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APRIL 2019

Bermuda

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Fashion

CONSCIENCE

New This Season: Sustainability and Social Purpose

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Situated in the middle of the Atlantic, the island of Bermuda feels the effects of global warming and other changes in the environment keenly and as such its residents are particularly aware of the importance of conserving and protecting biodiversity and the marine environment.

But on an island where there is little to no manufacturing and much of what is consumed must be imported, the question of how best to balance the impact this inevitably has on the environment must be addressed. Having long been touted as one of the more environmentally harmful and inequitable industries, it appears that sustainability and the world of fashion have finally decided to coexist. Brands have woken up to the fact that making a difference and giving back socially can actually be good for business, but it is a complex issue that involves a commitment to better pay, better working conditions and better environmental practices.

The trend for sustainability and social purpose is being embraced by smaller, more agile labels. In Bermuda, brands like *Apolis* (featured top left) and *Indigo Song* (featured bottom left) are committed to reasonable and responsible use of resources. Apolis use a business model that bridges commerce and economic development as their bags are made in partnership with manufacturers in emerging market countries. The designers of Indigo Song, Bermudian sisters Amanda Temple and Sacha Blackburne, are passionate about creating products that are not only beautiful to look at and well-made, but also sustainable, fair trade and less polluting. They use digital printing methods with biodegradable, non-toxic, plant-based inks and recycled brass pendants in their designs.

Science is also being called into the fight against the polluting effects of the fashion industry and several research and development programmes such as the Bermuda Institute of Ocean Science and the Ocean Cleanup programme which targets the removal of microplastic pollution use Bermuda as their base. Many design houses are eschewing the use of leather and fabrics that are difficult or environmentally harmful to manufacture such as PVC and virgin petrochemical fibres like polyester, nylon, and acrylic are also being phased out. Instead companies are introducing organic cotton, recycled polyester and turning to new and innovative methods to create fabrics from reprocessed materials like the aforementioned plastic waste that has been extracted from the oceans.

Other sustainable practices include methods to target the linear nature of the business. When an item is no longer wanted, steps should be taken not just to dispose of it, but to find a way to refurbish and recycle it. One popular method in Bermuda is the donation of secondhand clothing to charities such as the Bermuda Red Cross or the Mid-Atlantic Wellness Institute's Barn for resale, which ensures the reuse benefits the wider local community.

In Bermuda we understand the issue and impact the environment has on the well-being and welfare of the people who live here, and as such we are finely-tuned to, and passionate about, taking care of the resources we have. Brands that make the pledge to be sustainable should be commended, and by engaging the twin pillars of sustainability and social purpose, we can ensure the products we buy have a positive impact on people and the planet.

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