co-published by UNEP and UN Climate Change, The Sustainable Fashion Communication Playbook, offers guidance across various forms of media and messaging. Its purpose is to counter misinformation, inspire more sustainable lifestyles, and empower citizens to demand greater action from businesses and policymakers for climate action.<sup>20</sup>



## Cruelty-Free Fashion

Cruelty-free fashion is a popular term for the commitment to creating clothing and accessories without harming animals in any way. It extends beyond the materials used and encompasses the entire production process, to tackle animal suffering or exploitation. Cruelty-free fashion represents a growing movement within the fashion industry that prioritises compassion, ethical production, sustainability, and consumer choice. It not only benefits animals but also aligns with broader environmental and ethical values, shaping the fashion industry toward a more humane and sustainable future

### Cruelty-free fashion within sustainable fashion is:

- **Animal-free materials:** Cruelty-free fashion avoids the use of animal-derived materials such as fur, leather, feathers, wool, silk, and any other fibres or components sourced from animals. Instead, designers opt for synthetic or plant-based alternatives that mimic the look and feel of animal-based materials.
- **Ethical and sustainable production:** Cruelty-free fashion brands prioritise ethical and sustainable production practices. This includes fair labour conditions for workers throughout the supply chain, from garment workers to material producers. Sustainable practices, such as minimising waste and reducing energy consumption, are also often integrated into the production process.
- **Environmental benefits:** Cruelty-free fashion aligns with some environmental conservation efforts by avoiding animal agriculture and the associated deforestation, greenhouse gas emissions, and water consumption.
- **Transparency and certification:** Many cruelty-free fashion brands provide transparent information about their sourcing and production methods. Some seek certification from organisations to verify that their products are free from animal testing.
- **Alternative materials:** While avoiding animal-derived materials, cruelty-free fashion brands also pay attention to the ethical sourcing of alternative materials. For example, they focus on plant-based fibres like cotton, hemp, or bamboo. Innovations in material science have also led to the development of high-quality alternatives. For instance, pineapple leather (Piñatex), and apple leather are being used to create fashionable, sustainable items.





- **Consumer awareness:** Cruelty-free fashion brands play a crucial role in educating citizens about the importance of making ethical choices. They emphasise that cruelty-free fashion isn't just about animal welfare but also about reducing the negative environmental impacts associated with animal agriculture.
- **Veganism beyond food:** Cruelty-free fashion aligns with the broader vegan lifestyle, which extends beyond food choices. It encompasses a commitment to not only avoid consuming animal products but also to reject wearing them, using them in beauty products, or supporting industries that exploit animals.
- **Advocacy against animal exploitation:** Many cruelty-free fashion brands are vocal advocates against animal exploitation in the fashion industry. They work with animal welfare organisations to raise awareness about the conditions of animals in fur farms, leather production, and other industries.
- **Fashion industry transformation:** Cruelty-free fashion is driving change within the broader fashion industry. As more citizens demand ethical and sustainable products, mainstream fashion brands are increasingly adopting cruelty-free practices and materials in response to changing market preferences.
- **Consumer choice for a kinder world:** Ultimately, cruelty-free fashion is about giving citizens the choice to align their fashion preferences with their values, contributing to a world where animals are not subjected to suffering for the sake of clothing and accessories.
- **Animal welfare regulations:** Enacted to govern the use of animal-derived materials in fashion products, regulations such as bans on fur farming and rules for exotic animal skins are in place in various countries and regions.
- **Vegan Fashion Week:** Enacted to govern the use of animal-derived materials in fashion products, regulations such as bans on fur farming and rules for exotic animal skins are in place in various countries and regions.



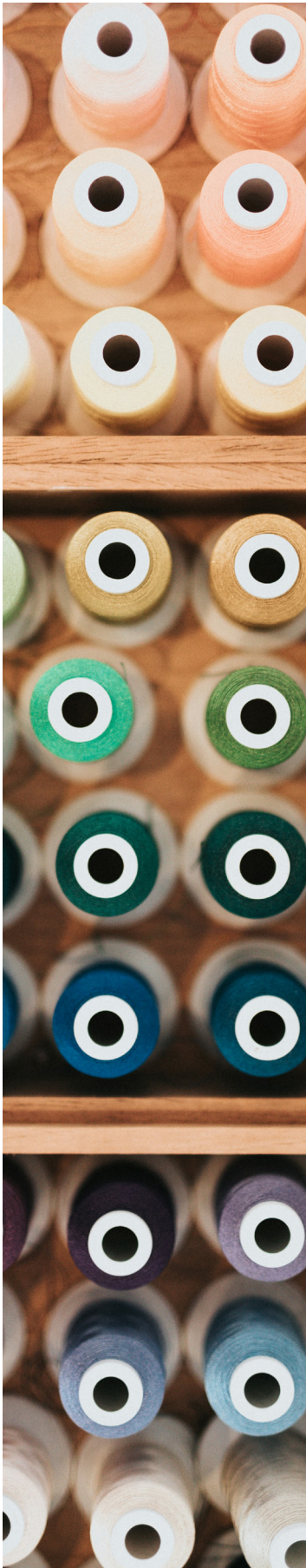


### Organisations and initiatives that align with this value:

- **Vegan Fashion Week:** Vegan Fashion Week is a non-profit organisation with a global impact supporting fashion businesses in their transition to ethical and sustainable practices, inspiring consumers to do better.
- **People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA):** PETA is a prominent global organisation advocating for animal rights. They have specific campaigns targeting the fashion industry, encouraging brands to adopt cruelty-free practices, and promoting alternatives to fur, leather, and other animal-derived materials.
- **Humane Society International (HSI):** HSI works extensively on various animal welfare issues, including advocating for cruelty-free fashion. They collaborate with fashion brands, conduct campaigns, and promote alternatives to animal-derived materials through their 'Fur-Free' and 'Be Cruelty-Free' initiatives.
- **Material Innovation Initiative:** A think tank focused on researching and promoting the development and adoption of synthetic-free alternatives to animal-sourced materials.
- **Cruelty-Free International:** This organisation is dedicated to ending animal testing globally. While not fashion-specific, they work towards promoting cruelty-free practices across industries, including beauty and fashion, by advocating for alternatives to animal testing and certification of cruelty-free products.
- **The Vegan Society:** This organisation advocates for veganism and supports cruelty-free lifestyle choices. While not fashion-exclusive, they provide certifications and support brands that produce vegan and cruelty-free fashion products.
- **Collective Fashion Justice:** An organisation operating to spotlight and uproot the injustices and harm to the planet, people, and animals in fashion supply chains.

It is important to note that citizens have often varying levels of expectations for Cruelty-Free fashion, and ensuring certifications and standards are legitimately being used is an on-going process.

## These animal welfare certifications and standards start the conversation:



### **Leaping Bunny:**

A comprehensive standard for household products and cosmetics enacted by the Coalition for Consumer Information or Cosmetics that certifies a company, its products, and their ingredients are free from animal testing and that they have a supplier monitoring system implemented.

### **PETA Global Animal Test-Free:**

Certifies products are free from animal testing.

### **PETA Global Animal Test-Free and Vegan:**

Certifies products are free from animal testing and do not contain animal-derived ingredients.

### **DOWNPASS:**

Ethically sourced down and feathers, focused on transparency and animal welfare in down products.

### **Global Traceable Down Standard (Global TDS):**

For down that is responsibly sourced and traceable.

### **Responsible Down Standard:**

Down and feathers from animals that have not been subjected to unnecessary harm. It upholds animal welfare in down production.

### **Responsible Mohair Standard:**

Mohair from farms that respect the Five Freedoms of animal welfare and engage in responsible land management.

### **Responsible Wool Standard:**

Wool from farms that respect the Five Freedoms of animal welfare and engage in responsible land management.

### **Responsible Alpaca Standard:**

Alpaca wool comes from farms that respect the Five Freedoms of animal welfare and engage in responsible land management.

### **Traumpass:**

Identifies manufacturers for traceable down used and products that do not contain material from living animals. It assures customers of ethical sourcing.

### **The Good Cashmere Standard® (GCS):**

An independent standard for sustainable cashmere, developed by the Aid by Trade Foundation (AbTF).



## Respect & Dignity for Labour

Do you know how long it takes to make your clothes? The time it takes to make the components of clothing can vary widely based on factors such as the complexity of the design, the type of garment, and the production method. From hand weaving, buttonhole making and embellishment carried out in the homes of subcontracted artisans and seamstresses, an estimated 300 million people globally, to the dedicated couturiers and craftspeople investing countless hours in creating intricate designs on fabric to make each piece stand out, the extensive process of making clothing involves skilled human hands at each stage.<sup>21</sup>



- **Fabric production:** Growing and harvesting natural fibres (e.g., cotton, flax for linen) can take farmers several months. Synthetic fibres are typically produced more quickly through chemical processes by material technicians.
- **Yarn production:** Spinning fibres into yarn can take spinners days to weeks, depending on the scale of production.
- **Dyeing:** Dyeing yarn or fabric can take dyers a few hours to a few days, depending on the dyeing method and the desired colour.
- **Weaving or knitting:** Weaving or knitting the fabric can take weavers or knitters days to weeks, depending on the size of the textile and the complexity of the pattern.
- **Cutting:** Cutting the fabric into pattern pieces for a garment can take cutters a few hours to a day, depending on the intricacy of the design.
- **Sewing:** Sewing the garment together can take seamstresses and artisans anywhere from a few hours for simple pieces to several days for complex designs.
- **Finishing:** Adding finishing touches, such as buttons, zippers, and hemming, may take additional hours by craftsmen.
- **Quality control:** Checking for quality and making any necessary adjustments can add extra time to the production process by inspectors.
- **Mass production vs. handcrafted:** Mass-produced clothing in factories often follows a streamlined process, while handcrafted or artisanal pieces may take longer due to individual attention and details.





The maximum total time could span from weeks to several months, especially for intricate designs or handcrafted and artisanal production. Your clothes take time to make, touched by hands from across the globe. Wear them for a while and treat them with respect.

Designers, seamstresses, artisans, pattern makers, tailors, weavers, knitters, dyers, cutters, embroiderers, and technicians work in the global apparel industry to bring us the clothes we wear, yet under examination the labour reality can often presents a need for industry-wide change. Currently, only around 2% of all garment workers worldwide are paid a living wage for their work, most of whom are women.<sup>22</sup> Child labour remains a serious problem in the garment industry as well. According to the International Labour Organization, recent findings suggest that of the estimated 160 million children worldwide in child labour, about 79 million are in hazardous work, either because of the nature of the work or because of the conditions in which it is carried out.<sup>23</sup>

Data on the handworker economy is remarkably inadequate. The industry pressure for faster output and lower prices has led to increased use of unauthorised subcontracting and informal labour agreements. Suppliers under pressure are more likely to engage unofficial labourers, and despite brand initiatives to prevent unauthorised subcontracting, rarely are solutions developed to remedy situations when they arise.<sup>24 25</sup>

For those who advocate for human rights, it's crucial to recognize that in addition to issues like factory collapses and modern slavery, a startling fact emerges: out of 250 fashion businesses evaluated and scored, a staggering 99 percent do not publicly disclose the percentage of workers in their supply chains who receive a livable wage.<sup>26</sup>

Design production significantly impacts individuals and communities, grappling with various pressing issues. Widespread challenges include unfair labour standards, such as employment status concerns, excessive work hours, hazardous conditions, forced or bonded labour, child labour, inadequate wages, and lack of benefits. Additionally, issues like insufficient collective bargaining, unequal treatment, racial discrimination, and gender inequality persist within this context.

The realm of sustainable accessories continues to evolve as the industry gravitates towards brands that prioritise recycled materials, ethical gemstones, fair wages, and transparent supply chains. Handmade, small-batch, and locally sourced items are experiencing an unprecedented surge in popularity, emblematic of the slow fashion movement.



**Supporting fair labour in sustainable fashion is:**

- Choosing and promoting slow fashion, valuing handmade, small-batch, and locally sourced items for their focus on craftsmanship and ethical production.
- Looking for ethical labour certifications and labels, and continuing the conversation with brands.
- Supporting sustainable fashion brands that collaborate with local artisans and craftsmen, promoting traditional skills and contributing to the economic growth of local communities.
- Supporting legislative efforts such as Modern Slavery Acts, which have already been implemented in various countries like the UK and Australia, aimed at ensuring transparency and ethical labour practices by requiring businesses to disclose their efforts to eliminate modern slavery in their supply chains.
- Encouraging brands to be transparent about their supply chains, especially in disclosing the percentage of workers who receive a livable wage.

**It is essential for all of us to pose these questions to designers and brands:**

- What is the design process?
- Who were the individuals behind the creation of my clothes?
- Were the garment workers compensated fairly for their labour?
- Are you actively implementing measures to enhance your ethical and sustainable practices?
- Could your company adopt further initiatives to increase its environmental consciousness?
- To what extent does your brand prioritise transparency?
- Do you openly convey a commitment to continuous improvement?







**Organisations and initiatives that align with this value:**

**Ethical Fashion Initiative (International):** An International Trade Centre programme, promoting sustainable and inclusive development in emerging economies through their mentorship programme, the Accelerator, and collaboration with artisan social enterprises in the Global South

**Clean Clothes Campaign (Netherlands):** Advocates for garment worker rights through podcasts, research, and position papers.

**Fashion Revolution (Global):** This initiative was born out of the tragic Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh in 2013, which claimed the lives of over 1,100 garment workers. By fostering transparency and accountability in the fashion supply chain, they advocate for fair wages, safe working conditions, and sustainable practices. Through events, social media campaigns, and partnerships with brands and activists, Fashion Revolution encourages citizens to ask a simple yet powerful question: "Who made my clothes?"

**Fair Wear Foundation (Netherlands):** Advocates for labour rights in the fashion industry and promotes the Fair Wear Theory of Change and Code of Labour Standards to member brands and companies.

**Greenpeace (International):** A global network of organisations advocating on issues of climate change, biodiversity, and social impact. Their Detox My Fashion campaign focuses on eliminating hazardous chemicals from fashion.

**Remake Our World (Global):** A women-led global advocacy organisation, whose current campaign, #NoNewClothes, challenges citizens to abstain from buying new clothing for 90 days. The organisation's global campaign, #PayUp in 2020, began when it was discovered that in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, a large number of brands cancelled garment orders to the tune of 40 billion USD and refused to pay their contracts.

**Solidaridad (International):** An international organisation rooted in Latin America working for sustainable supply chains.

**Ethical Trading Initiative (UK):** ETI is a membership organisation working to improve labour conditions through collaboration between brands, suppliers, and trade unions. It fosters partnerships to enhance labour standards.



