

BY CÉCILE POIGNANT

MANIFESTO FOR A CLEAN FASHION

#Capsule #GreenWashing

Creating a sustainable fashion capsule is too easy. If the need for an ecological approach were taken seriously, brands would take action across their entire production chain. But that is more complicated because it demands a different level of commitment. Sustainable fashion capsules do more harm than good, because they feel like greenwashing: brands refuse to think deeply.

#ComplexThinking

For too long, we have denied the complexity of the world¹ and conveyed a message that is wildly simple and binary: "It's progress, it's technology. Progress will improve life for everyone." Everything is very black and white: it's either good or bad, clean or not clean. But reality is far more complex and nuanced. Ecology is a complex subject because, as soon as you start to think about it, you may find that your intuitive answer to a problem is not the right one. It's a complex structure that has to be taken apart gradually. But we're not used to thinking like that because we weren't brought up to think critically. We hear that the textile industry is the second most polluting industry in the world. We realize that this is not absolutely true: someone said it once, and then it was picked up by such and such a media or magazine and became a given fact for many. But all industries pollute. The problem lies in the fact that we want and produce things in colossal quantities.

¹ - Complex thought is a philosophical concept introduced by Edgar Morin.

#FastFashion #Saturation

Today, people no longer need to acquire more things, but they need more space in their heads and their lives. The success of Marie Kondo's book and her KonMari method for sorting and tidying up at home is a good example of this. We are feeling a sense of saturation. We have gone from buying clothing we need or really want to buying clothes because they get attention. And so we buy yet another useless T-shirt or pair of pants. We are trapped in the cycle of constantly updating our wardrobe, while we don't even wear 70% of what we own.

#FastFashion

Fast fashion crystallizes a web of problems: low-cost production by exploiting subcontractors; low quality fabrics, stitching and threads; all in the service of a business plan that rolls out a fashionable product designed to fall out of fashion in six months. Consequently, these products are not justifiable either socially, technically or ethically. Each garment comes with an extremely short expiration date, as if it were an ultra-fresh product. Clothes are not supposed to have an expiration date.

#Clothing #Style

We've forgotten about clothing and style. We're only interested in the kind of fashion that goes out of fashion. But a garment that can be kept for a long time can be accessorized, transformed, adapted and worn differently. We can give it a different style and extend its life span.

#Luxury #ItBag Ecology and sustainability are among the core values of luxury: products that are well-designed, made to last, relatively immune to trends and timeless. But luxury has begun to embrace the codes of fashion and trend cycles. It will need to refocus on its core values and stop, for example, offering the It Bag.

#Politics #Purpose Thinking about sustainability inevitably raises political questions: can capitalism continue to function in its present form? Should capitalism evolve? Patagonia is working on this by affirming its purpose: "business exists to save the planet" - not just to sell as many products as possible.

#Consistency #Aspiration We are entering a moment in which people want to realign their work, thoughts and convictions: they want consistency.

#Imagine #Paradigm #Change We're in a state of flux. It's complicated to move from one paradigm to another. It can't happen without causing some damage. We human beings have always been programmed to dislike change. As soon as a difference arises, our primitive brains takes note and we panic. We are not made to accept change. It causes us anxiety. They never tell us in school that we can win by changing.

#Hybridization #Biomimetics The future will be hybrid. We will need to invent new materials and find new solutions: upcycling, recycling and imagining new ways to create. The most interesting creations will come out of a hybridization between different skillsets. Many young graduates from design and applied art schools are forming collectives: expertise in design, science and communication are combining at the intersection of biology, philosophy, sociology and pure creativity. Everything happening with biomimetics is fascinating.

#Expertise #Linen #Tradition The past can inspire us. In France, there is a resurgence of traditional expertise that had disappeared, such as spinning linen. Technology can combine with these traditional skills to drive innovation.

#Complexity #Craft #Responsibility One key challenge is to embrace the complexity of the world and the complexity of one's craft as a designer. That means examining the entire production chain for each product. Designers have an important responsibility today. They have to reflect on the impact of the materials they use.

#Aesthetics #Consistency We no longer live in an era where we can do aesthetics for the sake of aesthetics. We need design that has meaning and consistency. It must be aligned with our priorities.

#Materials #Recycling The materials used in clothing today - when it isn't 100% polyester - comprise three or five materials at a time. And we don't know how to recycle these materials.

#Constraints #Creativity For creative people, constraints are a source of creativity. We must stop seeing constraints as castrating. Thinking of your job as a designer in these terms: "I draw and I want to see in 3D what I've drawn, and I don't care where the yarn comes from, how it was dyed, who wove it, who sewed it, who's going to wear it or how it's going to end up": that's no longer possible.

#Clothing #Depth Image is not enough: it's just surface. We need depth. We need to take a renewed interest in clothing and stop getting excited about fashion. Take an interest in beautiful clothing: the piece that suits you. Then you won't want to buy new pants every six months.

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#Politics #CreativeActs #Crafts Creative acts that are purely decorative are not interesting. But ones that are politically driven are interesting. Creative acts that are aligned with our priorities are interesting. Creative acts that are understood, experienced and transmitted are interesting. Why is there so much interest today in crafts and expertise? Because they are creative acts that are endowed with truth.

#Stylist Anyone who wants to work in fashion cannot claim to be a “stylist”. They need to wear other hats, too: a passion for the materials, a minimum understanding of biology, humanities, psychology and sociology. Knowing the history of fashion is not enough.

#FashionSchool Today, it is up to students to demand courses on these burning issues from their fashion school faculty and management. But they can still learn on their own, especially on the web.

#Consistency #GettingStarted For a fashion brand that wants to be sustainable, there is no single issue that should be the top priority. The brand must be consistent. Sustainability is a set of actions that must be carried out simultaneously, step by step.

#Future #CircularEconomy #Learning The circular economy is new. We have to be willing to move forward, try new things, make mistakes and correct our course. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation offers training in how to move from a linear economy to a circular economy.

#EcoDesign #MustDo #Learning Learning ecodesign: from the very beginning of the project, ask yourself a set of questions and find a set of answers. That doesn't mean everything will be perfect overnight.

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#CollectiveImagination #OverConsumption Conveying a different collective imagination: you can wear the same dress several times, the same coat three winters in a row; shopping and buying things you don't need with money you don't have is not a goal in itself.

#Degrowth #Consumption It's currently seen as a dirty word, but it's going to happen: the moment when we will have to move towards degrowth, which means consuming less.

#FastFashion #Shame In Scandinavian countries, after the shame attached to flying, brands like H&M are now dreading the shame that will be attached to buying their fast fashion products.

#Transformation #Optimism Spark interest in change and transformation by making them our allies. Sustainability in fashion is an important political issue, not a dirty word. Political action means commitment. We live in a time of exciting transformations that can foster innovation.

#FrugalInnovation We can find the key in the concept of “frugal innovation” theorized by Navi Rajavi: doing more with less. Innovation does not necessarily mean using more technologies and materials. Innovation can also involve an economy of means. It's a bit like the philosophy behind permaculture: on a limited area, by promoting cohabitation and hybridization between each element's ecosystem, and by accepting the complexity of fertile interactions, we can achieve better results.