

Naked Fashion

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Foreword

Received wisdom is often quite dim. As an example, we are told constantly that today's mainstream fashion industry is all we might desire and all we should expect. It isn't. As made clear through some of the stirring eye-witness accounts of life as a garment worker on the Global Assembly Line in these pages – such as Liz Jones' account of a visit to Dhaka – there are some startling holes in the claims of the world's biggest fashion brands that they offer unparalleled opportunity for both consumers and developing world workers.

The strength of this book is that every page turns the conventional view of the fashion landscape upside down, gives it a good shake and (charmingly) disposes of the offending idea in the nearest trash can. Instead, we are offered just about the most inspiring alternative models (of business, shopping, working – and even actual alternative models in the form of Summer Rayne Oakes) imaginable. And this is genuinely liberating.

We should hardly be surprised because People Tree, the brand created by Safia Minney, has no truck with the pervading fashion business model which involves inadvertently or purposely chewing up environmental resources and capitalizing on the world's most vulnerable and dispensable workers. And People Tree and Safia Minney bring you this book. Their approach is unashamedly producer-centric and with a long-term view of the planet and its citizens. All of which means that when you embrace this sort of fashion and creativity you do more than design, write about or buy a vest-top or pair of jeans. You support communities, protect indigenous textile weavers and designers, help to realize Millennium Development Goals such as getting girls into education and bolster ecological resilience. As the actor Emma Watson explains, Fair Trade fashion brings genuine and measurable results to some of the world's most vulnerable communities.

Not surprisingly, up-and-coming designers, writers, commentators, stylists, textile producers and graphic designers, illustrators, artists – you name it! – are all attracted. They want their professional lives to have resonance and purpose. They recognise that fashion is an important tool and they see the examples of design companies such as Terra Plana or From Somewhere who do things differently. As people working to raise the profile of fashion that matches ethics to aesthetics, we meet these potential change-makers all the time. Sometimes we're inundated with questions! Now we can gently usher them towards *Naked Fashion* as an indispensable primer.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Fashion Revolution is now under way!

Livia Firth
Lucy Siegle
London, July 2011.

NAKED FASHION

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Introduction

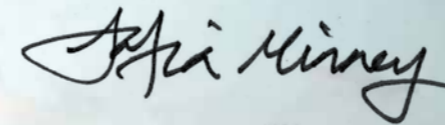
Creativity, compassion and consumption have to learn to go hand in hand. At 18 years old I worked in the advertising industry. I'd see talented creatives at the top of their class scoop up creative awards in the finest London hotels and at Cannes. Bathed in golden light, champagne flowing, surrounded by beautiful people – but then we'd be out at lunch and they'd confide about how uncomfortable it was to create advertising for products that nobody needed, that polluted the planet. They'd say, what about spending our energy-raising awareness and finding solutions to the real issues of human rights, poverty and environmental destruction? What about promoting social inclusion, more responsible consumption and more sustainable lifestyles? What if design, creativity and media could be used to change the world?

For many people at that rat race / 'what's the point of it all?' moment in their career, travel or time alone in nature has triggered a crucial switch away from our habitually amused-to-death lives. Get some fresh air. See parts of the world that function very well without our level of consumerism. See how conventional economics and consumerism are stripping land and natural resources away from farmers and fisherfolk and concentrating it all into the hands of a few business owners, investors and their army – the advertisers, creatives and marketers who make consumption so seductive, even at the cost of our planet and our sanity.

Exactly what happened in the 1950s in the West is happening in India today, as women in the villages are seduced by fashion and beauty billboards to buy one-rupee sachets of shampoo.

This book looks at how fashion, an industry and a tool for popular culture, is changing. From rural villages in Bangladesh to 'upcycling' ateliers in London and Melbourne and boutiques in New York, Tokyo and Paris, sustainable fashion pioneers, creatives and consumers are demanding a fashion industry free of worker exploitation. They are talking about a new industry that sustains this planet, that looks at real role-models and does not exploit our insecurities through 'body fascism'.

The world is seduced by the imagery of the global fashion brands. We hope *Naked Fashion* will inspire you to be part of the change we need to be.



Safia Minney

London and Tokyo, July 2011