## These labour standard and certifications start the conversation:

### **SA8000 Certification (Social Accountability International):**

Establishes rigorous labour standards and worker protections. It emphasises social accountability.

### **Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production (WRAP):**

Verifies ethical and responsible business standards. It encourages responsible production and sourcing.

### **amfori BSCI (Business Social Compliance Initiative):**

Focuses on auditing and monitoring supply chains in 13 social performance areas employing a code of conduct to exercise human rights due diligence.

### **Fair Labor Association:**

Accreditation for global supply chains to have policies and systems in place to support their workers. It promotes fair labour conditions.

### **Sustainable Fair Trade Management System:**

This certification emphasises both sustainability and fair labour practices in the supply chain. It encourages responsible and ethical production.

### **Fair Trade Certified™:**

Guarantees fair and stable prices for producers in developing countries, irrespective of global market fluctuations. It ensures fairness in trade

### **Fairtrade Textile Standard:**

Standard for wages and working conditions for manufacturers and workers in the textile supply chain.

### **World Fair Trade Organization Guarantee System:**

Combines Fair Trade and social enterprise verification into a unified system. It supports ethical trade practices.



## Fairness & Equity

Resources in the fashion industry are often not distributed fairly, leading to systemic inequalities across the supply chain. Several key factors contribute to this imbalance:

### Wage disparities

Garment workers, especially in low-cost production regions, frequently face inadequate wages that do not reflect the true value of their labour. The majority of profits tend to be concentrated at the top of the supply chain, leaving those at the bottom with minimal financial benefits.

### Exploitative practices

Fast fashion's demand for rapid production at low costs often leads to exploitative practices. Workers may endure long hours, unsafe working conditions, and insufficient benefits, while the profits generated by their labour disproportionately benefit fashion brands and retailers.

### Unequal access to opportunities

Opportunities within the fashion industry, such as design roles, are not always distributed equitably. Specific groups, including women and individuals from lower-income backgrounds, may face barriers to entry and limited access to career advancements.

### Environmental impact

The environmental costs of fashion production are not evenly distributed. Regions where manufacturing takes place may bear the brunt of pollution and resource depletion, impacting local communities' health and well-being.

### Limited recognition of artisans

Traditional artisans and craftspeople, often located in regions with rich textile traditions, may not receive adequate recognition or compensation for their contributions. Their skills and cultural heritage are sometimes exploited without fair compensation.

### Market dynamics

The dominance of large fashion conglomerates and fast fashion brands can create an uneven playing field for smaller, sustainable, and ethical fashion businesses. These smaller entities may struggle to compete for resources and market share.



“The only way sustainable style can be accessible to everyone is if there is proper distribution of wealth and income equality. The other way would be to shop with discernment, secondhand and in your closet.” -

*Evet Sanchez, Responsible Fashion Advocate, Sustainable Fashion Stylist & Sustainable Fashion Consultant*





Fashion waste colonialism is exemplified by places like Kantamanto Market in Ghana, which receives 15 million items per week of discarded clothing from Global North countries such as the USA and UK, contributing to environmental degradation and overwhelming local textile industries.<sup>27</sup> The substantial influx of second-hand clothes and fast fashion, while debated as a source of income for some, disrupts traditional clothing practices and hinders the recognition and crucial support for talented domestic designers and textile manufacturers. These individuals already contend with challenges such as unreliable infrastructure, high material costs, limited access to credit, and insufficient business support.<sup>28</sup>

This trend reinforces the notion that fashion from specific regions is superior, impeding the development of a sustainable local fashion industry. Fast fashion's

overconsumption and disposal model diminishes the cultural heritage of Ghanaian design, limiting the recognition and backing for local artisans and creatives. This hinders the potential for a thriving, independent fashion scene.

Similar patterns can be observed in places like the Mbare Musika market in Zimbabwe, Vinh Long market in Vietnam, La Quebradilla market in Chile, and Balogun Market in Nigeria, where discarded clothing from the Global North floods local markets, challenging traditional textile practices and overshadowing the talents of local designers. Furthermore, many of these countries are ill-equipped to manage the volume of fashion waste that arrives, around 40% of which is unsalvageable, and as a result, large informal dumps rise, such as the 20-metre-high pile of textiles outside Accra, and the mounds of used clothing littering the Atacama Desert.





The recruitment of individuals to sell second-hand clothes has a significant impact. Research in Ghana reveals that many retailers in the second-hand clothing trade operate in a cycle of subsistence debt. Following the purchase of a bale, which includes costs for transportation carried by young women, stall rental, electricity, and sanitation, market retailers often find themselves in debt of \$1.58 per garment before even opening the bale to assess potential sales.<sup>29</sup>

In response, some countries, like the Philippines and India, have closed the imports of second-hand clothes, in order to protect the local textile industry.<sup>30</sup> Others have raised taxes on second-hand clothes imports and started to incentivise local manufacturers.<sup>31</sup> Alternatively, South Africa's government allows the import of second-hand clothing only for charitable issues and not for commercial resale.<sup>32,33</sup>

An equitable distribution of wealth, meaning a fair and just allocation of economic resources, opportunities, and benefits among individuals and communities within a society, is pivotal for fostering a sustainable fashion industry. It extends beyond fair compensation and ethical working conditions to encompass equal opportunities for designers and creatives. This practice not only reduces the risk of exploitation associated with fast fashion but also promotes social justice, contributing to poverty alleviation within communities heavily involved in the fashion production process.

Moreover, ensuring equitable opportunities for creatives and professionals from diverse backgrounds enriches the industry with a variety of perspectives, styles, and sustainable practices, fostering a more equitable distribution of wealth. By championing inclusivity and fair economic practices, a sustainable fashion sector can inspire innovation, create a more resilient and ethically sound industry, and contribute to the overall well-being of communities.



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13 Haute Couture &  
High Craftsmanship

# Haute Couture & High Craftsmanship

In the vibrant narratives woven by cultural styles of embroidery and craft, we can see the legacy of generations, encapsulating narratives, beliefs, and traditions within intricate patterns and vibrant hues. These timeless techniques whisper tales of diverse cultures, carrying the essence of heritage through their meticulously crafted designs.

Where the elegance of couture meets the responsibility of sustainability, we see a bridge between the past, present and the future. Cultural heritage is preserved in every stitch and meets the imperative need to preserve our planet.

Haute couture, a pinnacle of design, heavily relies on artisanal and handicraft skills. In direct opposition to fast fashion, the investment of time is immense: a simple

couture piece takes an average of 150 hours to finalise, whereas the most elaborate gown can require more than 6,000 hours from start to finish.<sup>34</sup> The allure of haute couture, with its exquisite craftsmanship and bespoke creations, converges with the growing consciousness of our impact on the world around us.

As fashion houses delve into the realms of ethical sourcing, fair trade practices, and eco-conscious production, they recognize the intrinsic value of incorporating cultural embroidery not just as a design element but as a cornerstone of sustainable couture. Through this fusion, a new narrative emerges—one that honours tradition, empowers artisans, preserves heritage techniques, and champions a more ethical and mindful approach to fashion.





## How Can Haute Couture & Luxury Fashion Champion Sustainability?

If we look deeper amidst the splendour of haute couture and luxury fashion, we can find surprising champions for sustainability. Fashion's most exquisite creations can also be a narrative where elegance meets environmental consciousness and where design intertwines seamlessly with sustainability's rebellion against fast fashion trends. Here are some compelling arguments for considering haute couture and luxury fashion an essential component of the sustainability movement:

### Artistic expression

Haute couture and luxury remind us that design is, at its core, an art form that celebrates human expression.

### Slow design

In an industry that often prioritises speed, haute couture and luxury are a slow-moving niche that emphasises and appreciates the unique and innovative craftsmanship behind each piece. Designers typically work on couture collections for four to six months before presenting them during the fashion weeks. This extensive preparation period underscores the intricate detailing and craftsmanship involved.

### Change of perspective

They can emphasise the significance of mindful consumption, advocating for garments that carry meaningful narratives rather than fleeting trends.

### Celebrating artistry

Haute couture and luxury fashion shine a spotlight on skilled artisan work, celebrating artistry and craftsmanship and recognizing their invaluable contributions to the design industry. Some exceptionally intricate or heavily embellished couture pieces, such as wedding gowns or red carpet dresses, may require upwards of 1,000 hours of handwork to complete, showcasing the dedication to precision and perfection.<sup>35</sup>

### Commitment to environmental preservation

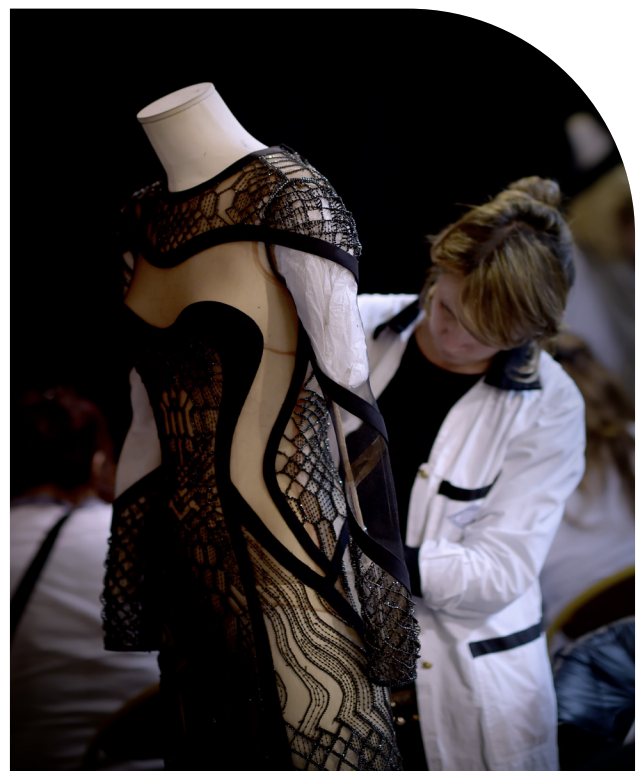
Some haute couture and luxury fashion houses incorporate responsible sourcing and innovative design methodologies that tread lightly upon our Earth.

### Commitment to cultural heritage preservation

Their collections can demonstrate a commitment to preserving the diverse cultural heritage embedded in each thread meticulously woven into couture creations.

### Redefining luxury

Some redefine luxury with the use of innovative sustainable textiles and digital tools to reduce waste.



The focus on artisans and the honouring of craftsmanship in haute couture extends to various aspects of the design industry, including our tailors and seamstresses. It emphasises the value of human hands, the magnitude of effort, time, and collaborative work that goes into creating haute couture collections and individual garments, encompassing principles of fair trade, safe working conditions, fair pay, and an intersectional approach to business ethics.

Still, the space faces some of the same issues as other sectors, including a lack of transparency around living wages and working conditions, with the use of controversial materials such as exotic animal skins remaining an important topic of discussion.

In the realm of luxury design, items are often meticulously crafted in ateliers, a process that takes time. This is why re-wearing designs becomes such a powerful statement. It not only embodies the circular nature of sustainability but also pays homage to the skilled hands that bring our designs to life.

Ethical treatment of workers is a core principle in sustainable design. While fast design often relies on exploitative labour practices, including low wages and poor working conditions, particularly in developing countries, sustainable design places paramount importance on fair labour practices. This approach ensures the rights, safety, and well-being of workers are upheld and respected throughout the production process.



## A Global Perspective on Red Carpet and Couture

Many luxury and couture designers showcase the diversity of sustainable fashion across the globe, proving that eco-consciousness can seamlessly blend with couture and red carpet glamour. They set examples of how fashion can be both elegant and environmentally responsible, emphasising the importance of sustainable choices in the industry.

Supporting fashion designers and brands from around the world promotes creativity, cultural sustainability, and the fashion industry's overall strength. The diversity and varied perspectives offered by designers from different backgrounds, languages, and cultures enrich the fashion landscape.



The background is a gradient of teal and green, transitioning from a lighter shade at the top to a darker shade at the bottom. It features several concentric, semi-transparent circles and a central swirl-like pattern, creating a sense of depth and movement.

14 *Style Sustainably for the Red  
Carpet & Special Occasions*

Sustainable red carpet fashion moments are a collaborative effort that reflects the growing awareness and commitment to environmentally responsible fashion choices in the entertainment industry. This is evidenced by the rise of high-profile events such as CNMI's Sustainable Fashion Awards and the Green Carpet Fashion Awards, alongside RCGD Global's 2023 red carpet resource and the 95th and 96th Academy Awards' Sustainable Style Guides, which were authored by BLACK PEARL's CEO Samata Pattinson. As sustainability continues to gain prominence, these moments become more than displays of style and elegance; they become powerful declarations of eco-conscious living on visible platforms.





## Red Carpet Sustainable Style Team

These red carpet collaborations involve various individuals and entities, each playing a crucial role in promoting eco-friendly fashion on the glamorous stage.

Here's an overview of the key players involved:

- **Stylists:** Stylists are instrumental in selecting sustainable fashion pieces for celebrities to wear on the red carpet. They research and curate outfits from eco-conscious fashion brands, vintage shops, and designers known for their sustainable practices. Stylists collaborate closely with their clients to ensure that the chosen ensemble aligns with their personal style and values.
- **Influential Talent:** Influential talent has a significant impact on fashion trends and sustainability awareness. When they choose to wear sustainable outfits on the red carpet, they send a powerful message to their fans and the industry at large. Many celebrities have become vocal advocates for sustainable fashion, using their platform to raise awareness about eco-friendly choices.
- **Fashion brands:** Sustainable fashion brands and designers are at the forefront of creating eco-conscious red carpet moments. They prioritise ethical and environmentally friendly practices, using sustainable materials, eco-dyeing processes, and fair labour practices. These brands often collaborate with stylists and celebrities to provide customised, one-of-a-kind pieces for the red carpet.
- **Red carpet events:** Major award shows and red carpet events like the Academy Awards, Costume Institute Gala, and Cannes Film Festival provide a platform for sustainable fashion moments to shine. These events set the stage for celebrities to showcase their eco-friendly choices, creating significant media attention and influencing industry trends.
- **Fashion organisations:** Organisations such as BLACK PEARL, CNMI Sustainable Fashion Awards, and the Green Carpet Fashion Awards (GCFA) work to promote sustainable practices in the fashion industry, using the visibility of the red carpet to amplify messages. They collaborate with celebrities, designers, and brands to highlight sustainable fashion on the red carpet and beyond.
- **Media and press:** Media outlets and fashion publications play a vital role in amplifying sustainable red carpet moments. They cover the events, interview celebrities about their sustainable fashion choices, and raise awareness about eco-friendly options available in the industry.
- **Citizens:** Ultimately, citizens have the power to drive demand for sustainable fashion on the red carpet. When they express their preference for eco-conscious choices, it encourages brands, designers, and celebrities to prioritise sustainability in their red carpet appearances.
- **Hair and makeup artists:** Sustainable red carpet moments often extend beyond clothing to include eco-friendly beauty choices. Hair and makeup artists can use cruelty-free and environmentally friendly products to complete the sustainable look.
- **Jewellery and accessories designers:** Sustainable red carpet moments also involve choosing accessories crafted from ethically sourced materials. Jewellery and accessories designers who prioritise sustainability offer unique and eco-friendly pieces for celebrities to wear.

