

THE BRICKYARDS JOURNAL: CONNECTING CONSUMERS TO SUSTAINABLE  
FASHION THROUGH PRINT MEDIA

By

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## **Abstract**

### **THE BRICKYARDS JOURNAL: CONNECTING CONSUMERS TO SUSTAINABLE FASHION THROUGH PRINT MEDIA**

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*The Brickyards Journal* is a creative exploration into print media and information distribution – analyzed particularly within the slow fashion/sustainable fashion industry. The project utilizes an arts-based research approach to explore the intersections of the Slow Food and Slow Fashion industries, and their relationships with consumers through print media.

While slow food has become a popular sustainably-driven movement, slow fashion has struggled to create the same roots in consumers fashion shopping habits and perspectives towards clothing. This paper analyzes the steps taken by the Slow Food movement and considers how to educate consumers on sustainability and the fashion industry in an analogous way. The result is a creative project that makes sustainable fashion information available and most importantly applicable, through a 54-page printed journal drawing new attention to both the local industry and the practices that will allow us to continue to flourish as a society.

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## Introduction

This project began as an exploration into the correlations between the Slow Food movement and the Slow Fashion Movement. The two intersect in many ways, and there is an emphasised concern towards the quick rate at which the industries are paced, creating two similar systems obsessed with “fast”: fast fashion and fast food. The two industries share similar production and consumption patterns: and the use of environmental resources, the creation of waste and the treatment of workers within both industries have all come into question. Additionally, these “fast” systems in which both fashion and food are made and consumed have completely removed the connection between the sphere of production and consumption, disconnecting consumers from their goods. Sectors of the food industry in more recent years have become largely dedicated to combatting this disconnection, and a movement towards a more sustainable and ethical system has developed, known as the “Slow Food Movement”. Proponents of the Slow Food movement have managed to create a revolution of sorts that shifts the way consumers engage with food, re-establishing the relationship between the two (Germov, Williams, Freij, 90). In their efforts, the movement has helped instill routinized consumption habits in consumers: as exhibited by the growing adoption of farmers markets, community gardens, local farm-to-table restaurants, and sustainably-driven grocery stores. The Slow Fashion movement, and more largely sustainability within fashion, has struggled to create the same roots in consumers fashion shopping habits and perspectives towards clothing. Faced at one point with the barriers the Slow Fashion movement is now faced against, the Slow Food movement developed an avenue of communication with its consumers, establishing resources of knowledge to reference in order to make better consumption decisions.

To create the same impact on the fashion industry, it could be beneficial to examine the steps taken by the Slow Food movement and consider how to educate consumers on sustainability and the fashion industry in an analogous way. In researching the barriers to the Slow Fashion movement, I identified 4 fundamental concepts that have contributed to consumers resistance to the movement and adoption of sustainable practices: these include, Transparency, Knowledge, Accessibility and Resonance. Each concept is a barrier to the Slow Fashion movement – or, more so, their missing presence in the movement is a barrier. Without Transparency, Knowledge, Accessibility and Resonance, consumers are unable to relate to the movement, resulting in further resistance to slow fashion and sustainable practices. However, it is possible to transform these four concepts into “resolutions” – that if implemented correctly can help promote the Slow Fashion movement to consumers, informing them about the system of production, offering alternative options, and demonstrating how these options fit into their own lives. When analyzed in the context of the Slow Food movement, all four resolutions are present, and the movement actively engages with them in a way that has resulted in the successful implementation of a more sustainable food industry. To effectively communicate the resolutions, the movement created and distributed print media resources, including magazines and journals, that contained information for consumers to become educated through, and did so in a way that appealed to consumers. They made sustainable food consumption information available and most importantly, applicable.

Fashion already has a well-established media landscape, and within the political climate of 2016-2017, magazines have increasingly become politically conscious as consumers demanded these outlets provide more coverage about politics behind the industry; including discussions on race, ableism, queer politics, and sustainability. Within this momentum,

magazines have made the case for more sustainable brands, and a more conscious outlook. However, the pattern of consumption promoted by major magazine and media outlets still promotes conspicuous consumption and a general disregard for the practices behind each piece of clothing produced and consumed. Further, the Canadian fashion industry alone does not receive much media, even in homegrown major outlets such as Flare, Fashion, and Elle Canada, and finding information on sustainable and ethical production within Canada remains a large challenge to even the most determined consumer (Braun, 40). There is yet to be one informed voice that is both fashion-conscious and sustainably-minded; a place for consumers to discover slow fashion brands, become generally more knowledgeable about the fashion industry, and become well-versed about the sustainable practices they can adopt in ways that are not portrayed in any of the major fashion outlets.

The Brickyards Journal is a creative exploration into print media and information distribution. The journal is a pilot project that features Canadian made goods and brands that are all produced in an ethical or sustainable way, as well as informational articles that help to support and promote sustainable consumption practices. The overarching theme throughout the journal is promotion of ethical and sustainable fashion within Canada in some way, which is referred to here as the Canadian “slow fashion” industry. It features individual interviews with sustainable brands and a collection of articles that look at sustainability’s intersections with social media, material diversity, beauty products and other topics that aim to educate readers on ways to be sustainable and how to make these aspects applicable to their own lives. In creating the Brickyards Journal, I applied the four previously mentioned resolutions into one central source of information, in an attempt to create a printed journal that could make slow fashion appealing to consumers, inspired by the slow food movement. In my methodology section, I

explain how I approached the four resolutions and in my analysis chapter I discuss the application of the resolutions and their effect. In applying these resolutions, the Brickyards Journal sets out to remedy the lack of information on the Canadian slow fashion industry by offering a place for consumers to refer to when seeking out more ethical or sustainable options, simultaneously uplifting responsibly-made Canadian fashion and drawing new attention to both the local industry and the practices that will allow us to continue to flourish as a society.

