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EXCLUSIVE

OLGA
OSPINA

*Interviewed for the first time.
831 Sits down with Olga Ospina.*

ECO-FRIENDLY, GREEN FASHION.

Can we really be green and fashionable?

BY : TAMMY CHRISTIANSEN

ignorance is bliss, but now that I have become aware of what Eco-friendly fashion is, I feel obligated to take personal action. So, Fashion Divas beware: reading further may result in the same for you!

First and foremost for the environmentally challenged, I will define what "Green" and "Eco-Friendly" are. When a product claims to be just that (though there are no federal standards) it is either environmentally conserving or comes from sustainable business practices. This means that these businesses could: use renewable or recycled materials; minimize or eliminate harmful chemicals from the production process; test humanely; and respect worker rights during production. Most of this comes down to not contributing to landfills, global warming, soil contamination, or depletion of natural resources. As a result, these businesses use different fabrics, different dyes, different packaging, and so on.

So what has fashion come up with to abide by these guidelines? First, companies have to use different methods to produce goods comparable to or better than non-"green" ones. Using natural fibers without the use of pesticides is one option. Examples of these are cotton, bamboo, and hemp. Did you know that it usually takes five ounces of pesticides to make a cotton T-shirt? That is equal to one overflowing glass of wine! The fact that hemp is a weed means it doesn't need pesticides so that's why it is used most often. Hemp can also produce three times more fiber per acre than cotton can. Unfortunately, the United States does not allow hemp growth domestically. There are also fabrics made from recycled plastics to produce nylon, fleece, and acrylics. Eco-spun is a fabric that uses 3 billion plastic bottles a year, which otherwise would be in our landfills. Soybean by-products make an amazing, soft, fabric too, comparable, in fact, to the finest cottons.

So now that we know what Eco-friendly fashion is, does that mean we have to sacrifice our trendy style? Fortunately the answer is NO. Many up and coming contemporary designers have been eco-friendly from the start and are very trendy. Many high-end brands and stores are jumping on the bandwagon too. Barney's was the first department store to have a Green holiday campaign in 2007. Soon after, Saks Fifth Avenue added the Greenhouse category to their website, with all Eco-Friendly garments listed together. Other designers, such as Seven for All Mankind, C&C, Banana Republic, Marc Jacobs, Urban Outfitters, Juicy Couture and Theory have come out with their own Eco-Friendly items as well.

I've always wanted to consider myself one step ahead of the trends when studying fashion; I was looking for all the newest silhouettes and colors for Fall and didn't realize that the newest trend was right under my nose. Even I, a self proclaimed fashionista, can be trendy and environmentally aware at the same time. Though I am not ready to go "vegan-Eco-friendly" (no use of animal by-products) I am ready to take a conscious step. While normally my shopping guilt is over spending too much money on fashion, I now have the Eco-friendly awareness which will make me consider my eco-footprint, and not just my wallet, when shopping.



Malcom Fontier Director Bag

The studio, led by Malcolm Fontier, has redefined the boundaries of style by creating a line of distinctive and practical unisex accessories.

Accessorize responsibly; style freely. All of their products are 100% vegetarian, and they don't settle for anything less than the best quality in finishes and materials. It wasn't easy to find the materials that met their quality standards, without compromising conscience, but the result is style that will last, and you can be proud to carry.

When I'd thought of "Green" fashion I immediately envisioned my college peers in Chico. I imagined a girl with dreadlocks, Birkenstocks, a Phish tie-dyed t-shirt and hemp jewelry. This vision made me turn a blind eye to even considering shopping eco-friendly (nothing wrong with that girl but definitely not my style). Finally, my curiosity about all the hype over "green" fashion made me drop by a new local Eco-Friendly boutique to see what this fad was. To my surprise, the store was fresh and modern with clothing that could have had designer labels that I would recognize in a luxurious department store. Could it be that Eco-Friendly was now fashion forward?

I went online to research the exact process behind Eco-Friendly fashion and what exactly I could be doing or supporting by possibly shopping Green. I had always believed that