## After Wear

A sustainability mindset in red carpet fashion, and beyond, is about the choices we make not only when buying and styling our special outfit but also the choices we make after the event is concluded. There are many opportunities to extend the life of those special garments.

Consider the following ideas and see which options resonate with you.

- **Prepare it for a re-wear:** Entrust your outfit to a professional for comprehensive cleaning and preservation, preparing it to be worn again either by yourself or future generations.
- **Evolution:** Get creative with a designer and evolve your garment into something new and uniquely you.
- **Put it on a platform:** There are several platforms available for the resale of luxury garments. Selling it second-hand allows you to recover a portion of the expense and reduces its carbon footprint through future use.
- **Give it away:** A local school theatre department or community theatre group could make use of your garment as a costume in their productions. Alternatively, there are non-profits dedicated to providing formal wear for those in need.
- **Create your own costume collection:** Create a playful and imaginative space for dressing up with family members at home.
- **Reinvention through colour:** Find a dye expert and reinvent your garment by changing its colour.
- **Frame it:** Turn your cherished outfit into a piece of art by framing it, allowing you to display it prominently and preserve its beauty for years to come.
- **Fashion a keepsake:** Transform a portion of your outfit into a memorable keepsake, such as a decorative pillow, quilt, or even a handbag, preserving its essence in a functional and sentimental manner.
- **Create a fashion time capsule:** Store your outfit along with a letter or diary entry detailing the event and your feelings to be opened and cherished in the future or passed down as a treasured family heirloom.
- **Repurpose it into accessories:** Collaborate with a skilled artisan to transform your outfit into stylish accessories, such as belts, scarves, or statement jewellery, allowing you to enjoy elements of the original piece in new and exciting ways.
- **Fashion a memory book:** Create a beautiful memory book featuring photographs of you wearing the outfit at various special occasions. Include notes and anecdotes about the events, making it a unique and sentimental keepsake that preserves the memories associated with the fashion piece.



## Red Carpet & Special Occasion Tips from Stylists

Embark on a journey aligned with your value system, making conscious choices with your purchases and styling choices. Whether your allegiance lies with vegan products, enthusiasm for championing women designers, or if you have a keen interest in supporting AAPI, Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, Latina/o/e/o/x, and other People of Colour-owned brands, these values should be the compass guiding your styling decisions. See what these stylist and image consultants recommend:

### Jean Chung

"A piece cannot be wasteful if it has a purpose and is being loved and utilized to its fullest potential. Consumerism and capitalism oftentimes dupes us into purchasing items that we don't genuinely love or will ever use ... leading to a lot of waste. The goal is to see through the murky confusion and fully stand behind what you love. An item that is fully loved cannot be wasteful.

Try to create a sustainable story for each item: Sustainability is very multifaceted and can range from quality craftsmanship that stand the test of time, to recycled materials all the way to supporting brands that empower unheard voices, supporting ethical labor practices. Make sure that every piece has a sustainable story to tell. If it doesn't - maybe it shouldn't make the cut!

Sustainability is a topic that one can easily "wormhole-nerd-out" about and can become a passionate learning opportunity ... putting together a red carpet look can be a lot more fun when you can maximize sustainability through each component of the outfit.

We can all contribute through doing our research (both in our own personal style and in sustainable fashion) to make sure our purchases are as responsible and something we can be proud of, as possible. Being sustainable is a lot more accessible than what you would think - but just takes a bit more time and investment in both yourself and your personal style."

### Micaela Erlanger

"Making conscious decisions and buying less new. I personally collect and wear exclusively vintage as well as actively participate in resale. I love the idea of finding special items that others don't have. It feels just as exclusive and is better for the environment- so that's all a win.

Wear things you own and shop your closet. Shoes, bags and jewelry are the easiest to repeat and can easily feel fresh with a new outfit.

Participate in the circular economy. Shop and buy resale. It's so simple: sell your stuff, buy someone else's, and repeat."

### Tara Swennan

"To me, sustainable style is simply about rethinking your wardrobe and its relationship with the planet. Making creative and thoughtful choices with every outfit!

Resist the urge to impulse buy ... By purchasing quality pieces that you intend to make last, you immediately become a more conscious shopper.

Pick versatile pieces that can be styled in many ways so that you can get the most use out of them! The goal should be to wear them dozens and dozens of times, rather than only a handful."

The background features a gradient from light teal at the top to dark green at the bottom. Overlaid on this are several concentric, semi-transparent circles and a central swirl-like pattern, creating a sense of depth and movement.

15 Start Sustainability  
with Your Textiles

# Start Sustainably with Your Textiles

Let your textile selection for a red carpet look, your next jacket or the next piece you are designing, be informed by more knowledge. Sustainable textiles go beyond conventional fabrics; they play a crucial role in responsible manufacturing. They are often crafted through processes that prioritise environmental stewardship, regeneration and innovation. Textiles can be eco-friendly, fair in trade, and economically smart. Their goal? Efficiency, purpose, and resource conservation for thriving people and a thriving planet. This journey covers origins, sources, manufacturing, high standards in trade and society, all the way to the final product. It also encompasses reclaimed, deadstock, or upcycled fabrics.

Whether you're into origins, sources, manufacturing details, or championing trade and social standards, we're here to keep you informed about options for more sustainable materials. Whilst there is no perfect solution, staying informed helps you better understand the options!

Textiles and materials primarily originate from fibres and raw materials sourced from farms, fields, forests, seas, oceans, and even labs. Consider the diverse range: raw silk, crisp cotton, resilient hemp, and durable linen, all going through several processes before they reach our skin. Textiles usually involve fibres spun into yarns and woven or knitted into fabrics, whilst materials like leather and certain plastics are not exclusively fibre-based. Leather, derived from animal hides, undergoes tanning and treatment processes, while some plastics are created through moulding or extrusion. Man-made cellulose fibres have natural origins but undergo a transformative chemical process. It's a complex journey! While details like thread, buttons, zips, and trim add finish and durability, textiles shine, crafting a tale of style, comfort, and innovation. Clothes without textiles? Unimaginable. Yet, we can envision a better approach to their selection and use.





## Natural Fibres

Natural protein and cellulosic materials are two distinct categories of natural fibres. Natural protein materials are sourced from animals and are composed primarily of proteins. In contrast, natural cellulosic materials originate from plants and consist primarily of cellulose.



### Plant-based Natural Fibres

These materials differ in their inherent attributes, environmental considerations, and processing techniques. Natural cellulosic materials encompass a wide range of materials such as cotton, hemp, linen, and trees, each boasting centuries of versatile use. Derived from plants these fibres each possess distinct qualities. Cellulosic fibres are generally considered more environmentally friendly due to their plant-based origin. However, the environmental impact can vary based on factors like farming practices, water usage, and chemical processing.

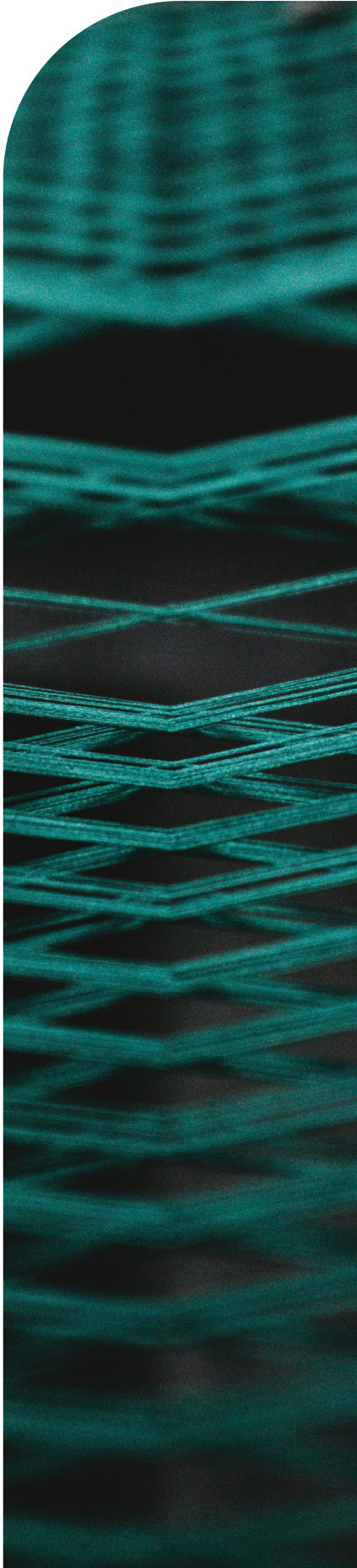
### Cotton

Cotton, often termed “white gold,” holds deep roots in our history, economies, and fashion preferences. Cultivated from cotton plant bolls (*Gossypium* spp.), its versatile legacy lies in threads and yarns, forming the basis for various products. Despite its comfort, traditional cotton cultivation raises concerns regarding synthetic pesticide, fertiliser and insecticide use.

Organic cotton emerges as a cleaner alternative, avoiding synthetic substances and emphasising sustainability and ethical practices.

### Considerations of Organic Cotton

Organic cotton cultivation, using non-GMO seeds and without harmful pesticides, benefits workers, farmers, and ecosystems. Clothing made from organic cotton is ideal for those with skin sensitivities and stringent certifications for textiles like the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) and Organic Content Standard (OCS) support with traceability along the supply chain into final products. Cotton production systems that follow the IFOAM Organic family certifications contribute positively to the environment by replenishing soil fertility, promoting biologically diverse agriculture, reducing chemical usage and its harmful impact on ecosystems. Organic cotton farming that uses renewable energy sources shows lower contributions to global warming, acidification, and eutrophication compared



to conventional cotton farming.<sup>36</sup> Choosing organic cotton supports the adoption of sustainable farming practices. However, accessibility is limited in some regions, and transitioning from conventional methods poses challenges, potentially reducing yields. Certifying authenticity is costly and complex, requiring stringent monitoring.

### **Considerations of Conventional Cotton**

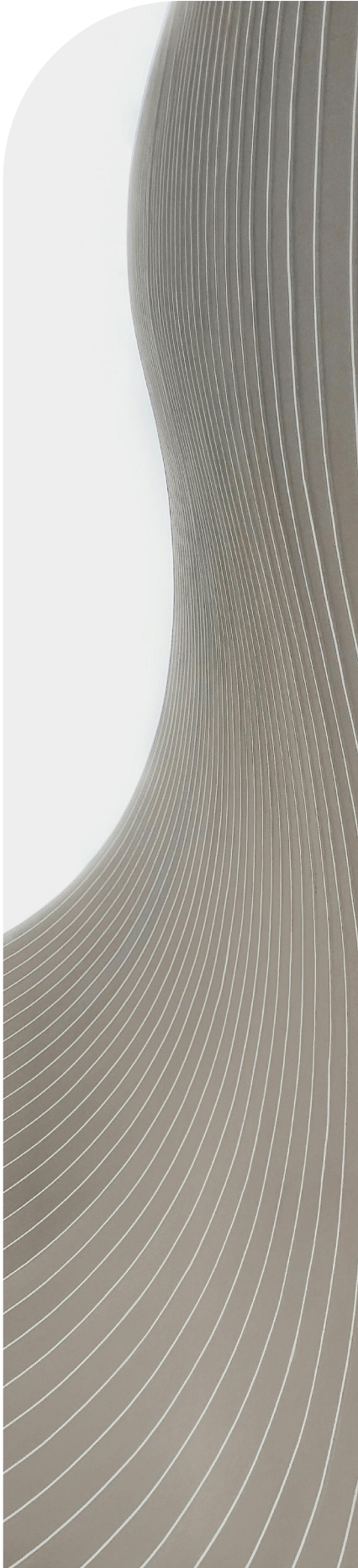
Conventional cotton farming yields larger quantities, aided by synthetic fertilisers and pesticides. With wider availability in the market, consumers find conventional cotton more accessible. Leveraging agricultural tech advancements, conventional cotton benefits from higher efficiency. Genetically engineered plants enhance yield, meeting product demand without extensive land use. These plants grow faster, facilitating swift harvesting to meet market needs promptly.

However, heavy reliance on synthetic fertilisers and pesticides leads to water pollution, soil degradation, and ecosystem harm, which eventually puts the health of the farm and therefore livelihoods of the workers at risk. Health risks loom for farmers, workers, and consumers due to exposure to pesticide residues. Water scarcity in some regions is a concern, while prolonged chemical use degrades soil fertility, affecting sustainability. Monoculture practices disrupt biodiversity, displacing native species. The dependency on synthetic pesticides contributes to chemical runoff, harming waterways and ecosystems. Soil quality suffers, reducing fertility and raising ethical concerns about genetically modified organisms (GMOs) impacting the environment.

### **Hemp**

Hemp, extracted from the robust fibres of the *Cannabis sativa* plant, stands out in textile production. Being legal and free from THC's psychoactive effects, industrial hemp possesses unique qualities. Its potential is evident in emerging applications like hemp-based concrete, suggesting a growing role in sustainability in other industries as well.