### Definitions

When addressing the concept of sustainability, it becomes crucial to consider how the word exists in complex and diverse ways depending on the context it is being used in, and the way that it is being interpreted. While there is a generalized idea of the concept that is accepted as the definition within the world of consumption, one where today's practices fulfil the needs of both our current society and any future societies – what is sustainable, or how to act in a way that is sustainable is still rather ambiguous. There has to be consideration for the multiple ways that sustainability can be applied to both production and consumption: to the environmental impacts, the social impacts and even the economic impacts, and that the term may only refer to one aspect of a product.

The widely-accepted concept of sustainability came from the 1987 “Brundtland Commission Report: Our Common Future”, which defined sustainability as “development that meets the needs to the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (as quoted by Erhenfeld, 2). For the purpose of this project, the term sustainable will derive from the work of John R Erhenfeld. In his essay, “The Real Challenge of Sustainability”, Erhenfeld identifies the failure to understand what sustainability means exactly – as mentioned earlier in the previous paragraph. Alternatively, Erhenfeld offers his own definition

for the term, introducing the concept of “sustainability-as-flourishing”: an idea that challenges the idea of sustainability as survival, but as an approach that will not only sustain life but ensure growth and development for generations to come after us ((Ehrenfeld, 7). Considering the term in the context of flourishing, this definition expands to a more culturally meaningful sustainable development: “we strive for a context in which all life can flourish” (Erhenfeld, 7).

## **Chapter 1: Research Background**

### Fast Fashion

The current system of production that supports the fashion industry is a relatively recent development – and looking into the not-so-distant history of the industry reveals that we had a very different relationship with our clothes, even prior to the 1990’s (Farley and Hill, 31). “Fast fashion” as a term has been used by mainstream fashion media at an increasing rate over the last few years, but its only really been in our fashion vocabulary for the last 20 years - yet, no matter the time period, inexpensive clothing has always been predominantly made possible by two main factors, “mechanization and poorly paid employees” (Farley and Hill, 46). The production of clothing, especially cheap clothing, has accelerated since the industrial revolution; in combination with the development of factories and the beginning of the ready-to-wear industry. Before the revolution, clothing was made by dressmakers and tailors who could afford them, or at home, made on a by-need basis. Textiles and garments were valuable enough to operate as a form of currency; and because of their value, they were taken care of, mended when needed and often modified when styles changed (Farley and Hill, 32). Even to the extent that they were passed on to family members, friends, and employees in the wills of deceased individuals (Farley and Hill, 32). We’ve lost this emotional connection to clothing with the development of the current fashion system– ignoring the “tremendous amount of time and labour required to produce clothing”, impacting the meaning and value it held, and shortening its life cycle, abandoning the reuse of garments, textiles, and fabrics (Farley and Hill, 32).

The transition of manufacturing outside of North America beginning in the 1990’s was the beginning of the “fast fashion” system as it operates today. Major manufacturing companies looking to increase production at reduced rates, moved factories to locations outside of the main

Western consumption region. Garment manufacturers predominantly moved into China; a country which at the time was looking to revitalize its own economic situation (Schor, 37). As China grew into a strong economic and industrial country, production moved into other locations where labour could be sourced cheaply, and governments were looking to enter the global economy (Schor, 37). The process completely removed the product from its production, and consumers became unable to recognize the individuals who made their clothing. The disconnect allowed for a number of environmental and social atrocities to occur without any response from consumers. Production amounts increased, and a system developed that centered on the rapid turnover rate of clothing – one that is practiced by both producers and consumers and is considered “Fast Fashion”. Apparel manufacturers, such as Forever 21, Zara and H&M, now continue to quickly adapt looks from designer collections, manufacturing the look as soon as possible – these items are designed, produced, and shipped out to their respective stores within a matter of a weeks (Kong et al, 105). These shortened lead times result in an increased number of “seasons” and the speed in which new styles become available to purchase (Kong et al, 105). Once on the floor, the garments are sold at low prices, a result of compromising on both quality and worker welfare. The consumer is able to justify their inferior quality for the cheap price – allowing them to not only purchase multiple items without large financial sacrifice, but also to discard after a few wears (Kong et al, 105). The garments lose their appeal, fall out of fashion, and are disposed of accordingly. When the consumer goes back to replace the discarded items, they can consistently find new “of the moment” styles available for purchase.

In maintaining this ever-changing cycle, the fast fashion industry has become highly associated with the exploitation of both resources and people (Wilson, as quoted by Ertekin and Atik, 53). The continuously circular process maintains a temporal mindset about apparel today,

one that relies on increased consumption and equivalent disposal: between the years of 1900 to 2006, global material use increased by 7 billion tons, to 60 billion tons – with individual use increasing from 4.6 tons to 8-9 tons (Worldwatch Institute, as quoted by Grose, 223). The consumption of these materials has proven to be detrimental to the environment; each stage of the life of a garment has serious environmental impacts, including the “dyeing, drying and finishing, chemical usage and use of natural resources” as pointed out by Kong, et al (104); and the large carbon footprint of an item remains with it throughout its lifetime (Ertekin and Atik, 57). Additionally, it is estimated that over 10 million tons of textiles are discarded every year between America and Europe; with more than half going into landfills and smaller but impactful proportions ending up incinerated (Penderson and Andersen, 316). To manufacture such copious quantities of clothing at cheap prices, other sacrifices must be made, and often at the expense of the garment workers. The workers are often subject to low wages and unsafe working conditions; and without access to unions and shortened lead times, temporary contracts are implemented with excessive overtime to meet unreasonable deadlines (Fletcher as quoted Ertekin and Atik, 57).

Producing clothing in this way is unsustainable, but the fashion industry has ultimately remained resistant to the adoption of more sustainable practices. To spark change in the system, it requires a disruption in the mindset of consumers and producers alike. We have to consider the entire life cycle of a garment, from sourcing and manufacturing textiles to the disposal of the garment after its been purchased and worn; it requires thoughtfulness towards the treatment of workers, the use of resources and the current and future consequences of every action. While there is no singular way to act or be perfectly sustainable there are diverse ways to act sustainably that make an impact: protecting water use, purchasing slow fashion, reducing waste,

sourcing environmentally friendly textiles and working with fair trade companies are a few of many. The next section will continue to specifically explore the relationship between sustainability and the concept of slow fashion, and how the wider adoption of slow fashion can operate as a stepping stone towards a more sustainable fashion industry.

