

Beyond Green 2010: The System of Fashion

Location: World Fashion Centre Amsterdam, 9 November 2010, 10.30 AMF -4.30 PM

On November 9th, a bit after 11:00, Liesbeth in 't Hout opened the fourth edition of Beyond Green: The System of Fashion. She welcomed hundreds of students and other visitors who came to the World Fashion Centre in Amsterdam, and expressed the wish that sustainability would become a second nature for students. This edition of Beyond Green showed some practical, promising developments, and stressed the need for a change in the thinking pattern of designers: from linear to circular.

The first speaker to present a promising development was James Veenhoff, who also took over the moderator-job this year from David Shah. Result: a little less energetic and jumpy, but definitely as catchy as Mr Shah, and (with all respect to Mr Shah's style) a more daring outfit: a suit made out of denim, James' expertise. James did a warming up with some questions about sustainability, like: 'Who thinks sustainability is interesting?' This question didn't have a lot of impact on the students, but then he started his speech about a new denim project. That did raise a few hundred eyebrows: House of Denim – jeans made in Almere???

House of Denim – James Veenhoff

“Why not make jeans in Holland?”

James Veenhoff started talking about denim production and some of the bad sides of it: the use of water and chemicals. Being active in the fashion world (he was one of the founders of the AIFW), he started wondering why a denim-loving country such as The Netherlands had never had a denim production history. Dutch people know how to design denims and how to select the best producers, but hardly anyone knows how to weave, dye and make a good pair of jeans. The environmental part of denim production and the Dutch love for denim made him realize: “Clearly, something has to change, so, why not start this in Amsterdam?”

Together with other denim experts he started a platform for sustainable denim development and production in the Netherlands: House of Denim. They started connecting environmental impact of denim and the possibilities of local production. After a conversation with the gemeente Almere they came up with a daring and revolutionary idea: a denim weaving industry in Almere. This speeded up things at the House of Denim and they based the project on four pillars: a jeans school, a denim laboratory, an indigo archive/denim museum and a denim network for people in the denim industry. At the moment the team is busy developing a ten weeks' course for students who want to learn how to make denim. This course will kick off in the beginning of 2011, at ROC in Amsterdam-Zeeburg. Denim experts from Pakistan and from some big denim companies will be part of the educational team. A revolutionary idea and we can't wait to have the first jeans 'Made in Holland' in our wardrobes! Stay updated by following the blog at <http://houseofdenimnl.blogspot.com/>

Free Fashion Challenge

After James' story, a short film from the Free Fashion Challenge was shown and kicked off with some questions: How many of the clothes in your wardrobe do you wear on a regular basis? Do you have clothes that you've never even worn? Apparently 20% of the clothes in our closets, we wear 80% of the time, stated the film. The Free Fashion Challenge means 365 days without buying clothes, shoes, accessories, bags. The challenge started on November 9th with a team of about 25 fashion loving volunteers. Nannet van der Kleijn (creative director of AMFI) is one of the volunteers. The idea behind the challenge is to draw attention for the fact that fashion is losing its meaning as well made, quality products and that consumers hardly know the real price of clothes anymore. Free Fashion Challenge wants 'fashion to be quality again'. When we talked to Frank Jurgen Wijlens (AMFI tutor and one of the initiators) he stressed the fact that FFC does not want to stop people from buying cheap clothes, but that it wants people to realize that a T-shirt that costs

€5,- is pretty far from reality and that its production has its side-effects. On the site www.freefashionchallenge.com you can follow the lives of the fashion lovers. Let's witness how they survive events like sale, sample sales, the holiday season and new trends without buying a-n-y-t-h-i-n-g. Also interesting for people on a student's budget: how much money will they save after a year without buying any fashion...?

Fashion Futures 2025 – Vicky Murray

“The lack of transparency is a big problem.”

We can only guess how the wardrobes of these fashion lovers will change in the coming year. Predicting what the impact on the environment will be, is probably even more interesting. Predictions are part of Vicky Murray's job. She is advisor at the UK based Forum for the Future www.forumforthefuture.org and talked about the project Fashion Futures 2025. This project focuses on a sustainable fashion industry and helps organisations to take action, based on future scenario's, because 'knowing the future' helps making better decisions in the present. Levi's for instance works with Forum for the Future. By anticipating on certain environmental and social developments, companies could minimize the impact they have on the environment. Vicky showed four fashion related scenario's of the future: Slow is beautiful, Community Couture, Techno-Chic and Patchwork Planet. In collaboration with London College of Fashion, Forum for the Future developed a case study with students. Educational material can be requested by sending an email to Forum for the Future. On the website www.forumforthefuture.org/projects/fashion-futures you can read more about the project and the four future scenarios

Station Blue for an inspiring lunch

In the lunch break the Station Blue Gallery around the food area was pretty crowded. Annouk Post and 2nd year AMFI-students organized an exhibition about sustainable jeans and had invited some very interesting people and their projects. Some of the exhibitors: Kentroy Yearwood/Intoxica, Glue Jeans, Ornamism, Adriana Galijasevic/Denim Institute, Schone Kleren Campagne, Beauty and the Geek and many more. Visitors who craved more than coffee and a sandwich, could satisfy their appetite with new or used clothes from fashion shop Charlie + Mary and the Swap Store. For an overview of all participants, check Station Blue's blog. [Http://stationblue.wordpress.com](http://stationblue.wordpress.com)

Intoxica Jeans – Kentroy Yearwood

“Men of 50+ years old produce our knitwear.”