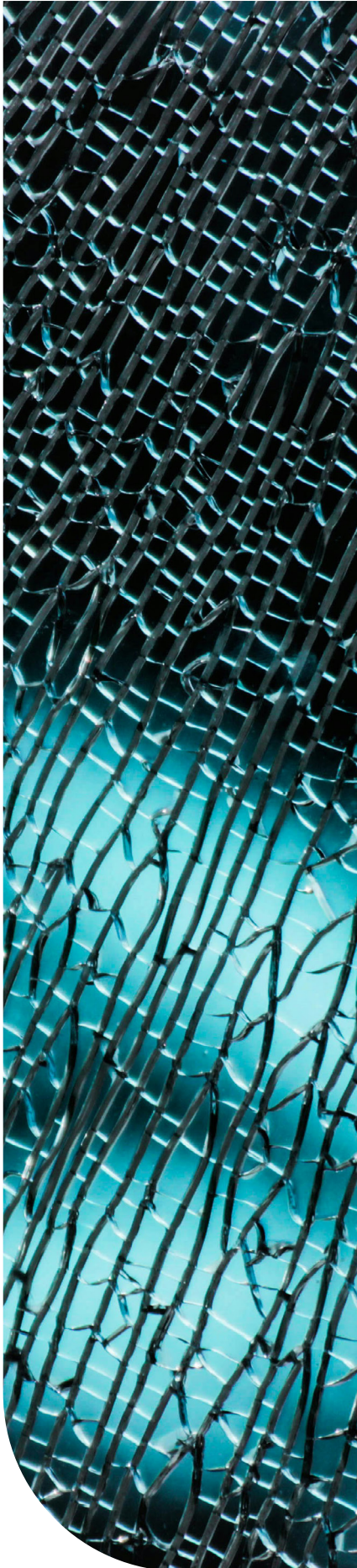
## Considerations

Hemp, a rising bast fibre, enhances soil health with its long tap root, supports biodiversity, suppresses weeds, and boosts yields in subsequent crops, all with low to no use of synthetic pesticides and fertilisers. Hemp fabric boasts durability and absorbency and grows softer with use.<sup>32</sup> As a “nitrogen fixing”, fast-growing, high-yield crop with carbon sequestering properties and minimal land requirements, hemp serves as a sustainable, renewable option in clothing, providing comfort through its moisture-absorbing properties. These attributes make hemp versatile and eco-friendly for diverse textile applications.

Hemp fabrics may wrinkle easily and need careful upkeep for a smooth look. Their environmental impact depends on where and how they’re produced. Despite hemp’s durability, its wrinkle tendency might weaken fibres and cause damage, lacking the comfort of materials like cotton, especially in finer sheets. Its coarser texture, limited colours, and wrinkle-prone nature could limit suitability for some garments, needing frequent ironing.

Limited availability affects accessibility and pricing due to lower production. Quality inconsistency in hemp fabric results from varying production methods and sources. Despite being eco-friendly crops, processing hemp fabric can use resources and involve chemicals, counteracting its environmental benefits. Legal restrictions and stigma associated with marijuana hinder hemp’s textile industry adoption in some regions. Hemp clothing, costlier due to production methods and niche market presence, aligns with organic product pricing trends.





## Natural Proteins

Obtained from animals such as silkworms (for silk), sheep (for wool), and animal hides (for leather), these fibres offer specific traits. Wool provides warmth, silk is prized for its smooth texture and lustrous appearance, while leather serves clothing, accessories, and upholstery needs. Protein fibres tend to be soft, lightweight, and have good draping qualities. They often have a natural sheen and can be highly breathable.

### Wool

Wool, sourced from sheep, offers warmth and comfort in clothing. Debates persist over its ethics and environmental impact, especially regarding animal treatment. Efforts promoting sustainable wool include The Responsible Wool Standard (RWS), ensuring ethical practices across the supply chain with audits to ensure traceability and compliance. RWS guidelines cover animal welfare, sustainable land management, and social considerations.

### Considerations

Wool, renowned for its breathable nature, ensures comfort by effectively regulating temperature across diverse climates. Its biodegradability, comparable to plant-based fibres, enhances its appeal, with the exception of some superwash wools, which are coated in plastic. Concerns about animal management and husbandry, such as painful mulesing, have sparked debates on animal welfare for wool production. Land use and potential degradation also underline the need for sustainable land management practices. Conventional wool production may involve pesticides. Washing wool items can consume resources, although less frequent washing can mitigate this impact.

### Cashmere

This highly-prized animal fibre is sourced from a specific species of goat. Its luxurious warmth makes it popular for stylish cold-weather garments, but as is true with all other animal protein fibres, animal welfare and land degradation concerns exist.



## Considerations

Cashmere, known for its unmatched softness against the skin, stands as one of the finest natural fibres available. Despite its lightweight feel, it offers exceptional warmth, making it perfect for winter wear. Its insulation properties keep heat close while ensuring breathability. Cashmere garments remain lightweight, allowing effortless movement without bulkiness. With proper care, they can endure for years, making it a worthwhile wardrobe investment. This versatile material crafts a wide array of clothing, from sweaters to socks, and as a natural fibre sourced from cashmere goats' undercoat, it's both biodegradable and eco-friendly. The popularity of incorporating recycled cashmere is increasing in luxury goods.

Cashmere, prized for its luxury, faces challenges: previously, this fibre was costly due to limited supply and labour-intensive production. As cashmere becomes more economical for consumers, the demand rises and herders must keep more goats to meet demand and maintain their income. Ethical concerns loom regarding overgrazing's environmental impact and treatment of cashmere goats, and ethical sourcing gains importance for brands and consumers to address industry issues. It's also delicate, prone to pilling, and can shrink if not cared for properly. Maintenance demands hand washing or dry cleaning and careful storage.

## Silk

Silk, known for its luxurious feel and sheen, constitutes a small fraction—0.2%—of the textile industry.<sup>39</sup> Concerns about its impact on silkworms prompt a reevaluation of industry practices.

## Considerations

Silk offers a luxurious, smooth feel and elegant draping, adding sophistication to clothes and furnishings. Its dyeing and printing capabilities create vibrant designs, and its surprising strength defies its delicate appearance. Lightweight and comfortable, silk is favoured in warmer climates. Its natural resistance to dust, mildew, and moths, coupled with good absorbency, ensures durability and comfort in various conditions. Silk's biodegradability aligns with eco-friendly approaches, while Ahimsa silk is a non-violent harvesting technique that addresses silkworm welfare.





Despite its luxury, silk has drawbacks: it's costly and requires either careful washing by hand or expensive dry cleaning. Susceptible to water stains, yellowing, and damage from perspiration, sunlight, and certain soaps. Insects like silverfish can harm it. Traditional silk production raises environmental and ethical concerns due to chemical use, water consumption, labour intensity, and silkworm harvesting.

### **100% Silk Organza**

100% Silk Organza, a sheer and lightweight fabric, is crafted exclusively from natural silk fibres. Favoured for its delicate and ethereal qualities, this luxurious material is renowned for its ability to hold shape well, making it an ideal choice for creating structural elements in garments.

#### **Considerations**

The sheer nature of 100% Silk Organza adds a touch of elegance, enhancing the overall aesthetic of garments. Crafted from pure silk fibres, it offers a luxurious feel and a crisp, smooth finish, making it a sought-after choice for those seeking a high-quality fabric.

Despite its luxurious qualities, 100% Silk Organza may require careful handling during cutting and sewing to achieve desired outcomes. The sheer nature of the fabric may necessitate additional lining, adding complexity to the garment construction process. Considerations about the environmental impact of silk farming and issues related to fair labour practices and silkworm harvesting methods should be taken into account. Attention to proper care is essential to maintain the fabric's integrity and longevity.

### **Silk Georgette**

Silk Georgette, known for its luxurious feel and smooth drape, this fabric is often crafted from natural silk fibres, but can be made from synthetic fibres like rayon, viscose, and polyester. The crinkled texture adds a touch of sophistication, making it a sought-after fabric for creating graceful and feminine silhouettes.

#### **Considerations**

The breathability of silk georgette enhances comfort, particularly in warm weather, and its lightweight nature allows for easy layering, contributing to its adaptability in different styles of clothing.





However, the crinkled texture may pose challenges during cutting and sewing, requiring careful attention to maintain the intended design. Special care is needed during washing and wearing to preserve the delicate nature of silk georgette. The production of silk, while natural, may involve resource-intensive processes, such as water usage and energy consumption in silkworm rearing and silk extraction. Considerations about the environmental impact of silk farming and issues related to fair labour practices should be taken into account.

### **Duchess Satin**

Duchess Satin, prized for its high sheen and smooth texture, is crafted predominantly from silk or synthetic fibres such as polyester or acetate. This heavyweight fabric is a preferred choice for crafting luxurious and formal attire, enhancing the silhouette of garments like evening gowns and bridal dresses.

### **Considerations**

The lustrous finish of Duchess Satin adds a touch of glamour, contributing to its popularity in special occasion wear. The fabric's opulence makes it a sought-after choice for those looking to create statement pieces.

However, the heavyweight nature of Duchess Satin may limit its suitability for certain styles that require more fluidity. Careful handling is required during cutting and sewing to prevent wrinkles, and environmental concerns may arise due to the use of synthetic fibres. Issues related to fair labour practices in the production of synthetic fibres should also be considered.



## Synthetic Fibres

Virgin synthetic fibres, like polyester, elastane, acrylic, nylon, and synthetic leather alternatives, are oil or fossil fuel-derived, demanding resource-intensive production processes and yielding harmful byproducts. Synthetic fibres, representing over half of the total materials production portfolio, stem from complex petrochemical processes, with polyester, for example, deriving from petroleum, a nonrenewable finite resource.

### Considerations

Derived from petroleum-based chemicals, these fibres, like polyester, nylon, acrylic, and spandex, bring durability, elasticity, affordability, performance attributes, and comfort to various garments and industrial products. Innovations like recycled and bio-based polymers offer more sustainable synthetic fibres by using waste streams as new feedstocks. These alternatives are crucial in the evolving textile industry and will be critical to adopt in order to meet upcoming regulation.

Despite their convenience, virgin fossil fuel derived synthetic fibres pose strong environmental concerns, and contribute to greenhouse gases and microplastic pollution in water. These microplastics pose threats to aquatic life and have been proven to enter the food chain.<sup>40</sup>

### Recycled Polyester (rPET)

Plastic water bottles are typically crafted from PET (polyethylene terephthalate), a lightweight polyester derived from crude oil and natural gas. This material can be shaped into fabrics or containers. Used PET products can be recycled into rPET (recycled PET), repurposed for items like clothing.

rPET, unlike virgin polyester, originates from post-consumer PET products. Manufacturers collect discarded PET plastic from sources like water bottles, then clean, melt, and reshape them into pellets or chips. The resulting process is similar to creating virgin polyester, with rPET spun into threads for fabric.

### Considerations

rPET, reduces landfill waste while producing new fabric. Recycled polyester clothing maintains the durability appreciated in virgin polyester, offering comfort, moisture resistance, and lightweight feel. Its flexibility, strength, blending capability, and ease of care mirror those of virgin polyester, catering to both brands and consumers alike.





The use of rPET faces challenges due to its plastic nature. Despite rPET using less energy and resources than virgin PET during production, melting it into pellets releases harmful compounds, necessitating stringent monitoring to reduce environmental emissions.<sup>41</sup> The prevalence of inexpensive polyester in the garment industry has exacerbated environmental waste, spanning from fast fashion to athleisure. This convenience has driven wasteful production and consumption habits, alongside concerns about misrepresenting virgin polyester as environmentally friendly rPET, potentially confusing conscious consumers.

## Other Fabrics

### Marbled Velvet

Marbled Velvet is a luxurious material prized for its sumptuous feel and distinctive marbled patterns, adding a touch of individuality to upscale fashion and décor. Crafted predominantly from a blend of natural and synthetic fibres such as cotton, polyester and viscose, this plush fabric undergoes a complex marbling process, involving specialised techniques and materials. The marbling technique enhances its visual appeal, creating a sought-after aesthetic for garments and furnishings.

### Considerations

The soft and plush texture of Marbled Velvet provides a luxurious experience, making it highly desirable for those seeking opulence in their fashion and home items. The unique marbling patterns enhance the aesthetic, offering a sense of exclusivity to the products crafted from this material.

However, the intricate marbling process raises production costs due to added steps and the use of specialised techniques and materials, making Marbled Velvet pricier than other fabrics. Environmental considerations come into play, as the resource-intensive processes involved may contribute to ecological concerns, including energy consumption and chemical usage. Ensuring fair labour practices in the manufacturing of this intricate fabric is crucial, particularly in regions with less stringent regulations.



## Chiffon

Chiffon, celebrated for its lightweight nature and sheer appearance, is a versatile fabric suitable for creating flowing and elegant garments. Typically made from natural fibres like silk, cotton, or synthetic fibres such as polyester, chiffon's translucency adds a touch of sophistication, making it ideal for various styles and occasions.

### Considerations

Chiffon's lightweight characteristics contribute to the graceful and airy feel of garments, making it a popular choice for diverse fashion styles. The sheer quality adds sophistication and is often used in layers or as overlays for an ethereal effect.

However, the delicate nature of chiffon requires careful handling to prevent snags or tears. The sheer quality may necessitate additional lining, adding complexity to garment construction. Environmental concerns arise with synthetic versions, questioning resource consumption and potential waste issues. Additionally, fair labour practices should be considered, especially if sourced from regions with less stringent regulations.

## French Crepe Light

French Crepe Light, valued for its elegant drape and smooth surface, is a versatile fabric suitable for crafting luxurious and formal attire. Its matte finish provides a sophisticated look suitable for both casual and formal wear. Typically, French Crepe Light is crafted from silk or synthetic fibres such as polyester, man-made cellulosic fibres such as rayon, or a blend of these materials.

### Considerations

The lightweight nature of French Crepe Light allows for a range of clothing styles, from blouses to dresses, contributing to its popularity among designers. The matte finish adds an element of understated elegance, making it suitable for various fashion applications.

Despite its lightweight nature, French Crepe Light may require careful handling during cutting and sewing to achieve desired outcomes. Issues related to wrinkles and the environmental impact of the fabric's fibre content, whether natural or synthetic, should be considered. Additionally, fair labour practices and working conditions in the manufacturing process should be taken into account.





## Man-Made Cellulosic Fibres

Derived from natural sources such as wood pulp, these fibres undergo chemical treatments to acquire unique qualities. Rayon imitates silk's texture and appearance by dissolving wood pulp and extruding it into fibres. Modal, prized for softness and breathability, is commonly used in clothing and bedding. Lyocell boasts eco-friendly production from sustainably sourced wood pulp using a closed-loop system.

### Viscose / Rayon

Viscose/Rayon, a regenerated cellulosic fibre derived from plant sources, is globally known as 'Viscose' and 'Rayon' in the US. The complex manufacturing process involves the dissolution, washing, cleaning, and bleaching of wood pulp, typically sourced from trees like pine, beech, and eucalyptus, resulting in fibres spun into yarns. With an 80% market share among MMCFs and a production volume of around 5.8 million tonnes in 2021<sup>42</sup> viscose competes with alternatives such as bamboo, agricultural by-products, and post-consumer/ industrial waste.