### Slow Fashion

“Slow fashion” is a movement from 2008, started by Kate Fletcher that embodies the process in which products are made and consumed. It does oppose the system of “fast” – fast food, fast fashion, fast print – yet there is more to the movement than time itself. Rather than only criticizing the rate of production and consumption in modern times, in a much larger way, it emphasizes the experience of a product (Fletcher, 173). The larger “Slow” movement was initiated in 1980’s. Carlo Petrini, the founder of the Slow Food movement, was an activist against the integration of fast food restaurants into Italy (Germov, Williams, Freij, 90). The movement saw fast food as challenging their historic gastro-traditions of quality and pleasure; and mobilized to counter this integration with a revitalization of traditional Italian food culture, focusing on elements that reconnected Italians with their gastro-heritage. It prioritized food that was produced in a more organic way, grown locally, given the time and space to cultivate naturally, prepared with a focus on taste and health, and served within a community setting, fostering relationships between the producers and the consumers. The movement has since been adopted by other industries and found roots in fashion, creating the “Slow Fashion” movement. The relationship between slow and fashion can at first seem to be an oxymoron of sorts – with the fast paced and ever-changing nature of fashion inherent to its essence. However, before the development of “fast fashion”, our relationship with our clothing was much deeper than the superficial nature often applied to the industry, and slow fashion seeks to reinvigorate it. The

designers and individuals behind slow fashion brands follow a set of methods behind production that reflect the more traditional practices of the garment industry (Fletcher, 173). It is fundamentally opposed to the practices of fast fashion; and it looks to produce clothing in a way that is ethical and sustainable by slowing down (Fletcher, 173).

In slow fashion, garment workers are treated with respect and paid a living wage. They have the time and the space they need to produce clothing in a way that ensures quality and longevity, and they are given fair payment for the work they've done. In valuing the work of the production team, slow fashion places greater value on the garments themselves, elongating their lifecycle and separating itself from the disposability of today's consumerism (Henninger, Aleuizou, Oates and Cheng, 84). The movement also considers the relationship between garment production and the environment – acknowledging the environmental resources that are used in textile production, and the impact that textile waste has on the Earth (Henninger, Aleuizou, Oates and Cheng, 84). Many slow brands will look for ways to responsibly source fabric, like using deadstock, upcycling, thrifted or recycled materials, or using fabrics that are sustainably produced, like hemp or bamboo rayon. It is also important in the movement to minimize waste, and often designers will find creative ways to either, conserve water, repurpose fabric, or use any off-shoot from the production process. In respecting the environment, many slow fashion brands look towards historical methods of textile production that works in harmony with the Earth – giving slow fashion a unique culture rooted in heritage, very similar to the Slow Food movement. Slow fashion involves more than simply the timeline to design and make a garment – it considers the entire process of creating a garment and strives to re-establish a connection between the consumer and the producer in a way that we no longer experience within the current fashion system.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The movement towards a more conscious consumer group and in general a more sustainable fashion industry has occurred in contemporary history in waves. There remains a large sociological canon of theoretical commentary on the frivolous nature of fashion, beginning famously with George Simmel and including the work done by Thorstein Veblen who introduced the concept of “conspicuous consumption” – the idea of consuming beyond needs and merely for want and status (Schor, 37). The concept has remained a foundational criticism of the fashion industry throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, with other notable sociologists building on Veblen and Simmel’s work. It was however in the mid-20th century, that commentary on fashion’s consumption problems were circulating in the realms of social activism - beginning notably in 1960 with Vance Packard’s *The Waste Makers*, a commentary on the United States’ over consumption problems (Farley and Hill, 46). In the decade before, North America saw a spike in consumption following the war and experienced a shift “in the perception of clothes from a durable consumer good with an intrinsic material value to a non-durable consumer good with novelty and brand value” (Fletcher, 224). “Disposable fashion” came into style, and producers began using new materials and fabrics that shortened the length of a garment’s life cycle (Farley and Hill, 46). Following the 1960’s, commentators in the 1970’s carried on the critical approach to the overconsumption problem: in the 1975 book *Cheap Chic*, Carol Troy and Catherine Milinaire, the authors, state “we end up with far too many clothes, without stopping to consciously work out our own personal style and gather together the basic elements we need to get going” (Troy and Milinaire, as quoted by Gordon and Hill, 46).

As the fashion industry grew in size, moving more production over seas, producing excessive amounts of items and dangerous levels of waste, various groups and movements have

commented on the acceleration of the production process and the harm that it has caused both environmentally and socially. The anti-sweatshop campaigns of the 1990's, which targeted Nike specifically, was for many the first exposure to the reality of the production side of the fashion industry (Welters, 26). While consumers placed pressures on those companies – which did impact sales and lead to fair labour certification programs – the demand for the cheapest possible price on a garment never waivered (Welters, 26). Further awareness was created, and backlash increased after the disastrous event of the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013: with over 1135 garment workers perishing and another 2500 critically injured after 5 garment factories, supplying to Western fashion brands, collapsed in Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh (Chowdhury, 938). However, the system in many ways has become immune to criticism, described by some researchers as the “fashion Paradox”. Despite public knowledge about poor practices, the economic importance of the industry has protected it from more serious demand for change (Black and Ekert, as quoted by Ertekin and Atik, 56). In turn, this results in a slower industry-wide movement towards more ethical and sustainable practices, and inadvertently supports the continuance of unethical production and consumption (McNeill and Moore, 213).

