

Artist of the Month: Hyunsoo Alice Kim

Change Your Fashion and Care What You Wear

With the upcoming Fashion Week in France, where does the fashion industry stand on sustainable practices?

It wasn't long ago when activists from Extinction Rebellion (XR) invaded fashion shows by high-end fashion houses in Paris, such as Dior and LVMH. In Spring 2021, a protester held up a hand-written sign on yellow fabric on a catwalk, "we are all fashion victims".

The protester later interviewed with the media, claimed that "WE ARE ALL VICTIMS OF THE FASHION SYSTEM. While the world is suffering from pandemic and climate change, Dior persists in fueling this culture of excess and obsolescence, that is inflicting environmental and social damage to the planet, people and animals (Bauck, 2020)."

In Spring 2022, at the Louis Vuitton show during Paris Fashion Week, another activist, again from XR, held up a sign that read, "Overconsumption=extinction", demonstrating the view that sustainable fashion solutions are still not good enough. There are still fashion companies destroying the Amazon rainforest to build new leather tanneries, and polluting the one water resource of the town with toxic chemicals.

The fashion industry is estimated to be the fifth most polluting industry in the world, and excessive consumption only exacerbates this problem. Between 2000 and 2015, apparel sales doubled from 50 billion to 100 billion. As a result, the average number of times clothes are worn has been significantly reduced, creating a huge amount of textile waste. Landfills burn the equivalent of one truckload of clothing every second. Less than 1% of waste fibers are recycled and reused. Another side effect of fast fashion is the increase of chemical and plastic pollution.

Between 2012 and 2014 alone, global manufacturers produced nearly 1.8 billion square meters of lightweight leather for the fashion industry. Most of these premium leathers are made in small factories in developing countries, where the cost of labor is low, and workplace health and standards are often poor.



Marci Zaroff, founder of America's first organically certified textile mill, explains: "It's not that different from the 'Farm to Table Movement' campaign, which means people wonder where does the food I eat come from? How is the material for my clothes grown? How is it produced?"

The use of substances of concern in textile production has significant impacts not only on the surrounding environment, on the health of farmers and factory workers, but also on the consumers who are wearing it.

Substitute synthetic leathers, such as polyurethane and polyvinyl chloride (artificial leather) are available in the market, however they are also both toxic in their own way.

This exploitative and oppressive fashion system will no longer have a place to stand in New York fashion week. **The New York state legislature introduced the Fashion Sustainability and Social Accountability Act on Jan 7th, 2022.**

The law will require global fashion companies to map out a minimum of 50 % of their supply chain, publicly disclose the social and environmental impacts, including fair wages, greenhouse gas emission, and water waste management.

Leading designers and textile scientists are also approaching the fashion industry's problem from other perspectives: creating fibers that are completely different from the traditional fiber or how traditional fibers are produced.

Among the leading group, Kim's Sustainable Leather Collection tackles current issues of traditional leather production through:

- 1) cost-efficient & time-saving digital technology,
- 2) waste-free manufacturing process,
- 3) chemical-free adhesive processes, and
- 4) surveys on consumer demands.