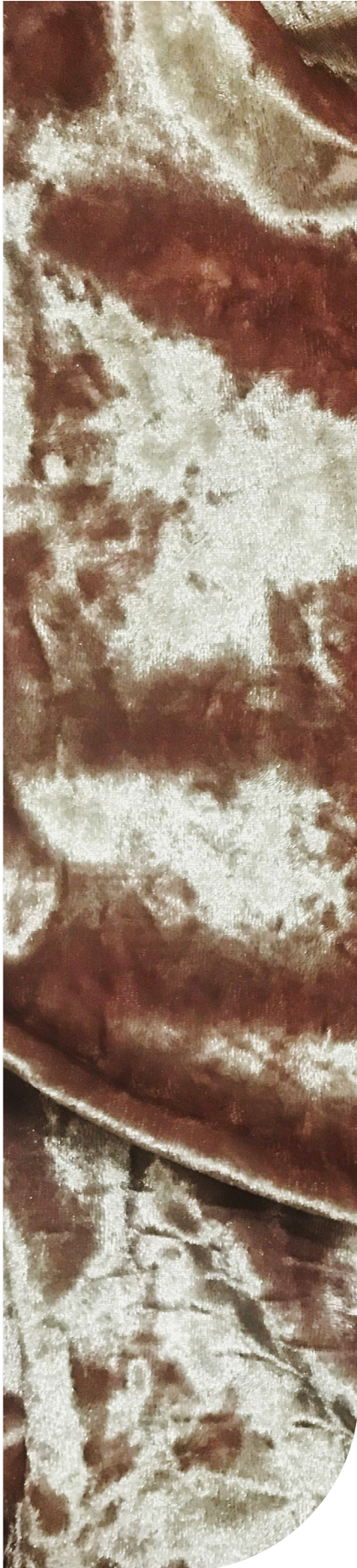
### Considerations

As a cost-effective silk alternative, viscose seamlessly blends with other fabrics due to its lightweight composition, elegant draping, and soft texture, making it suitable for garment creation. However, concerns arise from the sourcing of wood, introducing environmental and social risks, including deforestation, forest exploitation, and adverse impacts on biodiversity and the well-being of Indigenous Peoples. Additionally, the chemicals used in pulp and fibre production pose threats to both worker health and environmental safety, raising worries about forced or child labour and mistreatment of workers during the fabric's production process.

### Bamboo

Bamboo, prized for its rapid growth and strength, is crafted into textiles that embody both luxury and eco-consciousness. The fabric, including variants like Art Silk, Banana Silk, and Luxelle, resembles silk, utilising bamboo fibres from the fast-growing plant. The journey begins by processing cellulose-rich bamboo stems into fibres spun into yarn and woven into fabric, often undergoing dyeing for aesthetics.





### **Considerations**

Bamboo excels in eco-efficiency, using less water and land than cotton or silk. It occupies half the land area of cotton production, aids in preventing soil erosion, and can achieve nearly zero-waste use. Alongside sustainability, bamboo fabric offers softness, breathability, adaptability to seasons, moisture-wicking, UV filtration, hypoallergenic qualities, and wrinkle resistance. When cultivated sustainably, it provides an eco-friendly choice aligning environmental benefits with textile quality.

However, challenges exist despite its sustainability. Rapid growth might disrupt ecosystems, fabric shrinkage and longer drying times due to absorbency are common, and it often comes at a higher price compared to cotton. Concerns also arise regarding chemical-intensive processing, particularly in bamboo rayon and bamboo viscose production.

### **Lyocell**

Lyocell, typically referred to as regenerated cellulose, is a manufactured fibre, crafted from eucalyptus, birch, or oak wood chips that undergo a transformative process from pulp to fibre.

### **Considerations**

Lyocell fibres offer a blend of elegance and practicality. They have a smooth texture ideal for creating graceful drapes and are available in various vibrant colours. These fibres prioritise strength, absorbency, durability and eco-friendliness, maintaining their quality through multiple wash cycles without pilling while mirroring the softness and breathability of silk. However, its superior quality comes at a premium, making it an investment requiring discernment. Additionally, the wood origin of lyocell raises concerns about its impact on forests, emphasising the necessity of sustainable forest management to safeguard precious ecosystems.





## Cupro

Cupro is a regenerated cellulose fabric derived from cotton waste. Made by dissolving fine cotton fibres in a cuprammonium solution, it yields a smooth, drapery textile reminiscent of silk. Originating in Germany in the 1900s, cupro undergoes chemical processing. It's popular for lightweight summer clothing and often combined with cotton for distinctive textures. Sometimes called "Bemberg" after J.P. Bemberg, it's labelled "ammonia silk" in some markets and may also be recognised as "cupra."

### Considerations

Cupro uses cotton by-products, aligning with circular fashion principles. Biodegradable, it decomposes naturally. Its lightweight texture allows breathability and blends well with fabrics and prints. Easy-care, it's machine-washable and gentle on skin and hair, avoiding allergies and static. Cupro's production, rooted in cotton waste, reflects sustainability through closed-loop practices.

However, Cupro's production involves ammonia, posing risks to worker safety. It's also sensitive to heat, requiring caution around flames. Cupro needs air-drying and tends to wrinkle, although ironing helps. Ethical concerns linger around lack of transparency of value cycle and labour conditions, with environmental and waste issues due to the harsh chemicals used.



## Exploring Sustainable Leather Alternatives

The fashion industry significantly impacts biodiversity by using animal fur and skins for various products, estimated at about 100 million animals annually, excluding illegal sourcing.<sup>43</sup> This poses challenges in quantification. While leather remains popular, it faces controversies due to animal cruelty, substantial greenhouse gas emissions, and high deforestation rates, notably in the Amazon. Vegan leather emerges as an ethical alternative, but not all options are eco-friendly. Avoiding polyurethane, polyester, or PVC-based vegan leather is crucial due to their contribution to plastic pollution and energy-intensive production.

Fortunately, many of the vegan leather alternatives available today showcase ingenuity and resourcefulness. Electing to purchase and support the use of natural-source leather alternatives promotes sustainability and encourages innovation as you can see from the following list:

- **Piñatex®** Fabricated from discarded pineapple leaves, this leather alternative champions innovation and Philippine pineapple farming communities.
- **Alter-Nappa** is an innovative, cruelty-free material in fashion, blending recycled polyester and polyurethane with a vegetable oil-based coating
- **SCOBY** leather Derived from kombucha cultures, this leather alternative showcases sustainable innovation with a texture akin to genuine leather.
- **MuSkin** Crafted from mushroom caps, MuSkin is biodegradable and embodies an earthy aesthetic, connecting with nature.
- **Brewed Protein™** Created from lab-grown proteins, this leather alternative combines science and fashion for a circular economy.
- **Cork leather** Repurposing cork oak tree bark, this material offers a distinct texture and utilises renewable resources.
- **Malai** Produced from bacterial cellulose grown on the water of mature coconuts, Malai offers biodegradability and visual appeal in sustainable fashion.
- **Desserto®** Derived from cacti, Desserto® is a supple alternative known for its low water usage, that is being embraced as it redefines leather luxury sustainably.





- **VEGEA™** Using grape waste from winemaking, VEGEA™ offers a bio-based material coated for durability.
- **AppleSkin™** Created from discarded apple waste, AppleSkin™ mimics traditional leather's texture and durability, offering a stylish ethical choice.
- **Leaf Leather** Crafted from tree leaves, leaf leather offers water resistance, a striking aesthetic, and a natural texture.
- **Bio-Tex™** This lab-grown leather uses proprietary Bio-Alloy™ technology, less water, and less non-renewable energy in its production.



## Other Inspired Textile Innovations

In the realm of textiles beyond leather alternatives, science and engineering collectively weave a narrative of creative innovation. Whilst the full impact of these solutions is still being explored, take a look at some innovations:

- **Banana fibres** Derived from banana tree stems, banana fibres can create textiles of silken-softness from the inner peel or coarser textiles ideal for ropes, rugs, and packaging from outer peels.
- **Algae-based fibres** Companies are pioneering sustainable textile processes, converting algae into fibres, reducing energy and water usage.
- **Parblex®** Derived from potato waste, this bioplastic promises biodegradability and recyclability. Fermentation and polymerization drive the unique production process.
- **KOBA® Faux Fur** This fur alternative uses 37% plant-based synthetic fibres and recycled polyester to mimic animal fur, providing an ethical alternative in fur fashion.
- **Lotus fabric** Handmade from lotus flower microfibrils, offering breathability, wrinkle-resistance, and waterproof properties.
- **SPINNOVA®** fibres Derived from wood, agricultural waste, and textile waste, offering a biodegradable and recyclable alternative.

Various branded Man-Made Cellulosic Fibres and feedstocks are available today, utilising alternative feedstocks or innovative manufacturing techniques, such as TENCEL™, ECOVERO™, CIRCULOSE®, Naia™ Renew, TreeToTextile®, and more.





## Deadstock Materials

Deadstock material in the fashion and textile industry refers to surplus or unused fabric and clothing items from prior collections. These include brand-new, unused fabric rolls, garments, or accessories due to reasons like overproduction or changing trends.

### Considerations

Using deadstock fabric conserves resources by reducing the need for new textiles, and aligns with circular fashion principles to minimise landfill waste as it offers opportunities for repurposing or integration into new collections. This practice saves energy and water, lessening the environmental impact of textile production. It also reduces carbon emissions and often comes at a lower cost, offering economic benefits. Embracing deadstock sets a sustainable fashion example, encouraging wider industry adoption of responsible practices.

Despite sustainability benefits, deadstock fabrics have limitations. Sourcing can be challenging due to scarcity, logistics, and limited variety, especially for specific needs or larger productions. Quality issues like imperfections and inconsistencies due to age or storage pose challenges for consistency across collections. While avoiding new demand, they still stem from past fast fashion cycles, linking back to concerns about overproduction and wasteful practices.

## Challenges for the Design & Textile Industries

Immersed in creativity and glamour, the fashion industry's impact reaches far beyond the runway. Its significant contribution to ecological distress includes waste generation, water depletion, chemical saturation, and greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for around 10% of global greenhouse gases.<sup>44</sup> Clothing production, surpassing 60% of textile usage, has doubled in the past 15 years, causing environmental strain.<sup>45</sup> While natural eco fibres claim a growing market share, the continued dominance of synthetic fibres poses a threat to our planet's resources. Fashion intertwines expression and industry, urging us to consider the environmental implications of our clothing and material choices. The urgency behind addressing this predicament is underscored by several compelling factors including the following:



### Millennium-long persistence

Synthetic fabrics—polyester, nylon, spandex, and acrylic—are derived from petroleum and resist biodegradation. Unless incinerated, they will endure on Earth for a millennium.

### Plastic menace

When clothes go through the wash, they release tiny plastic microfibres. Half a million tonnes of these reach the oceans yearly, silently polluting. By 2050, without intervention, this could swell to 22 million tonnes, turning oceans into plastic havens.<sup>46</sup>

### Dependence on non-renewables

The textile industry relies on 98 million tonnes of non-renewable resources annually—oil for synthetic fibres, fertilisers for cotton, and various chemicals for processing.<sup>47</sup>

### Freshwater contamination

The textile industry contributes to 20% of global freshwater pollution through dyeing and printing processes.<sup>48</sup> For instance, Indonesia's Sit-ah-rum River—home to 2,000 textile factories—suffers from unregulated effluent discharge, causing local environmental harm.

### Alarming pollution rates

The textile industry accounts for up to 20% of industrial pollution affecting rivers and land.<sup>49</sup>

In fashion, every thread tells a story, intertwining style with environmental responsibility. It's time to heed the call for change. Fashion entities should prioritise textiles that meet sustainability standards, reflecting our commitment to a greener future.





When you consider that 1.7 million sequined items, mostly made from non-biodegradable plastic, are discarded after the Christmas party season, you start to understand the impact of our clothing's details.<sup>50</sup> Sustainable fashion is underscored by sustainable apparel notions such as zippers made from recycled metal, organic cotton labels, recycled glass beads, colourful seed-beads, bamboo buttons, hemp labels and ribbons, cork patches, recycled leather labels, upcycled denim patches, wooden toggles and more.

Recent innovations such as bioorganic yarns derived from kelp, algae, or seaweed, as exemplified by companies like Keel Labs offer an eco-friendly alternative to traditional yarns, showcasing the potential for fashion to align with ecological principles. The use of toxin-free and natural fabric glues further emphasises the meticulous attention to detail in sustainable fashion practices.

Designers have explored solutions that push the boundaries of innovation, from biomaterial innovator and materials specialist Alice Potts creating crystals for embellishments from body sweat to a collection of jewellery from sequins made from seaweed! Other examples include:

- **Radiant Matter BioSequins:** Plant-based cellulose sequins that are plastic-free, nontoxic, and biodegradable.
- **3D Biopolymer Sequins:** Material and textile designer Carolyn Raff makes sequins from vegan algae-based powders agar and carrageenan. She colours them using leftover dye bathwater from natural dyes.
- **Photosynthetic Coating™:** Post Carbon Lab developed a Photosynthetic Coating™ which can be applied to textiles. This coating is of living, growing algae which, as part of its natural life cycle, absorbs carbon dioxide and produces oxygen, transforming the clothing into carbon reducing innovation.
- **PURE.TECH:** A coating that can be applied to many surfaces, such as textiles, wood, and plastic, that absorbs air pollutants, including carbon dioxide, and converts them into minerals, converting mundane surfaces into active greenhouse gas cleansers.





The background features a gradient from light teal at the top to dark teal at the bottom. Overlaid on this are several concentric circles and a central swirl-like pattern, all rendered in various shades of teal and green, creating a sense of depth and movement.

17 Sustainable Colours & Dyes

# Sustainable Colours & Dyes

Fashion is a vibrant realm brimming with creativity and expression, showcasing an array of colours in garments. However, the enchanting hues often conceal a darker reality. Some dyes, including synthetic ones, replacing natural ones since the industrial revolution, bring speed and cost-efficiency but at a grave environmental and societal cost. They taint waterways, farmlands, and communities near dye processing plants, contrasting sharply with the once-utilised, less harmful natural dyes prevalent before the mid-1800s.