The paradox is sustained significantly by the mainstream fashion media. Magazines and other media outlets largely ignore the side of fashion that happens on the production side, opting instead to promote the aesthetics and glamour of fashion. When magazines do feature the production side of fashion, they often opt to show the spaces of couture ateliers; rather than exposing the working conditions of the factories that produce the majority of clothing, both designer and brand name. In her dissertation, “Looking at fashion through green-colored glasses: A multimodal critical discourse analysis of Vogue's sustainable fashion editorials”, Kathryn Jo Baker Jones investigates the presence of sustainable fashion editorials in the U.S magazine

Vogue, analyzing the way that fashion magazines create “a dream world and a sense of escapism” (Jones, 7). By highlighting this, she argues magazines resist capturing the production side of the industry as well – seeing as it would detract from the magical existence of fashion. The dissertation goes on to analyze the way in which magazines help in disguising the reality of clothing production; ignoring the social and environmental impacts in favour of economic interest.

Fashion and magic often collaborate in fashion magazines and is a concept that is explored further by Brian Moeran. He conceptualizes the entire system of fashion as a form of magic that has come to adopt numerous “practices to enchant their readers into desiring, if not buying [fashion]” (Moeran, 3). Moeran references the canon of magic and fashion, citing the work of John Fluigel and Elizabeth Wilson. Fluigel argues that it is “their magical, rather than ornamental or decorative, properties that gave articles of clothing a meaning beyond their functional use” (Fluigel, as quoted by Moeran 4); an idea that is supported by Elizabeth Wilson who believes fashion objects have talismanic properties. In her article “Magic Fashion”, Wilson explores how Western society relates to objects, and specifically relates to fashion objects. In doing so, fashion objects like garments, “can take on an imagined and/or subjectively experienced property that go far beyond the flaunting of wealth or refined taste” (Wilson, 379). Instead, fashion objects become magical, capable of “symbolic expression of values remote from materials” (Wilson, 379). In understanding this concept, she refers to Marx and his theories of commodity fetishism; exploring how his theories can be used to understand this process of magical transformation. In doing so, she relates the disempowerment and alienation of human actors in the process of commodity fetishization as a way to understand the way that the modern fashion industry covers up the production process of clothing in order to maintain the magical

properties that promote consumption. Moeran equates both of Wilson's and Fluegel's concepts to the connection between magic and fashion as an element of glamour: it is "an enticing image, a staged and constructed version of reality that invites consumption" (Moeran, 3). In his chapter "Magical Elements", Moeran continues to argue that rather than completely disguise the labour behind objects of fashion, there is a promotion of effortless glamour, that ensures human labour remains "unseen and so allows people to be seduced by fashion, beauty, and consumerism" (Moeran, 62). Fashion magazines transform labour into something close to magic, stating that "we stand in awe of fashion, seeing it as an idealized form of production because we're at a loss to explain how it comes to exist in the first place" (Moeran, 4). It is this sense of uncertainty that connects magic and fashion so well – in the case of both there is a sense of the unknown, the enduring and the blind faith.

On top of the lack of media awareness, there are a variety of barriers to consider that have also impacted the resistance to a greater adoption of sustainable practices by consumers. As cited by multiple theorists, the actual definitions of "sustainable" and "ethical" remain largely undefined or vary among individuals (McNeill, and Moore 217). Suggested by Weiss, Trevenen and White there are no "simplified" standards surrounding the terms – with conflicting messages being communicated about what it means to be sustainable (232). This makes it difficult for customers to make informed decisions when purchasing clothing. Amidst the confusion, consumers have developed a generally negative perception about the concepts and the products produced by the sustainable fashion industry; with a lack of trust in both the system and the companies involved cited as a large deterrent from buying into the sustainable industry (Ertekin and Atik, 60). In trying to promote sustainably-conscious products, the movement has "created the notion of Greenwashing" – a superficial attempt at displaying products that are ethical,

environmentally friendly, and sustainable, promoting values through marketing that the company itself does not uphold (Weiss, Trevenen and White, 239). Often the marketing promotes “green” values behind products and the brand that the company makes no commitment too, while maintaining their un-sustainable or unethical practices hidden under the screen of “green” (Weiss, Trevenen and White, 239). Claudia E. Henninger, Panajiata J. Alevizou, Caroline J. Oates and Ranis Cheng, warn against greenwashing as it may lead consumers to feel a distrust towards the company, and in general terms like “sustainable” (85). Greenwashing campaigns focus primarily on the symptoms, rather than the core problem; and in order to create more awareness surrounding sustainability, communication strategies must inform consumers of products and educate them on the issues (Henninger, Aleuizou, Oates and Cheng 85). Henninger, Aleuizou, and Oates, in another paper similarly note that “sustainability is intuitively understood yet has no coherent definition” (402). In their study on the meaning of sustainable fashion, and how consumers perceived and interpreted the concept, they found that participants who were the most vocal about price difference between non-sustainable and sustainable clothing had not actively sought out options in sustainable garments: and “the perceived premium is an assumption based on their reality, rather than an actual experience” (405). This sheds light on the way that pre-conceived notions and a lack of education act as barriers against the movement.

To encourage more conscious consumption practices, the movement must challenge these negative associations by promoting a different image of sustainable and ethical fashion: in multiple consumer surveys, participants described a desire for greater knowledge and transparency about sustainable and ethical practices (Kong, et al, 115; Weiss Trevenen, and White, 232; Pedersen and Andersen, 318; Ertekin and Atik, 60). While researching consumer attitudes and behavioural intention, Kong et al found that a more positive attitude towards

sustainable fashion would positively affect consumer behaviour in regard to sustainable fashion products (Kong, et al, 115). To do so, the consumer must have access to educational material that is not difficult to find; as research suggests that better awareness in relation to the quality and fashionability of sustainable products would reduce some of the barriers to “uptake amongst more hesitant consumers” (McNeill and Moore, 219). The accessibility of this knowledge is also crucial to the movements ability to grow; in an industry characterized by “scant information and lack of transparency”, consumers “have to make a big effort to find better alternatives” (Pendersen and Andersen, 318); which can deter the average consumer and lead them back to the easily accessed fast fashion industry.

