



Resource Review

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Name of reviewed item:	Sustainable Fashion & Textiles: Design Journeys
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Review:

Sustainable Fashion & Textiles: Design Journeys is set to be a far-reaching book that will be invaluable not only to its target audience of those interested in fashion and textiles but also to art and design in general.

Lecturers of both practical and theoretical studies at graduate, postgraduate and research levels wishing to 'be ahead of the game' will count on this book to give insight into debates of a moral, social, ethical and political nature. This book provides concrete and backed-up evidence of sustainable issues in action – ideal source material for lectures, seminars, discussions and tutorials.

More and more students are working with such issues in their practical studio-based work and will benefit from an informed approach to choice of materials and techniques. In addition, sustainability is significantly increasing as a subject for the essays, critical research papers and dissertations required on most HE courses. Investigation into the world of materials will necessitate the topic of sustainability to emerge even if it is not the main focus of an in-depth thesis.

Academics often struggle to get enough information on this subject and, as we know relying on the Internet is not always entirely appropriate. This book solves that dilemma in one fell swoop. Lecturers and students alike will gravitate towards this source where its author Kate Fletcher brings together information from conference papers, journals, technical reports, etc, in an accessible and lively manner.

Related environmental concerns and important issues that subsequently arise are also put forward, for example by buying local we keep or even increase cultural

diversity. The notes arranged according to each chapter include websites to allow the reader to follow up a particular aspect in more detail should they wish.

Each chapter takes the reader on a journey – eight in all and we follow the author's train of thought and reasoning as we travel deeper into the investigation. The book is easy to access with a logical development and two sections; namely sustainable fashion and textile products and systems. 'Products' with its four chapters looks in detail at textile fibres, both natural and manufactured. Alternatives to our dependency on oil, an ever-topical subject are discussed with examples given of eco-friendly alternatives made from corn starch, bamboo and soya bean fibre. The case for synthetics being 'bad' and naturals 'good' is debated along with the inevitable 'swings and roundabouts' scenario that develops. Good advice is given with a no mess attitude and suggestions made as to which types are the best to use. The sourcing of raw materials and the impact this has is explained along with the principles of Fair Trade. Textile manufacture is covered - this does not blind us with science but looks at the various processing methods used in a straightforward way. How the resulting textiles are used (laundering, etc) is discussed along with the question as to what happens to them at the end of their life, where are they taken (recycling?) and methods of disposal (landfill or returned to the manufacturer?) The second section, 'Systems' also has four chapters that consider different design approaches. Our ethical obligation as human beings on this planet is aired and the author looks at patterns of consumer behaviour and asks why we consume fashion so voraciously. The cases for buying quality as opposed to quantity and shifting from global to local to reduce our carbon footprint are mooted as well as ideas of 'slow' fashion and ways the user can become involved in the actual product - participatory, 'do-it-yourself' design. The book would benefit from more of a conclusion, as it does tend to leave the reader up in the air - a look to the future might be appropriate?

The book is generally well-presented and scientific data communicated easily with clear bar charts, tables and diagrams. Seemingly dry information like statistics is delivered in an interesting way with examples given of the work of both big companies and small operations from names such as Levi Strauss and Muji to Annie Sherburne and her range of Eco-Annie yarns (fifty per cent recycled London textiles and fifty per cent pure new wool).

The idea of sustainable fashion and textiles could bring to mind images of recycled stuff where aesthetic notions are possibly less considered. Instead, Kate Fletcher offers the reader beautiful garments and fabrics that seduce. She demonstrates that working in the area of sustainability does not mean a compromise on looking good - you only have to look at the work of Dosa, EDUN and Becky Earley to see this. Images throughout the book are good although some of the full pages have lost their sharpness of detail and would have been better smaller.

Available in both paperback and hardback, this is an excellent reference book that will be turned to time and time again. Lecturers can take heart that the contemporary issues debated in this book will influence the next generation of practitioners and theorists coming out of the world's art and design educational establishments. Students have always been (and are increasingly so) aware of playing an active role in enabling social, moral, ethical and political ideals. As such, this is a much-needed book on a subject whose interest base it is anticipated will only grow and grow.