
SUSTAINING WHAT?

The essential question never asked by proponents of sustainable fashion is “sustainable what?” - what in fashion do we want to sustain? It is clear none of us wants the sweatshops, environmental disasters and collapsing factories. But what about celebrity culture? Adoration and elitism? Addiction to the cheap thrills of consumption? Subordination to aesthetic dictates? The continuous anxiety to the opinion of our peers? The gossiping and judgments? The bullying and exclusion?

Be careful of what you wish for, and remember; *someone's utopia is some-*

ones else's dystopia. The development of the “good” is never distributed in an equitable way. The path to utopia is not a win-win-game: someone wins and someone loses.

Sustainability is a similar double-edged sword: someone decides what is worth sustaining, and that defines how the design or policy plays out over time - who is counted and who is not. Some values are prioritized over others, and someone's future is taken for granted while someone else has to claim a future that is otherwise neglected and unrealized.

*Sustainable fashion is not only an oxymoron,
it is a toxic form of deception.*

We accept fashion as a whole and then just put some small band aids on the consequences we are continually reminded of, such as environmental pollution and sweatshops - little else seems to matter.

When addressing the issue of sustainable fashion we must thus point towards what should be favored over what: what is considered “good” in the realm of dress and what is unwanted parts or side-effects of the phenomenon. These side-effects we must mitigate. The problem though is that we seldom discuss what we desire in fashion, and thus what the side-effects are of those very desires. Do you desire the glamour? The vanity? The exclusion? The pride? The cheap thrill?

So how do we move forward? We must first see that sustainability is not only a matter of doing less harm.

We must pick our fights, and do so with both a sense of what desires we affirm, while simultaneously acknowledging the various conflicts of values these desires produce. We must do less harm, but also actively stop harm from being done elsewhere. We must see that fashion, per definition, is a conflict.

Fashion takes sides. And it usually takes the sides of the powerful, the rich, the beautiful. Thus, not only must a new type of fashion design somehow “do good.” It must affirm some desires while also stop harm from being done in the name of other desires. Both fashion and the notion of sustainability must be questioned on a deep level.

A deep fashion addresses the conflicts inherent in fashion. It does not brush over them and put band-aids on the infected wounds produced by inequality.

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A deep fashion must engage with holistic well-being, on environmental, social as well as mental levels. It must strive to disarm interpersonal and cultural conflicts. A deep fashion acknowledges the life and

contribution of all actors in the production chain of fashion; from the life energies, plants and animals, to the workers, interns, wearers, inheritors and forces of decomposition. Depth is a long embrace.