## Did You Know?

- Annually, 5 trillion litres of water is used to dye textiles.<sup>51</sup>
- 95% of the textile industry's wastewater originates from dyeing processes.
- Roughly 10-15% of dye matter doesn't bind to the fabric and instead remains in the wastewater, often discharged into local rivers.<sup>52</sup>
- Contamination of local water systems from untreated synthetic dyes affects aquatic and plant biodiversity, negatively impacting livelihoods and food sources.<sup>53</sup>
- Dye chemicals have been found in vegetables and fruits grown in cultivation fields near industrial dye factories.<sup>54</sup>





Synthetic dyes pose both environmental and human rights concerns, notably in regions like China, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Zambia, where dye production predominantly occurs.<sup>55</sup> Disposal of toxic wastewater from dyeing processes affects local communities' health due to river contamination. However, growing awareness has spurred interest in sustainable alternatives like natural, low-impact, biosynthetic dyes, and microbial pigments. Exploring these options supports a more sustainable and ethical approach to garment colouring, reflecting a shared commitment to a brighter fashion landscape.



## Natural Dyes

Natural dyes have long held global significance. The historical origins of the botanical dye or natural dye movement date back 5,000 years in China, where plants and barks were first employed. This practice has since encompassed diverse sources, including the powerful Indian madder from the Himalayas, the black walnut utilised by Cherokee artists, and a myriad of other plant-based materials globally.

Embracing the philosophy of Japanese aesthetics, as articulated by author Jun'ichirō Tanizaki in "In Praise of Shadows," encourages the acceptance of a material's shadows and imperfections, an example of which being the heterogeneous hues generated by natural dyes. Tanizaki contends that these elements contribute to the creation of dimension, depth, and character, suggesting that beauty is intricately tied to the presence of shadows.

This perspective invites us to appreciate the uniqueness of natural dyes, recognizing their inherent irregularities and variations as integral to their beauty.

Today, interest is growing in natural dyes sourced from animals, plants, and minerals, offering biodegradability, non-toxicity, and hypoallergenic qualities. Their eco-friendliness and safety, devoid of synthetic dye carcinogens, make them appealing. However, large-scale production requires careful handling to safeguard farmers, water systems and supply, biodiversity, and workers. These dyes, categorised as adjective (requiring mordants like alum and iron to bind the colour to the fabric) or substantive (skipping mordants for eco-friendliness), offer varied options. For enthusiasts, we've compiled a comprehensive list covering a wide range of natural dye sources. This resource illuminates sustainable choices for vibrant and eco-friendly textile hues.



### **Adjective Dyes (require a mordant)**

Adjective dyes, reliant on mordants, offer diverse hues across the spectrum. For brown shades, options include walnut extracted from its hulls, birch bark, oak galls creating deep purples, and black tea leaves yielding deep browns. Red and pink tones stem from Brazilwood sourced from its wood and bark, madder from plant roots, and *Coreopsis* flowers, producing various shades. Lac extract offers crimson to burgundy reds, while avocado skins and pits produce pinks and soft golds. Blue hues come from indigo plants, using a fermentation process. Yellow and orange tones arise from annatto seeds, chestnut oak bark, sapan wood, avocado leaves, elder, gorse, and goldenrod, each contributing to a spectrum of vibrant colours.

### **Substantive Dyes**

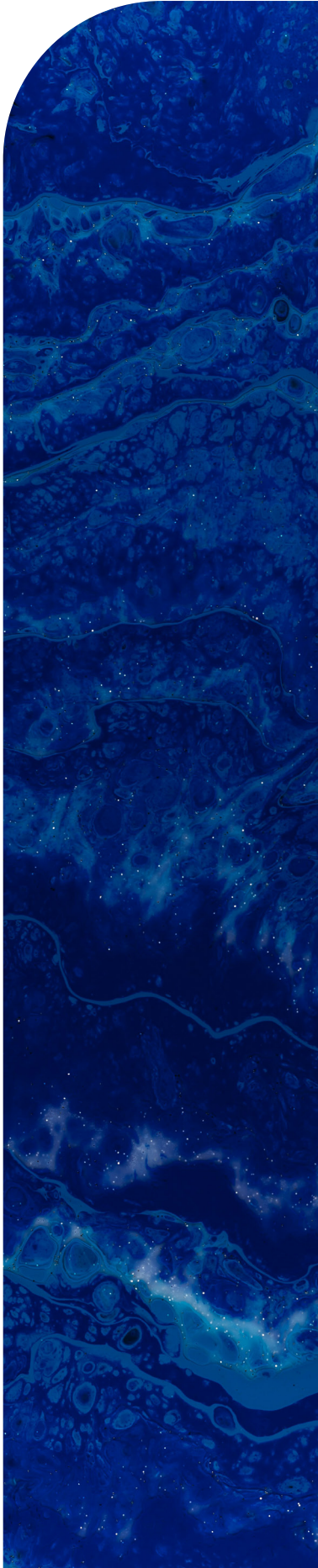
Substantive dyes offer a spectrum of natural colours sourced from various plants. For instance, eucalyptus bark or leaves provide gold, brown, amber, and red tones. Yerba mate leaves yield a natural green dye, while woad leaves produce rich greens, browns, and purples. Turmeric roots create vibrant yellow-orange hues, and St. John's wort flowers offer yellow tones. Safflower petals deliver orange and yellow shades, while osage bark produces bright yellow and orange tones. Marigold flowers offer a range from yellow to orange, and dyer's chamomile yields a bright natural yellow. Daffodil flowers and leaves provide a variety of yellow tones, and weld plants give beautiful shades of yellow. Annatto seeds produce tones ranging from orange to brown. These substances showcase the diverse palette available from natural sources for dyeing textiles.

Various dye sources demand specific preparation methods (like boiling, soaking, or fermenting) to extract the dye, yielding colours influenced by dye concentration, fabric type, and mordant. This diversity in natural dye sources enables sustainable and eco-friendly colour creation. The unpredictable process produces variations in colour depth, embraced by some designers for its unique effect.

### **Certified Low-Impact Dyes**

Low-impact dyes, certified by OEKO-TEX® or Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS), provide a toxin-free option compared to traditional synthetic dyes. Though synthetic and derived from fossil fuels, they're easily absorbed by textiles thus saving significant water in the dyeing process, as well as offering a wide colour range and longer-lasting hues, extending garment lifespans.





## Biosynthetic Dyes & Microbial Pigments

Biosynthetic dyes mark a sustainable shift, using renewable materials instead of petroleum. EarthColors® by Archroma utilising non-edible agricultural waste and huue's biosynthetic indigo sourced from sugar exemplify this innovative trend. Microbial pigments, harvested from bacteria, yeast, algae, and fungi, offer affordability, sustainability, biodegradability, scalability, rapid growth, and safety. Brands like Colorfix and PILI use synthetic biology and fermentation to engineer vibrant dyes, while Algaeing has developed an algae-based dye formulation compatible with all types of textiles and Swedish start-up Mounid is extracting colour pigments from microalgae to fabricate inks for textiles.

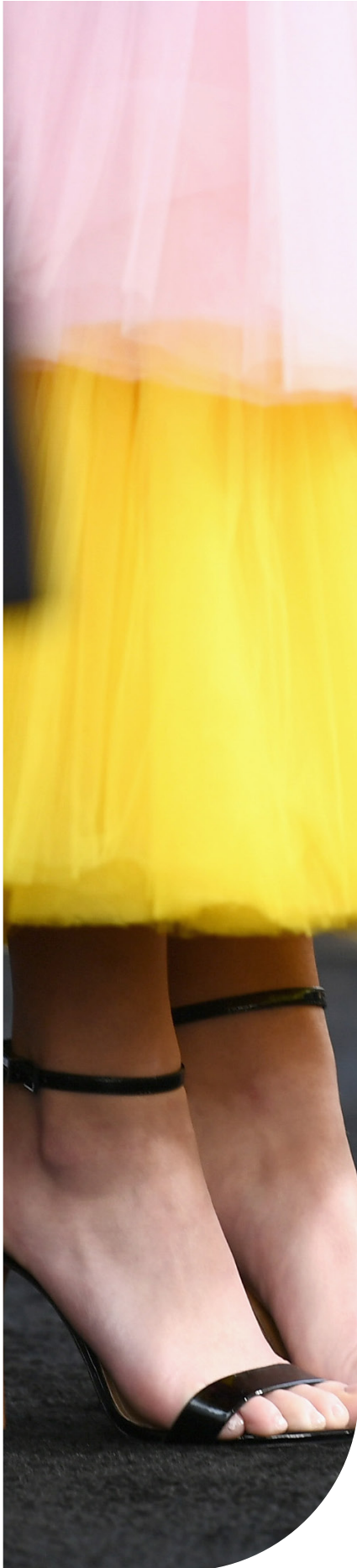
### What Can You Do?

In the fashion realm, the pursuit of eco-friendly dyeing methods merges science with art. While challenges persist—like accessibility, scalability, and adoption—the commitment to reducing environmental impact is prompting a transformative shift towards more sustainable and ethical dye materials and practices. Both designers and citizens can support the growth of responsible and sustainable dye methodologies and the use of sustainable dye products.

### Considerations for Colour Creatives & Designers

We encourage you to consider the following characteristics when creating a strategy to use more sustainable dye options in your collections:

- **Water conservation:** Opt for dyes that require minimal water usage during the binding process. This involves choosing dyeing techniques and materials that reduce water waste and promote responsible water use.
- **Toxicity levels:** Choose dyes with minimal toxicity to safeguard workers and the surrounding environment. This includes selecting dyes that do not contain harmful chemicals or pose health risks during production and use.
- **Renewable sourcing:** Prioritise dyes sourced from renewable materials, reducing dependence on fossil fuels. Renewable sourcing involves using materials derived from sustainable and regenerative sources, such as agricultural waste or plant-based compounds.
- **Biodegradability:** Opt for dyes that decompose naturally over time, mitigating long-term environmental harm and reducing their impact on ecosystems.



- **Colour fastness:** Seek dyes that retain colour vibrancy even after multiple washes, extending the lifespan of garments.
- **Biodiversity protection:** Consider dyes that respect ecosystems and minimise harm to biodiversity during sourcing.
- **Social responsibility:** Source textiles from manufacturers that prioritise fair labour practices and support local communities. Social responsibility in dyeing involves ensuring that workers are treated ethically, paid fairly, and provided with safe working conditions.
- **Assess impact:** Source textiles from manufacturers that have an EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) in place. An EIA evaluates the overall environmental footprint of the dyeing process, analysing the energy and water consumption, waste generation, and emissions associated with a specific dyeing method.

### Colour Considerations for Citizens

Even if you aren't planning any dye or colour creations of your own, you can contribute to the growth of sustainable dye methods and alternatives by doing the following:

- **Conscientious buying:** Shop and share your support of designers and brands that use alternative dye products and sustainable methodologies.
- **Social responsibility:** Opt for brands and manufacturers that prioritise fair labour practices and support local communities. Social responsibility in dyeing involves ensuring that workers are treated ethically, paid fairly, and provided with safe working conditions.
- **Transparent supply chain:** Prioritise brands that share information about sourcing, production, and sustainability efforts. A transparent supply chain ensures that citizens can trace the journey of a product from its origin to the final purchase, promoting accountability and responsible practices.









18 Leverage Transparency  
for Sustainable Change



Sustainable fashion is not just about eco-friendly materials and ethical production; it also hinges on a critical factor: transparency. In today's fashion landscape, transparency has emerged as the cornerstone of responsible practices, fostering trust between citizens and companies. It's a two-way street where both parties can benefit with technology illuminating the path.

## Transparency for Citizens

For citizens, transparency means access. Access to comprehensive information about a brand's supply chains, business operations, and the consequences of these actions on the well-being of workers and the environment. It's an invitation to peer behind the curtain, to understand not only what they are buying but also the impact it carries. This access allows us to make informed decisions about our purchases, confident that our purchases align with our values.

Fashion Revolution's Fashion Transparency Index is an annual review of 250 of the world's largest fashion brands and retailers, assessing their public disclosure on human rights and environmental policies, practices, and impacts in their own operations and supply chains. It's important to note that disclosure means precisely that. This information should then be scrutinised, and in many cases, leveraged to drive positive change.<sup>56</sup>

## Transparency for Brands

On the flip side, companies that embrace transparency invite independent audits and scrutiny of their practices, which in turn provides opportunities for improvement. When a brand willingly shares its goals, strategies, and performance, it signals its commitment to accountability and progress. This openness builds credibility and trust among citizens, which invites engagement, support, and patronage that further strengthens the brand.





## Transparency Drives Competition & Improvement

Furthermore, transparency in fashion fuels healthy competition and collaboration among industry players. Brands strive to outdo each other in sustainable practices, whilst simultaneously sharing resources and information, propelling the entire sector towards more ethical and environmentally conscious choices. In essence, transparency is fundamental for the change we want to see realised: a fashion industry that values not just style but also the well-being of people and the planet.

## Transparency via Blockchain

Blockchain technology, characterised by its secure and immutable digital ledger, offers a powerful solution for enhancing transparency throughout the fashion supply chain. Brands that utilise blockchain to track materials and production create a comprehensive and tamper-proof record of their supply chain, from raw materials to the finished product. Far from perfect, blockchain struggles with scalability, slow transaction processing, and high energy consumption. Regulatory uncertainties and the risk of centralization further impede widespread adoption.

## Technology Solutions Driving Sustainable Change

The intersection of sustainable fashion and the digital realm is reshaping the industry not only by facilitating transparency but also by making eco-conscious choices more accessible and convenient for citizens and devising methods and tools for designers and brands to reduce waste in product creation. Technology offers a range of solutions, including biotech textiles and predictive analytics, which, when combined, can drive positive change.

The growing demand for sustainable fashion is driving innovation and technological developments that have the potential for future scalability. Technology provides useful tools to bring about systemic changes within the fashion industry and reduce its environmental impact in the following ways:

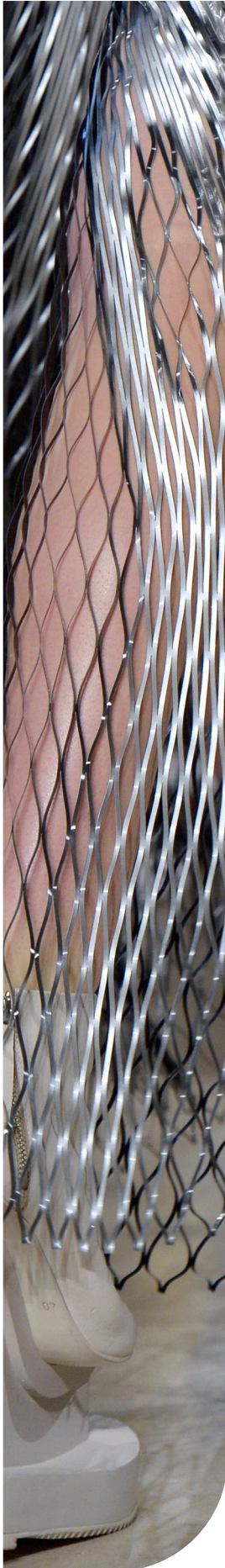
### Online marketplaces for sustainable fashion

Digital platforms and e-commerce websites have become hubs for sustainable fashion brands and products. Citizens can easily discover and purchase eco-friendly clothing and accessories.