This is especially poignant as consumers are believed to shop in patterns and routines: Jayawardhena, Morrell and Stride argue that people shop on auto-pilot, and act in a way that minimizes effort and saves time (779). These routines are practised by consumers and make it more difficult for them to change their habits; any additional effort, time or consideration creates resistance to towards sustainable practices which require more thought (Jayawardhena, Morrell and Stride, 779). The fact that sustainable purchases require a break in habit and conscious thinking, highlights the gap between attitude and behaviour: decision-making is almost always involving values, rules, and habits, and “an option is evaluated according to whether it “fits” existing values and life goals and if it is compatible it is enacted” (Jayawrdhena, Morell and Stride, 794). They argue then that in most situations, automatic and preconscious behaviour will always overrule rational behaviour, as most decisions are always made non-rational (Jayawrdhena, Morell and Stride, 794). Matthais Lehner addresses the same topic by arguing that the way consumers interact with products and sustainability is largely prescribed by the socio-cultural context they are embedded in – which speaks to the multiplicity in understanding and

interpreting sustainability (406). In order to create a more accessible understanding for consumers, he references Fuentes who states that one must “construct the material-symbolic artefacts that make sense to consumers and fit into their lives and practices” (as quoted in Lehner, 406). Considering this mentality, consumption is then as much of a social practice as it is a personal practice: consumers have to see these practices as socio-culturally significant. Companies must consider then, how to incorporate an interpretation of sustainability into social networks and the local context, identifying how these impact consumers. Lehner also highlights that consumers often rely on decision heuristics (Lehner ,416); meaning that consumers will routinely rely on the information they already have when in a rush to make a quick decision, specifically when shopping. He identifies that there are in fact “sustainable” food decision heuristics, such as eco-labels and brands, local origin, and various dietary alternatives (Lehner, 416). With these two ideas in mind, he argues that sustainable consumption patterns are in fact “routinized” much in the same way as “conventional” consumption behaviour (Lehner, 417).

Whereas ethical shoppers are motivated by knowing the impact of their purchases – they are educated about the clothing industry and understand the difference their consumption practices make (Lundblad and Davies, 159) – the average consumer has very little knowledge about the process of making clothing and how to look for quality (Ertekin and Atik, 54). Instead, these shoppers depend heavily on their friend’s advice and content they find in the major fashion magazines – reinforcing their behaviour in regard to consumption (McNeill and Moore, 217). In order to target these consumers, sustainable fashion brands must be available, and actively publicize the impact of slow fashion (Jung & Jin, 12). In multiple studies, visibility is emphasized in regard to promoting sustainability and slow fashion (Ertekin and Atik, 63; Weiss, Trevenen and White, 232; McNeill and Moore, 220; Kong, et al, 104). In the fashion industry,

elevating visibility falls into the responsibilities of both the brands and the media, and research shows that “consumers have a higher understanding of the accessibility of sustainable apparel if fashion companies make efforts to spread knowledge on sustainability” (Kong, et al, 115).

Ethical and sustainable fashion products have very little presence in the media, and this is even more so in Canadian media, finding any representation of Canadian fashion is rare and sparse. In her dissertation, “Towards A Stronger Canadian Fashion Industry: An Investigation of Canada’s Media Landscape and Its Coverage of Canadian Fashion”, Jennifer Braun goes on to analyze three major Canadian fashion media outlets, including Elle Canada, Fashion and Flare magazine. In her findings, it became apparent that Canadian products are severely underrepresented in Canadian media (Braun, 40). Out of 32 photo editorials collected and analyzed, only 3 of the editorials featured Canadian fashion. Each of these editorials was Canadian-themed, with titles like “We the North”, “Glorious and Free” and “Best in Show” – all emphasizing a feature or specialized focus on Canadian fashion (Braun, 40). It is important for media to normalize Canadian fashion, making it more of a common or reoccurring theme in their content in order to promote the applicability of Canadian made fashion: leaving the magazines and fashion publications with “an increasingly important responsibility to report as often and as efficiently as possible on Canadian culture as well as the various players that define Canada’s society” (Braun, 9).

In other industries, the creation of media outlets to help communicate sustainable messages have contributed the greater adoption of these conscious practices. In her article, “A Recipe for Connectedness”, Julia Labelle begins by addressing the overarching issue that influences the fashion, food and print industries, specifically the disconnect between producers and consumer and the way in which capitalism has supported and maintained this disconnect

(82). While Labelle is directly addressing these issues in the food industry, her arguments are equally applicable to the other two industries – all three of which view consumption as a “passive and apolitical act” as it is assumed to “exist separate from production and irrespective of the power relations behind a product” (Labelle, 82). Instead, Labelle argues that the development of alternative forms of communication and knowledge-sharing is a way to challenge the system that maintains the separation between the spheres of production and consumption: “since the production of information is a form of control in contemporary society, this information can potentially challenge social order” (Labelle, 84).

Labelle’s argument is exemplified in the case study done by Germou, Williams and Freiji, in their articles “The Portrayal of the Slow Food Movement in Australian Print Media: Conviviality, Localism and Romanticism”. The article explores the ways that print media has come to support and create certain portrayals of the Slow Food movement in Australia. The development of the movement became dependent on the promotion of community through shared-knowledge, connecting producers to consumers in a co-creation process – as communicated through these food magazines and publications (Germou, Williams and Freiji, 90). In doing so, magazines focused on the local aspects of the movement, romanticizing the locale for readers, and inviting them to engage “in ethical and politically conscious ways” and negotiate the “intersections between a grounded, specific locality and global forces” (Germou, Williams and Freiji, 102). Germou, Williams and Freij, argue that localism is a powerful ideology that offers readers a source of resistance to globalized capitalism. However, they also note that while the concept of the locality within the movement is used to undermine capitalism, the concept itself is not inherently anti-capitalist – rather it is a “soft resistance” one that attempts to change consumer habits rather than eliminate consumption in its entirety (Germou, Williams

and Freij, 103). Lindholm and Lie carry this on with their investigation into how consumption has become politicized between the local and the global within the greater food industry. In particular, they investigated the way in which collective identity can become powerful when created through a shared positive experience, and when it is streamlined through consumption, it can be wielded in a form of collective resistance. (Lindholm and Lie, 53-54).

