

A collection OF GOOD INTENTIONS

WHILE CLOTHING MANUFACTURING HAS LONG BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH FAST FASHION, MANY OF MADRID'S DESIGNERS AND ARTISANS ARE CRAFTING COLLECTIONS THAT GIVE MOTHER NATURE HER DUE.

By Guillaume Jan Photos Stéphane Remail

IT'S A RED AND GREEN SHOP A STONE'S THROW FROM THE PLAZA DE ESPAÑA.

Amidst pretty flower bouquets, the shop window displays colourful clothes, designer dresses, bags and jewellery. What do they have in common? They all meet the standards defining sustainable fashion. "They're made from environmentally friendly materials, most are manufactured locally, limiting consumption of natural resources, minimising their impact on the environment and respecting the well-being of human life," says Paloma García López. This former journalist opened her outlet in December 2014 under the name The Circular Project **30**, inspired by the circular economy's principles of transparency, ethics and sustainability. In 2016, this youthful fifty-something woman decided to broaden her project's scope and founded the Asociación Moda Sostenible ["sustainable fashion association" – Ed.] to federate initiatives in this realm: "There's an increasing number of individual projects, but most are relatively unknown. My goal is to give them greater exposure." Apart from her shop, Paloma García López seizes every opportunity to stress that there are alternatives to the cheap garments of fast fashion from Bangladesh or Cambodia, for example, quickly sold and quickly tossed out. She holds fashion shows in the streets of Madrid, teaches classes and gives presentations. Last April, she went to the European Parliament in Brussels to defend a bill on protecting textile-industry workers. ●●●



MORA EFRON, RECYCLED JEWELLERY

Argentina native Mora Efron settled in Spain in 2001. This trained jeweller then hung out her shingle in 2012, having decided to work only with recycled materials.

"Jewellery is an opaque, polluting industry and it was hard for me to justify being part of that world. But now, I buy from local suppliers, I try to use only recycled metals and everything I make is hand-crafted. Even my tools were made by me. I sell mainly at fairs, but a few shops in Madrid sell my pieces, and I also sell some of my pieces online. I'm not rich, but I earn enough to get by."

SLOGAN
Planet A is all
we have.
A fitting session
at Ecoalf.





SENSE NU: 100% LOCAL

The voluble Oriol García listens to classical music as he works in the studio in his apartment near La Puerta del Sol. This former arts student is always on the lookout for new ideas to make his clothes more affordable and sustainable. “I introduced my first clothing label through the regular channels, without giving it too much thought. The manufacturing was in India, with poor working

conditions. In 2012, I did some research to understand how to produce sustainably. I wanted my designs to be 100% local and eco-friendly. Now, with Sense Nu 3, I work with two small workshops in Madrid. My production is smaller, but I listen to my customers, and I’ll even patch pants I’ve sold them when they start to wear out. That keeps them coming back.”

DLANA*: GREEN WOOL

In 2014, Esther Chamorro Fernández and Javier Benito Pascual opened dLana 3 in San Lorenzo, north of Madrid. Their shop sells balls of wool, throws and sweaters. “We eat organic and we’re concerned about the state of the planet, so naturally wanted to start a project that was consistent with our convictions. We were looking for a local raw material that had positive impact of some kind and we found this artisanal wool from Andalusia. The breeders use the old-fashioned techniques, shearing the sheep with scissors, and the wool is washed without chemicals. We only have one brick-and-mortar store, but with some help from the Internet, we sell our sweaters in Japan.”*



“We feel a great desire to change things in Spain.”

DIFFERENT BY DESIGN

In the mid-1980s, Spain entered the European Union and worked doubly hard to kick-start its economy. Several ready-to-wear brands grew to become giants in the textile industry. The world was soon crawling with newly opened stores selling budget clothing, with new collections replacing the last in a ceaseless, dizzying whirl. The pace of fashion was accelerating. “These companies quickly bloated the market, making fashion one of the planet’s most highly polluting sectors,” says Paloma. “But they can’t keep producing in such a destructive way. Especially since we’re sensing a sort of consumer weariness. Spaniards might just be ready for slow fashion.” In 2012, Javier Goyeneche founded the Ecoalf label 3, which sells clothing, footwear and bags made from 100%-recycled materials (plastic bottles, tires, industrial refuse, etc.), designed with style and elegance: “Environmentalism is taking on greater importance in our lives,” explains the young entrepreneur. “The new generations are embracing products that reflect greater respect for people and the planet.”

On this spring morning, Gema Gómez is trailed by a throng of journalists at the Museo del Traje 3, the clothing museum. The lively fiftyish woman chose this venue for the sixth annual Slow Fashion Next festival, showcasing the lat-



OFICIO STUDIO, ARTISANAL LEATHER

When they met in 2009, David Iglesias had just declared bankruptcy for his leather bags factory – which was based on the fast-fashion model (large quantities, cut-rate materials, new collections every six months) – and Melina Carranza wanted to learn how to work with this raw material. In 2012, they founded Oficio Studio in their apartment

in downtown Madrid. “We decided to stick with local, hand-crafted products of very good quality, but sold at affordable prices. It’s not 100% eco-friendly, because leather involves killing an animal, even though the cows are killed for their meat, and we then buy their hides from the slaughterhouses. But we don’t use chemicals

or chrome, the leather is naturally processed. We hadn’t heard about the concept of slow fashion before we started out. We experimented with different methodologies and this one proved to be the one that worked best. What we want more than anything is to be consistent – in our products and with our values.”

est innovations in sustainable fashion. “People need to know that there’s an alternative to fast fashion,” she asserts. But that is not a simple task. “We’re running into a sort of glass ceiling. Fast-fashion companies have trained customers to think that a t-shirt shouldn’t cost more than five euros. But that’s a warped view of reality. If the t-shirt is sold so cheaply, that means someone at a factory in India or Bangladesh is paying the price for that cheapness. At the Slow Fashion Next festival, guest designers exhibit items made from reused, recycled or upcycled materials. And the good news is that we are seeing ever-increasing quantities.” The former stylist experienced her ecological wakeup call in the 2000s while working for a ready-to-wear company. “I’ve seen the terrible working conditions at the factories, the child labour, the pollution of the rivers and the hypocrisy of the big

brands that feign ignorance and look the other way. I decided that I didn’t want to be part of the problem, but part of the solution.” She resigned from her job and got in touch with Greenpeace. In 2011, this pioneer of sustainable fashion in Spain introduced the first Slow Fashion Next, and the event has grown steadily over the past six years. She leaves us on an optimistic note: “Here in Spain, we feel a great desire to change things, even if consumers haven’t yet adopted an eco-friendly culture the way they have in Northern Europe. We’re motivated. And, most importantly, the movement is becoming firmly established on solid foundations. More and more people are eating organic, care about the fate of the planet and are aware of how their purchases impact the world.” ■

> You’ll find all the locations on our map in the back of the magazine.