### Sustainable fashion apps

Mobile apps dedicated to sustainable fashion have emerged, helping citizens make eco-conscious choices whether by supporting ethical brands, buying second-hand, renting, or donating. These apps provide information on sustainable brands, materials, and shopping tips.





### **Virtual try-on and augmented reality (AR)**

Digital technologies like AR enable customers to virtually try on clothes before purchasing them online. This streamlines the trying-on process by rendering images of customers wearing different pieces from a brand's collection, offering a more accurate representation of fit and reducing the need for physical try-ons and returns, which can be environmentally costly.

### **Consumer education**

Digital platforms serve as educational tools, raising awareness about sustainable fashion practices and ethical consumption. Brands and influencers use social media, blogs, and videos to inform citizens about the environmental and social impacts of their clothing choices.

### **Second-hand and rental marketplaces**

Online second-hand marketplaces have gained popularity promoting accessibility and circular fashion by extending the lifespan of clothing items while digital rental platforms also offer a sustainable alternative to buying.

### **Sustainable influencer marketing**

Digital influencers and content creators are collaborating with sustainable fashion brands to promote eco-friendly products and practices. Social media influencers can significantly impact consumer behaviour and inspire sustainable fashion choices.

### **Blockchain for transparency**

When integrated with QR codes and near-field communication (NFC) technology on product labels backed by blockchain data, consumers gain access to authenticated supply-chain information, such as working conditions and the journey of garments, ensuring brands cannot engage in greenwashing.

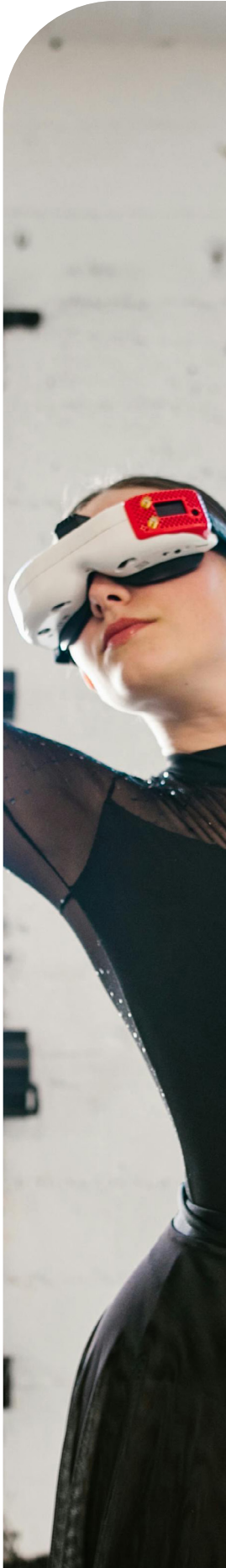
## **Design & Production Efficiency**

### **Sustainable material sourcing**

Digital platforms connect fashion designers and brands with sustainable material suppliers. These platforms help source deadstock, eco-friendly fabrics, dyes, and trims, reducing the environmental impact of fashion production.

### **AI and data analytics**

Artificial intelligence and data analytics are employed to optimise supply chain management, reduce waste, and forecast demand more accurately. AI algorithms can help brands make informed decisions on inventory, production, and transportation, minimising their carbon footprint. Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning



can help fashion brands optimise production, reducing overstock and waste. Heuritech, for instance, collects and analyses data from social media images to predict product trends and behaviours. By forecasting product quantities and optimising assortments, brands can reduce overproduction and unsold inventory.

### **Virtual sampling with 3D modelling**

3D modelling technology plays a vital role in sustainable fashion by creating virtual samples for collections. These digital samples can be shared with buyers worldwide, reducing the carbon footprint associated with physical production and travel. 3D modelling allows brands to customise clothing to individual body measurements, minimising the issue of mass returns due to limited size options.

### **3D printing and customisation**

Digital technologies like laser cutting and 3D printing enable customization of clothing items, reducing waste by producing garments on-demand and minimising excess inventory.

### **3D solutions for personalization**

Some brands harness eco-friendly materials in their custom 3D-printed collections, providing personalization and exclusive options for customers. Others leverage laser cutting, 3D printing, and traditional crafting techniques to create stylish and environmentally conscious fashion items.

### **Eco-friendly packaging and delivery**

E-commerce platforms are adopting sustainable packaging materials and eco-friendly delivery options to reduce waste and carbon emissions associated with shipping.

### **Virtual fashion shows and events**

The digital realm has become a prominent stage for fashion shows and events. Virtual fashion shows allow brands to showcase their collections to a global audience without the need for physical runway events.

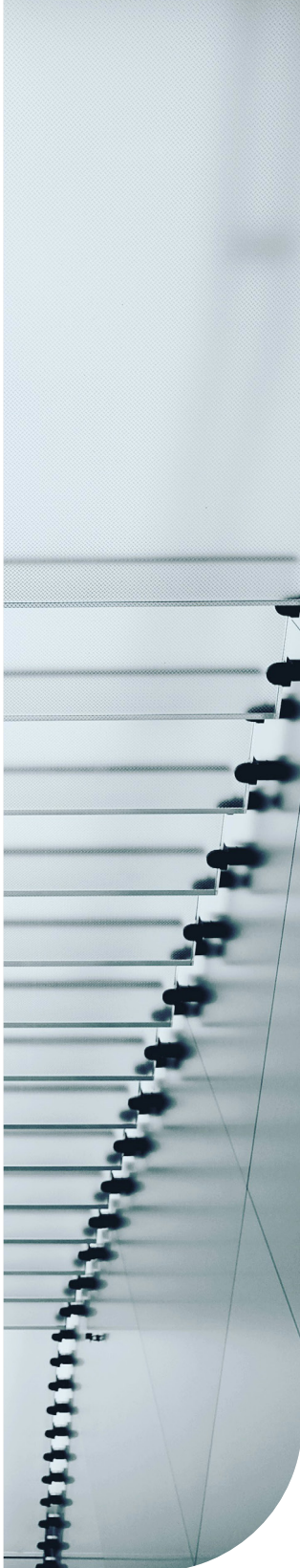
Technology serves as a catalyst for fashion's evolution towards sustainability and transparency, with think tanks like the Institute of Digital Fashion (IoDF) developing research papers and immersive digital solutions such as AR, VR, UX, and digital try-ons to demonstrate the potential of a more inclusive, sustainable, and diverse in-real-life and web-based reality. By embracing these digital solutions, the fashion industry can make a significant impact on reducing waste, enhancing trust, and meeting the growing demand for ethical and sustainable fashion.



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19 Useful Certifications  
or Standards to Look  
for when Shopping

The next time you go shopping, take a closer look for certifications or standards. Does the label, or the website, make a sustainability claim? Not falling prey to deceptive tactics of greenwashing means looking for more information beyond what has been provided. These certifications and standards start the conversation, which your quest for information can continue.



### OEKO-TEX®

OEKO-TEX® standards test textiles for harmful substances and ensure safe working conditions for the production workforce, assuring citizens that textiles are free from harmful chemicals. Their standards include the following:

- **OEKO-TEX® MADE IN GREEN:** This traceable product label ensures that products are made with sustainable materials and in environmentally friendly facilities. It provides transparency about the eco-friendliness of the product.
- **OEKO-TEX® STANDARD 100:** Verifies every part of the product has been tested for harmful substances and found harmless.
- **OEKO-TEX® ORGANIC COTTON:** Verifies that GMOs were not used in the product's manufacturing, and the product has been tested for pesticides and harmful substances.
- **OEKO-TEX® LEATHER STANDARD:** Verifies that the leather product has been tested for harmful chemicals and passed.

### Global Organic Textile Standards (GOTS)

GOTS ensures the organic status of textiles, from raw material harvesting to labelling, with high-level environmental and social criteria. It provides a comprehensive assessment of organic fibres.

### Textile Exchange

A global non-profit that developed a set of standards for the textile industry to validate sustainability claims. Their standards include the following:

- **Content Claim Standard (CCS):** CCS is a chain of custody standard that tracks products from source to the end product, ensuring transparency in recycled content.
- **Global Recycled Standard (GRS):** GRS is a voluntary product standard that tracks and verifies the recycled materials content in a final product. It supports recycling efforts.
- **Recycled Content Standard (RCS):** RCS certifies products with specific percentages of recycled content, encouraging recycling and responsible production.

### USDA Certified Organic

Compliance with USDA organic regulations. It is a recognized standard for organic products in the United States.





### **Soil Association Certification**

A leading organic certifier offering a wide range of organic and sustainable certification schemes that cover various aspects of organic production.

### **bluesign®**

bluesign® focuses on sustainable textile production, ensuring that garments are made with minimal impact on the environment and worker safety. It assesses products across the entire production chain for sustainability and is a member of SGS, an auditing service.

### **EU Eco Label™**

The EU Eco Label™ ensures that textile products meet strict environmental and safety criteria, including social aspects like worker well-being. It offers citizens confidence that products adhere to high environmental standards.

### **Nordic Swan Ecolabel**

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel is awarded to products or services meeting stringent environmental criteria. It is a widely respected certification in Nordic countries.

### **GreenEarth® Cleaning**

Dry cleaners displaying the GreenEarth® mark commit to quality and environmental responsibility. They use a safer cleaning process.

### **B Lab**

B Lab is a non-profit network that certifies businesses as B Corps. The B Corp certification is a designation that a business is meeting high standards of performance, accountability, and transparency on several factors including input materials, supply chain practises, employee benefits, and charitable giving.

### **Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)**

The FSC® “check tree” label verifies sustainable forestry sourcing throughout the supply chain for the product it appears upon.

### **ICEC**

Certification for Italian leather that signifies quality and ethical leather production.

### **Leather Working Group (LWG)**

Offers certification standards for various actors within the leather supply chain. It promotes responsible leather production.

### **Cradle to Cradle Certified®:**

A standard used by designers, brands, and manufacturers across industries for the circular and safe design and production of products.



## More Organisations Working for Change

Organisations worldwide are hard at work to transition the fashion industry into one that is more conscious of the planet and people. These organisations and their visions, their goals, and their processes are as varied as the issues we find within the fashion industry itself. Throughout this piece, we've listed many of them relevant to the various topics covered, and yet, there are still many more whose aims and actions cover a spectrum, such as the following:

### **Fashion Takes Action (Canada)**

A non-profit fashion organisation in Canada that creates webinars and hosts community events to divert textile waste from landfills, youth programmes, and workgroups promoting education in sustainability.

### **ECO Age (UK)**

Promotes sustainable practices in fashion through strategic campaigns, consultancy, advocacy, and initiatives, such as the Green Carpet Fashion Awards.

### **New Standard Institute (Global)**

A think tank dedicated to transforming data into action for promoting sustainability within the fashion industry.

### **Fashion for Good (Global)**

A global platform promoting sustainable and circular fashion innovations, and home to the Fashion for Good Museum, an interactive fashion museum for the future of fashion.

### **Changing Markets Foundation (USA)**

Researches, creates, and supports campaigns that leverage the power of markets by generating engagement and mobilisation to prompt market shifts away from unsustainable products and companies.



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20 Campaigns & Legislation

# Campaigns & Legislation

A promising driver for change currently being driven by the New Standard Institute and a broad coalition of supporters, The New York State Fashion Sustainability and Social Accountability Act (S4746/ A4333) (Fashion Act) would require major fashion brands selling into New York State to comply with supply chain mapping requirements and to achieve environmental and social targets in line with what many have voluntarily committed to.

“Voluntary measures alone are insufficient. Common sense regulation is the only way to lift the floor and have an industry, which shares suppliers, to be aligned in addressing impacts. It’s the opportunity to have an industry thrive together.” -  
*Maxine Bedat, Executive Director - New Standard Institute*

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation is aimed at holding producers responsible for the entire product life cycle, especially product end-of-life which extends to waste management. In 2023, the European Commission proposed a Textile EPR Directive for all EU Member States. Many countries have EPR laws, but not all apply to textile waste. The OR Foundation’s Stop Waste Colonialism Campaign, driven by the Kantamanto Community in Ghana, is pushing to make Extended Producer Responsibility globally accountable.<sup>52</sup> It calls upon apparel companies to internalise the cost of waste management, advocates for global accountability regarding loss and damage to recipients of exports, as well as the disclosure of production volumes.

“Knowing where to begin may be overwhelming but the journey is not linear - advocacy begins with questioning the status quo. It’s your right to access the information required to make well-informed choices. Citizen empowerment fuels change: activate your activism and view your voice as a crucial tool to help push for greater transparency and accountability in the fashion industry.” -  
*Liv Simplicano, Policy and Research Manager, Fashion Revolution*

Sustainability within the fashion industry is a multifaceted process that demands action on various fronts including government and individual citizens. The EU Circular Economy Action Plan, European Union initiatives, promotes a circular economy, encourages recycling and reducing waste, and promotes sustainable practices. But government initiatives do not occur without citizen support. Your role can extend beyond making sustainable fashion choices for formal events and daily life. You can support the introduction of legislation promoting socially responsible and environmentally conscious policies and laws in your country and add your voice to impact campaigns.





## Legislative examples:

- **International Accord for Health and Safety in the Textile and Garment Industry:** A binding agreement currently signed by 153 brands, that focuses on safety standards within the textile and garment sector.
- **Garment Worker Protection Act (SB 62):** California law that mandates hourly wages for garment workers and prohibits piece rate pay.
- **U.K. Green Claims Code:** Provides guidance to UK businesses on making environmental claims while complying with consumer protection laws.
- **Australia's Modern Slavery Law:** Requires entities operating in Australia to report on and address modern slavery risks within their operations and supply chains.
- **California Transparency in Supply Chains Act:** California legislation mandating disclosure of efforts to eliminate forced labour and human trafficking in supply chains.
- **EU Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR):** A regulation setting sustainability disclosure requirements for financial market participants in the EU, impacting investment decisions and financing in the fashion industry.
- **REACH Regulations:** These regulations govern the use of chemicals and substances in textile and apparel production, particularly in the EU, to protect consumers and the environment.
- **Anti-Waste for a Circular Economy Law (France):** This law aims to phase out single-use plastics entirely by 2040, implement measures for transparency and better consumer education and waste management, waste reduction, and more.<sup>58</sup>

## Campaigns to amplify:

### #WhoMadeMyClothes

This campaign, initiated by Fashion Revolution, encourages consumers to question and inquire about the origins of their clothing, urging brands to be transparent about their supply chains.