In their final argument, Germou, Williams and Freij reiterate that the limited portrayal of the Slow Food movement is a large barrier as individuals will not necessarily see the movement as relevant to their lives – unless media portrayals makes the movement more accessible (Germou, Williams, and Freij, 103). To combat this, they explored how the movement capitalized on larger pre-existing movements or “alternative” concepts: such as organic, sustainable development and fair trade, all of which became unified under the singular slow food movement (Germou, Williams, and Freij, 90). In doing, so the movement within print media built upon a pre-existing vocabulary in order to help make its message easily accessible to new audiences. Labelle similarly argues through the use of specific vocabulary, the slow food movement references hegemonic cultural codes that a majority of consumers are capable of recognizing, like “quality” and “tradition” – however, it tries to subvert the dominant meaning by relating it to a new form of consumption (Labelle, 88). Additionally, Lindholm and Lie argue that in particular the concept of “co-producers” in the slow food movement transforms consumption into an act of collective solidarity (Lindholm and Lie, 56). All three articles stress that this approach helps individuals relate to the movement at large – as “when individuals are able to recognize and claim their place in a network of food relations, personalized and trusting relationships can develop” – creating a “mutually beneficial” system of exchange (Labelle, 89).

Elaine L. Ritch also argues that the Slow Food movement is the ideal place to look for inspiration in communicating with consumers, as supported by the scholars previously mentioned. She specifically investigates the possibility of transitioning consumers understanding of sustainability in terms of food into the sphere of fashion. In her research, she conducted 26 interviews with female consumers to see how the consumer understands sustainability. She found that among her participants, all of the participants were able to recognize aspects of sustainability and call upon them while purchasing food (Ritch, 1170). Ritch then argues that in order to promote sustainability in the fashion industry, consumers have to be able to apply these same concepts to fashion while shopping (Ritch, 1173); the same way that the slow food movement built on the terms of “heritage”, “tradition”, “fair trade” (Germou, Williams and Freiji, 90). She draws particular attention the fact that most consumers were incapable of seeing the personal benefit and the moral benefit to shopping sustainably for clothing. Instead, she states that the “mainstreaming of sustainable initiatives in the food sector enabled participants to align consumption with moral sentiment, leading to more certainty of what consumption contributes to” (Ritch, 1175); in reference to fashion, the slow and sustainable fashion movement has to offer consumers more perspective on how their purchasing habits can create an impact.

Fashion magazines that aim to help promote sustainable fashion should look towards the content created by the Slow Food movement in order to implement a successful campaign in connecting consumers to the side of production in a way that is meaningful and impacts their daily lives. The magazines that have been used to promote the Slow Food movement often bear resemblance to niche magazines or smaller, specific publications as opposed to the more mainstream format we are familiar with today. Within the realms of fashion, Lyng-Jorlén’s article “Between Frivolity and Art: Contemporary Niche Fashion Magazines”, explores the

market for these niche magazines in a world of fast communication via the internet. Against the abundance of “online fashion publishing”, she instead argues that there remains a market for niche fashion magazines, where it is “the physical quality” of the magazines that matters “greatly to both their consumption and production” (Lyng-Jorlén, 8). The genre of niche magazines, can be described as “small print runs, small membership, and a high symbolic exchange value” – Lyng-Jorlén relates this to Bourdieu’s restricted production, where the purpose of the magazine is to appeal to a small group of individuals all interested in the same topics (Lyng-Jorlén, 13). These magazines can be understood in the same way as an art journal or exhibition catalogue that focuses on in-depth interviews, articles where the story takes precedence over the representation of clothing, and presenting fashion as a legitimate art. These magazines challenge the perception that fashion is a “frivolous part of postmodern popular culture” (Lyng-Jorlén, 15); instead they address fashion as a “meaningful and intellectual topic” (Lyng-Jorlén, 15). They also try to encourage alternative discourse, seeking out individuals who are not “overexposed” in other magazines, finding new and interesting topics that go beyond the scope of traditional fashion media (Lyng-Jorlén, 24). In doing so, these types of magazines ask the reader to engage with topics in a more meaningful way, therefore creating a closer bond within the community, one that is built on shared knowledge and reflects that same process that occurred in the slow food movement.

In the same vein as Lyng-Jorlén, Megan Le Masurier argues instead of claiming print media as dead, commentators should first think more critically towards niche magazines currently in operation with a small but devoted community of followers in her article “Independent Magazines and the Rejuvenation of Print”. She defines more recent rejuvenations of print media as one that focuses on the “underrepresented manifestations of popular culture and

creative work from the independent producers of fashion, design, photography, film and music” (Le Masurier, 384). Likewise, to Lyng-Jorlen, Le Masurier focuses on the smaller communities these publications often appeal to, using the term “cultural journalism” to describe the way that the topics are relevant to those particular communities, and are “presented in a manner that is meaningful to them, and with their collaboration and support (Le Masurier, 388). Le Masurier describes an emphasised appreciation for the workmanship of print magazines that is lost on digital media: rather these independent magazines, or “indies”, have identified the core elements of print media, and emphasized their importance, highlighting, “quality, tactility of the paper, format, the integration of words, images, and space as an expression of graphic design, specific to the life and function of the magazines” (Le Masurier, 393). These magazines are created with longevity in mind, made for collectability with a “expressive capacity for social and subjective identity” (Le Masurier, 394). This alludes to a larger cultural shift towards the “slow”, and in particular slowing down media time, with irregular publications that emphasis quality over quantity (Le Masurier, 393). Publications only go through once enough material has been collected to garner publication. In a comparable way, the slowing down of media reflects the same values of the Slow Food movement – where both producer and consumer is encouraged to slow down the process, instead savouring every aspect of the final product.