Before the after lunch dip kicked in, Kentroy Yearwood from Intoxica Jeans got everyone's attention (www.intoxica-jeans.com). After a few difficult years Intoxica is back with a great collection (which was shown on the screens) and new, innovative plans for local jeans production. Intoxica uses a lot of recycled materials and environmentally friendly dyeing and washing methods. Kentroy started his presentation by talking about the unconventional way he started his journey for better, cleaner jeans. He went backpacking through Japan (on the hunt for good suppliers and producers) and contacted recycling and cleaning companies for materials and machines. Buying his materials from waste companies is a sustainable, original and pretty cheap way of sourcing. For a kilo of great materials Kentroy only spends a few euro's. He found a laundry service that was willing to let him use their machines for washing. Besides that, he uses high pressure water systems and recycled water (with the help of a cleaning company) to 'stonewash' his jeans, without any use of chemicals. Soda (biodegradable) is being used to bleach denims. Kentroy's story shows that with a lot of willpower, endurance and creative thinking (*Out of the box!* Remember David Shah's presentation last year?) any designer can save time, money and the environment, and still make beautiful, original products.

Ljiljana Rodic

“Create the future you would like to live in.”

After a short film from Join the Pipe (www.jointhepipe.org), the organisation that stimulates building water pumps for people without water, tutor and researcher Ljiljana Rodic came on stage. She started her talk with images of ants and the question 'Are we with too many?' Ms. Rodic compared the way we organize and use our habitats with the way ants do. Ants are far more efficient in using their resources and do not damage the environment, but nourish it instead. She explained the linear system we use in our thinking patterns and the fragment thinking we use when it comes to health risks. Linear thinking runs through the stages: raw material > product > waste. Fragment thinking means taking action on dangerous materials once the damage has been done, such as the case with the development of DDT, nano-fibers and the use of heavy metals. Ljiljana Rodic then presented the circular thinking method of Cradle to cradle. Designing in a circular way, means asking yourself a few questions before starting the design process: what is the intention behind the design, what is the quality and what is the value of it? Cradle to cradle is about designing better things and not 'less bad things', because those are still bad and harmful in the end. At the end of her presentation Ljiljana Rodic gave the audience some stimulating examples of how to think about products in a another way (*out of the box*, here we are again!). Do people really want to own a roof, or do they want protection-against-the weather insurance? Do people want to own a sheet of glass for a window, or do they want see-through-insurance? Do people want to own a washing machine, or do they just want to have clean laundry? Interesting questions, with pretty easy answers....

Van Gansewinkel – Tom Duhoux

“Producer are not responsible, so they don't really care.”

The last part of the lifecycle of a conventionally designed product is waste. Waste was also the subject of the final presentation. Tom Duhoux, marketing manager and project manager Cradle to cradle at Van Gansewinkel, represented this topic. James Veenhoff announced Mr Duhoux earlier on as 'the sexy Belgian guest' and Mr Duhoux himself mentioned 'waste is sexy'. Sexy or not, how Van Gansewinkel is trying to change recycling- and waste management is pretty impressive. After some figures about waste and recycling in general (check them online at the Van Gansewinkel website www.vangansewinkelgroep.com), Tom Duhoux explained why damaging the environment is inevitable if we keep on making bad and 'less bad' products. Recycling is one way to use old materials, but a lot of materials can never be recycled effectively. By showing the process of recycling clothes, it became clear that it is difficult to recycle clothes, since they are made of different, mixed materials and qualities. Making 100% recyclable products starts on the design table. Tom stated that the first step in designing should be: the end of life question. Designers decide what loop (bio or techno) they choose for a product and the waste management company thinks about how to connect the end-of-life of one product to the birth of another product. Of course a clean production process and innovative take-back systems are key to this circular way of designing. Van Gansewinkel is working hard on designing logistic systems for clean, 'cradle to cradle' recycling. You can check some cases on here www.vangansewinkelgroep.com/nl/company/CtoC-praktijkvoorbeelden.aspx

What do you really want?

James Veenhoff ended the day with a short summary of the discussed topics and a big thanks to all the speakers and other parties. Walking towards the exit, we overheard students discussing their new boots, opening hours of H&M and what they had bought and swapped at the Station Blue 'supermarket'. We'd like to ask all students: do you really want to OWN these clothes and boots, or do you just want to have 'image insurance' and 'protection-against-the-cold insurance'...? See you next year!

Text by Miranda Hoogervorst