### #FashionRevolution

Fashion Revolution's broader campaign aims to raise awareness about the environmental and social impacts of the fashion industry. It encourages consumers to demand transparency and sustainable practices from brands.

### #SustainableFashion

This general hashtag is used by various organisations and influencers to promote sustainable fashion practices, share eco-friendly clothing options, and highlight the importance of making environmentally conscious choices in the fashion industry.

### #MakeFashionCircular

Launched by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, this campaign focuses on promoting circular fashion practices, advocating for a shift towards a circular economy where clothing is designed to be reused, recycled, and repurposed.

### #DetoxFashion

Greenpeace's Detox My Fashion campaign targets the fashion industry's use of hazardous chemicals in the production process. It calls on brands to eliminate the use of toxic substances and adopt safer and more sustainable alternatives.

### #FOSSILFUELFASHION

ECO Age's campaign advocates for reducing or eliminating the use of fossil fuels in the fashion industry, promoting cleaner and more sustainable energy sources throughout the production and distribution process.

### #TheFashionAct

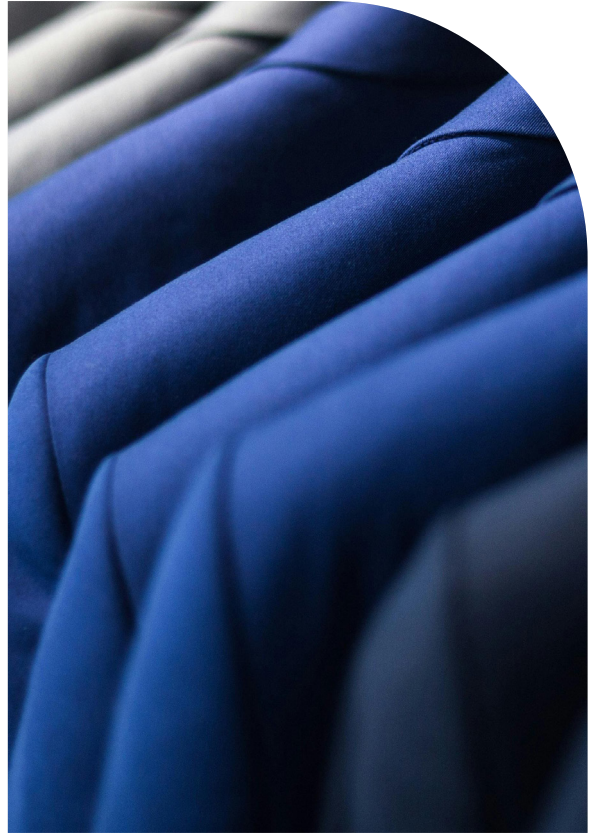
Supports “The Fashion Act,” which pushes for legislative efforts or policies aimed at improving sustainability and ethical practices within the fashion industry.

### #NoNewClothes

Remake’s campaign encourages consumers to refrain from buying new clothes, promoting a more sustainable approach by focusing on second-hand, upcycling, or other alternatives to reduce the environmental impact of fast fashion.

### #FifteenPercentPledge

Encourages retailers to commit 15% of their shelf space to products from Black-owned businesses, aiming to address economic disparities and promote diversity and inclusion within the retail industry.



## Citizen Education & Resources

“The accessibility of sustainable style to a wider audience requires a multifaceted approach that tackles affordability, awareness, and inclusivity within the fashion industry. First and foremost, making eco-friendly fashion financially viable involves encouraging mainstream brands to embrace sustainable practices and materials. Supporting and promoting budget-friendly options from sustainable fashion brands is essential, alongside advocating for subsidies or incentives to alleviate the costs associated with sustainable production.

“Educational initiatives play a crucial role in raising awareness and empowering consumers to make informed choices. This can be achieved through implementing sustainable fashion education programs in schools, offering online courses, and conducting workshops. Providing information on sustainable materials, ethical production practices, and the environmental impact of fashion encourages conscious decision-making.” - *Arieta Mujay*  
- *Cultural Curator, Expert in African Creative Economies and Industries, and Multi-Hyphenate Brand Marketer*



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## 21 How to Get Up To Speed

Here is a compilation of resources for you to peruse, view, and interact with, aimed at broadening your comprehension. These selections offer diverse insights into sustainable fashion, covering environmental impact, ethical considerations, and innovative solutions within the fashion industry.

## Documentaries

- The True Cost (2015)
- River Blue (2016)
- The Next Black (2014)
- Sustainable (2016)
- Slowing Down Fast Fashion (2016)
- Minimalism: A Documentary About the Important Things (2015)
- Sweatshop: Deadly Fashion (2014)
- Thread (2016)
- Unravel (2012)
- The Positive Chain of Change (2015)
- Invisible Beauty (2023)
- SLAY (2022)

## TV Shows

- Worn Stories (2021)
- Fashion's Dirty Secrets (BBC, 2018)
- The Wardrobe (2018)
- Follow the Food (2021)
- Patriot Act with Hasan Minhaj (Season 6, Episode 2 - "The Ugly Truth of Fast Fashion")
- Foreign Correspondent (Season 30, Episode 19 - "Dead White Man's Clothes")

## Films

- Poisoned (2022)
- Frontline Fashion (2016)
- Thread (2021)
- Unravel (2012)
- Handprint (2018)
- Cotton Road (2014)
- The Machinists (2020)
- The T-Shirt Economy (2017)





## Podcasts

- Conscious Chatter Kestrel Jenkins and Natalie Shehata: Conversations on sustainable fashion, ethics, and the intersection of style and activism.
- Wardrobe Crisis by Clare Press: Exploring the fashion industry's environmental and social impacts, featuring interviews with industry leaders and experts.
- Sustainababble by Dave Powell and Ollie Hayes: A humorous take on sustainability topics, including fashion, with a focus on breaking down complex issues.
- Sustainable(ish) by Jen Gale: A broader sustainability podcast covering various lifestyle aspects, including sustainable fashion.
- Fashion Revolution Podcast by Fashion Revolution: Exploring topics related to fashion, ethics, and sustainability, often featuring interviews with industry experts.
- Circular with Katie Treggiden by Katie Treggiden: Discussions on circular design, sustainable materials, and the circular economy in fashion.
- The Green Dreamer Podcast by Kamea Chayne: Holistic discussions on sustainability, including fashion, conscious living, and environmentalism.
- Wear, Tear & Care by Patsy Perry: Exploring sustainability in fashion through discussions on garment care, repair, and responsible consumer practices.
- Sustainably Influenced by Bianca Foley: Conversations about sustainable living and fashion, exploring how individuals and brands are making positive impacts.
- Good Influence by Gemma Styles: Exploring various aspects of ethical living, including sustainable fashion, with a focus on positive and impactful influences.
- All The Small Things by Venetia La Mana: Conversations with inspiring people, thought leaders, writers and activists, including discussions about social and climate justice.

- Preloved by Emily Stochl: Exploring the stories behind second-hand items, sustainable fashion, and the impact of preloved fashion on the environment and community.
- Conscious Style by Elizabeth Joy and Stella Hertantyo: Dive into conscious and sustainable fashion with Elizabeth Joy and Stella Hertantyo, exploring the intersection of style, ethics, and environmental responsibility.
- Ecochic Podcast by Laura Diaz: Laura Diaz delves into eco-friendly living, sustainable fashion, and ethical choices, offering insights and interviews with experts on the path to a more conscious lifestyle.

## Books

- Overdressed: The Shockingly High Cost of Cheap Fashion by Elizabeth L. Cline
- To Die For: Is Fashion Wearing Out the World? by Lucy Siegle
- Wardrobe Crisis: How We Went From Sunday Best to Fast Fashion by Clare Press
- Fashionopolis: The Price of Fast Fashion and the Future of Clothes by Dana Thomas
- Sustainable Fashion: Past, Present, and Future by Jennifer Farley Gordon and Colleen Hill
- Slow Fashion: Aesthetics Meets Ethics by Safia Minney
- Fashion and Sustainability: Design for Change by Kate Fletcher and Lynda Grose
- Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things by William McDonough and Michael Braungart
- The Sustainable Fashion Handbook by Sandy Black
- Craft of Use: Post-Growth Fashion by Kate Fletcher
- Fashioned from Nature by Edwina Ehrman
- Dress, Body, Culture by Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson
- The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy: An Economist Examines the Markets, Power, and Politics of World Trade by Pietra Rivoli

- Eco Fashion by Sass Brown
- Naked Fashion: The New Sustainable Fashion Revolution by Safia Minney
- Fashion Revolution: A Guide to Changing the Fashion Industry by Orsola de Castro and Sarah Ditty
- Designing with the Circular Economy: A Guide for Business and Government by Martin Charter
- The Handbook of Sustainable Fashion by Miguel Angel Gardetti and Ana Laura Torres
- Sustainable Fashion and Textiles: Design Journeys by Kate Fletcher
- Fashion, Sustainability, and the Anthropocene edited by Kate Fletcher and Mathilda Tham
- ReFashioned: Cutting-Edge Clothing from Upcycled Materials by Sass Brown
- The Green Edit: Travel by Manda and Ollie Segerstrom
- Sustainable Luxury and Social Entrepreneurship: Stories from the Pioneers by Miguel Angel Gardetti
- Fashion, Style, and Elegance: From Craft to Couture by Colin McDowell
- Fashion Made Fair: From Cradle to Cradle to Catwalk by Ellen Köhrer and Magdalena Schaffrin
- Ethical Fashion: A Global Perspective edited by Sandy Black
- Clothing Poverty: The Hidden World of Fast Fashion and Second-Hand Clothes by Andrew Brooks
- Sustainable Fashion: What's Next? A Conversation About Issues, Practices, and Possibilities by Janet Hethorn and Connie Ulasewicz
- Upcycling Textiles: Adding Value to Recycled Textiles by Antonella Bertagnin
- Wearable and Flexible Electronics for Smart Clothing by Gang Wang and Fei Tao
- The Dress Detective: A Practical Guide to Object-Based Research in Fashion by Ingrid Mida and Alexandra Kim
- Eco-Chic: The Fashion Paradox by Sandy Black
- Circular Fashion: A Handbook for Design and Marketing by Kate Fletcher and Lynda Grose
- Fashion Brands: Branding Style from Armani to Zara by Mark Tungate
- Sustainable Fashion: Understanding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Fashion Industry by Mairi Mackenzie
- Fashion and Sustainability: Reflections on Research and Practice edited by Kate Fletcher and Louise St. Pierre
- Fibershed: Growing a Movement of Farmers, Fashion Activists, and Makers for a New Textile Economy by Rebecca Burgess
- The Sustainable Fashion Handbook by Tamsin Blanchard
- Sustainable Apparel: Production, Processing, and Recycling edited by Richard Blackburn
- Fashion Design for Living by Alison Gwilt
- Sustainable Luxury and Craftsmanship by Miguel Angel Gardetti
- Fashioning Value: Undressing Ornament by Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas
- The Art of Sustainable Fashion: Slow Fashion by Anne Prah
- Sustainable Fashion and Textiles: Design Activism by Kate Fletcher
- Sustainable Fashion: New Approaches edited by Hilde Van den Bulck and Sarah Cooper
- Fashion, Ethics & Environment by Connie Ulasewicz
- Sustainable Fashion: What Does It Mean? by Kristine Harper
- Wearable Technology: Smart Apparel edited by Sundaresan Jayaraman
- Sustainable Fashion: A Handbook for Educators edited by Jennifer Lynne Bird and Ingrid Mida
- Eco-Friendly and Fair: Chic and Affordable Vegan & Ethical Fashion for Every Body by Angela Grinell
- To Dye For: How Toxic Fashion Is Making Us Sick—and How We Can Fight Back by Alden Wicker



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22 Let's Engage in a Fresh  
Sustainability Conversation

## Let's Engage in a Fresh Sustainability Conversation

Clothing has a tangible impact on people and the planet, it matters. Our clothes do not just exist for a single moment in time. Their life span stretches from the farm, field, forests, or factories to the hands that shape and create them, to the people who alter, tailor, embellish, and transform them, across to the people who buy, wear, love, re-wear, repurpose, donate, sell, or discard them, all the way to the people sorting through the landfill they occupy.

Sustainable fashion need not be a conversation full of self-righteous judgement and shaming. Instead, it can be one that acknowledges shortcomings in accessibility and transparency. It can be one that encourages, educates, and assists through practical advice and strategies. It can be one that invites participation, innovation, and input. It can be one that recognises the value of individual contributions alongside broad systemic and organisational changes. It can be one that celebrates the inherent creativity of an industry as it simultaneously pushes us to be accountable and socially responsible. There are ways to make better, fairer choices without having to compromise our style.

"Access to resources like the 'Sustainable Style Guide for Everyone' is crucial for a clear understanding of sustainable fashion. It opens up opportunities for more people to feel seen and reflected within and outside the industry, fostering a better and more inclusive environment for everyone involved."

- Andrew Morgan, Director,  
*The True Cost*







### Everyone has a role to play in driving this change:

- **Citizens:** Every individual can contribute by choosing to shop for and support sustainable design products, brands, and stores, thereby encouraging and promoting sustainability within the fashion industry.
- **Manufacturers:** Manufacturers can scrutinise their processes and implement sustainable changes.
- **Investors:** Investors can utilise their influence and financial resources to hold companies accountable and steer their business strategies in a sustainable direction.
- **Brands, designers, and influencers:** Those in the public eye can use their visibility to raise awareness about sustainability and demonstrate that sustainable design is not only responsible but also beautiful.
- **Legislators and politicians:** They can draft and endorse environmental policies that hold the fashion industry accountable.

Let's refresh our conversation about sustainable fashion! It's not about sacrificing style; it's about enhancing it. Sustainability is a canvas where we paint our identities, creativity, passions, and values. These discussions shouldn't be confined to those in the industry, or in the know—they belong in our family circles, with friends, and within our communities. That is why we wrote 'The Sustainable Style Guide For Everyone', an imperfect but honest offering to help you start your journey. When we unite in these conversations, our collective power sparks incredible shifts. Together, we're the driving force steering the fashion industry towards social responsibility and environmental consciousness. It's time to weave this narrative into our lives and make fashion a symbol of positive change.

The background is a gradient of teal and green, transitioning from a lighter shade at the top to a darker shade at the bottom. Overlaid on this gradient are several concentric, semi-transparent circles and arcs. In the center, there is a stylized eye-like shape formed by overlapping circles and arcs, creating a sense of depth and focus.

Appendix

## Endnotes

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