This sets up the concept of a “Slow Journalism” movement, which is further explored by Le Masurier who argues that journalism continues to have a social function of providing information to people that is different from simply “news”, and aides them in “making sense of reality” in her article “What is Slow Journalism?” (Le Masurier, 139). Le Masurier goes on to criticize the current news cycle that promotes the intensified speed in which news is produced and published online, leading to a “loss of accuracy, and checking, journalists who rarely leave

the newsroom, and even [reporting] stories before they happen” (Le Masurier, 139). This form of journalism doesn’t allow journalists time to process and properly construct a story, and the “possibility of considered reflection, of narrative, of contextualized information disappears, for both producers and consumers of journalism” (Le Masurier, 140). She introduces the term “slow journalism” as coined by Susan Greenberg, as an alternative to the current news, which is perceived “as leaving a gap our understanding of the world at a time when the need to make sense of it is greater than ever” (Greenberg, as quoted by Le Masurier, 141). When speaking directly of small-scale, independent magazine publications, she emphasizes the aspects of collectability over disposability, and the “fact that this magazine can be environmentally more sustainable than mainstream print magazines with their high pulp rate as soon as an issue goes off sale” (Le Masurier, 146).

Fashion magazines that more closely align with the movement towards slow food and journalism, that focus on communicating with the consumers in an engaging way that sets out to connect the reader with the subject can have the power to change or at least broaden consumers knowledge about sustainability. There is a fertile ground for all three movements, fashion, food and print to find kinship in the promotion of “slow”: and in her article “Slow journeys: what does it mean to go slow?”, Daisy Tam seeks out to explore the differences between fast and slow more critically, and the balance between the two forces in times of innovation (Tam, 209). She emphasizes that fast things, such as fast food, fashion or media are not inherently bad because they are fast – rather, there is a much more complex web of interactions, made up of factors and products that make the process inherently bad (Tam, 208). She relates the slow movements to the Slow Food movement specifically and its use of collective memory in order to stimulate consumers into purchasing goods that remind them of a different time or space: “the combination

of individuality, of sourcing, and of information creates a tradition and authenticity that feeds a current need in the social life of commodities” (Tam, 212). She relates this to why slow is good, and that is because its mindful (Tam, 216); emphasizing that how we think about consuming matters just as much about how we spend our money, and through reflection on ourselves and our values, everyone can find a pace or a practice that works within their own lives and contributes to the greater good of sustainability and ethics.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

In setting up the Brickyards Journal, I approached the project with a practice-led methodology, borrowed from creative practices. The methodology involves the researcher creating their project and then reflecting on the process, deriving any valuable information from the project that could be impactful in evolving the discourse in the chosen field (Smith and Dean, 5). The creative project becomes both the research and the findings; generating “detectable research outputs” that can be transferred into written research (Smith and Dean, 5). The written work that is derived from the research process is a result of the “creative practice -- the training and specialised knowledge that creative practitioners have and the processes they engage in when they are making art” and leads to “specialised research insights which can then be generalised” for wider use in academia (Smith and Dean, 5). As opposed to the duality of quantitative and qualitative, practice-led research methodologies are often considered a third form of research; as argued by theorist Brad Haseman, research findings can be symbolically expressed, rather than through strictly numbers or words (Haseman, as quoted by Smith and Dean, 6). In choosing to do practice-led research, I hoped to create an approach to promoting the greater adoption of the sustainable fashion industry through a creative project that could be applied as a solution or an answer to my research question: specifically addressing the lack of information made available to consumers about the slow fashion industry in Canada by creating a source of that knowledge.

My creative project began by establishing the specific barriers that have prevented the wider adoption of slow and sustainable practices and considering the ways I wanted to dismantle them. The most commonly cited barrier I found in my research was the lack of understanding when it comes to sustainability. The term has taken on a ubiquitous nature, without any real

concrete definition or coherent contextualization. It is applied universally, to food, architecture, houseware, fashion, and other products – but there is no foundational interpretation that holistically certifies an object as sustainable. Without the clear definition, additional issues emerge in a complex web of miscommunication surrounding the concept and the products involved. Varying information gives consumers sparse insight about the industry, making it difficult for consumers to properly engage with the concept. In their study, Henninger, Allezou and Oates found that consumers understand certain parts of sustainability, like sourcing and production, while either ignoring or remaining uninformed about other issues, predominantly the social side, including aspects like wage and working conditions (404).

Without certain knowledge or information, it leaves consumers feeling hesitant to engage with “sustainable” products because of their lack of trust in the term itself and the companies that use the term to promote their products (Ertekin and Atik, 60). Greenwashing tactics are omnipresent throughout the fashion industry and this ultimately makes consumers weary of corporate attempts towards sustainability and in general products that are associated with the concept (Weiss, Trevenen and White, 239). When a consumer does choose to engage with sustainability, there is a lack of readily available sources for consumers to reference. As previously described by both Jayawardhena, Morrell and Stride, Lehner, and Ritch, consumers predominantly rely on “heuristics”: the most efficient decision-making that creates immediate gratification and influences how uninformed consumers make decisions about clothing and sustainability in the moment of shopping (Ritch, 1167). Without easily accessible sustainable information about fashion and garment production, consumers remain in their purchase patterns because they feel secure in them. To go outside of their norms, consumers would have to actively choose to engage; opposing the modern routinization of consumption that ensures “the customer

does not have to think too much” (Tam, 214). This form of passive, and routinized consumption maintains a system where consumers continue to financially support MNCs (multi-national corporations); companies that ultimately prioritise fastness, high turnover, and gross profits, over the “inevitable destruction of the agricultural, social, cultural, and economic landscape” (Tam, 214). The destruction created by this type of production is given very little visibility in the daily lives of consumers, making it difficult for consumers to rationalize why sustainability should matter to them. In order to maintain this form of consumerism fashion media purposely detaches garments from the production process in order to maintain a magical element to clothing that promotes constant consumption, securing these gross profits for MNCs (Moeran, 3). The cycle is maintained by a lack of disruption in knowledge and information; instead, proponents of the slow/sustainable fashion movement need to find new ways to communicate sustainability to consumers, but in a way that consumers are able to interpret and apply to themselves.

In my research, four major concepts surfaced from examining the barriers that have prevented the development and growth of the sustainable fashion industry. The four concepts, and their missing presence within the movement have impacted the way consumers see and interpret the Slow Fashion movement and sustainable fashion practices. I transformed the concepts into resolutions, highlighting four ways that the Slow Fashion movement should approach consumers in order to engage with them. These four resolutions include: Transparency, Education, Accessibility, and Resonance. In order to challenge the barriers previously mentioned, companies and media outlets involved in the Slow Fashion movement should adopt the four resolutions and make them present in the way they promote their sustainable values:

### 1. *Transparency:*

The values and ideas behind the brands and their sustainability practices have to be strong, concise, and transparent (Henninger, Aleuizou, Oates, 402). Transparency is a vital aspect to developing a stronger line of communication between consumers and products and can strengthen consumers understanding of the concept. This creates trust between consumers and brands, making consumers feel more confident in their sustainable purchases.

### 2. *Education:*

Brands and media outlets have to offer information that informs and educates consumers. Without any central source of information on sustainability, consumers remain uneducated and unaware of resources and information that can help them make better informed consumption decisions. With the politics behind knowledge so embedded in class and other societal distinctions (such as gender, race, ability, etc.,), it can be difficult for people outside of the hegemonic classes to access information outside of the system. As suggested by Labelle, alternative knowledge systems can have a positive impact in making sustainable practices adoptable while creating a more holistic understanding of the system at work (Labelle, 89).

### 3. *Accessibility:*

The third resolution directly relates to the second in that this information has to be easily accessible. The slow and sustainable movements have often been criticized for being elitist and hard to access (Tam, 216). Instead companies and media outlets alike have to make it obvious that being sustainable and investing in slow fashion is something that everyone can do, and the information about how to do that also has to be easily accessed by people of all positionalities. Henninger, Aleuizou, and Oates especially criticize the media's portrayal of sustainable fashion

as expensive and inaccessible stating that “if sustainable fashion is seen as an alternative to fast fashion, it needs to be communicated as such, rather than creating a celebrity hype in magazines, which implies garments are unaffordable” (406). However, if information about practices and the movement at large becomes more accessible, there is the possibility of influencing a change in views, by encouraging “a practice of self-examination, reflection, and monitoring, one seeks to form a subjectivity that is thought through ethics and which can apply to everyone regardless of their social status” (Tam, 216). This carries into individualistic approaches to sustainability and individual participation in the movement is further addressed in the fourth resolution.

#### 4. *Resonance:*

Consumers need to be able to identify how these practices fit into their own lives – encouraging them to adapt the practices in a self-involved way. Our purchasing patterns are routinized by our own understandings and interpretations of what it means to be sustainable: in a study conducted by the UK brand ASDA that found that consumers set their own sustainable agenda, choosing what aspects of sustainability are the most important to them (Lehner, 405). While most consumers in research will claim they are sustainability-minded, their purchasing power does not reflect these attitudes – this could be attributed to a larger misunderstanding of how consumers apply their sustainability choices in the marketplace (Lehner, 405). In order to combat this, companies need to find ways to align larger sustainable goals and initiatives with consumers own individualistic agenda. In a study conducted by Elaine Ritch, she found that consumers understood how organic food directly benefited both the health of the planet and their own families – knowing that food that is made without pesticides and chemicals led to superior quality and taste, and ultimately better to eat (Ritch, 1170). Her participants however, could not make the same connection between sustainably made clothing and their own personal benefit.

Then it becomes crucial for the movement to create this connection between sustainability, fashion, and consumer benefit.

The next stage of my creative project involved taking these four resolutions, analyzing them within other slow movements and then applying them to my own approach to the project. All four of these resolutions are present in the Slow Food movement, and I investigated the way they had been applied to the movement in order to generate interest and encourage the adoption of more sustainable practices in food consumption:

1. It promoted transparency, by establishing a connection between consumers and producers that evoked feelings of trust through a co-creation relationship. The movement actively encouraged consumers to engage with and communicate with the people who produced their food; giving consumers a first-hand experience as to how their food was made, making the experience of buying and preparing food more intimate. As described by Labelle, the Slow Food movement emphasizes the idea of “local” and uses it to combat the disconnect, between “space from place, stretching distance between where food is produced and where it is consumed” (Labelle, 86). By relocating the local in the food system as a way to create a more integrated system, defining “channels for possible connections” between consumers and producers (Labelle, 86). The Slow Food movement in particular has focused on shared knowledge between producers and consumers, “sharing traditions of producing, and processing, along side eating and tasting” (Labelle, 87). By allowing consumers to experience production, it makes “visible” the relationship between the separated spheres of food.

2. The Slow Food movement created a specific form of communication used to convey its messages. It specifically built upon consumers pre-existing knowledge to make information easily interpreted and applicable. The movement adopted terms like “heritage”, “quality”,

“tradition” to talk about production methods, consumption patterns – evoking cultural codes that consumers were able to identify as important (Labelle, 88). It also related itself to other concepts and movements that consumers were familiar with to give the movement a foundational understanding. By identifying with fair trade and organic, the movement seemed less foreign, and easier to adopt into everyday practices as consumers were already factoring in these concepts into their buying heuristics. As pointed out by Lehner, consumers do use sustainable decision heuristics when shopping for food that directly relate to local origin, eco-labels, and dietary alternatives, like vegan and gluten free (Lehner, 417). Through these associations, decisions were easier for consumers to make in the moment of purchase.

3. Proponents of the movement created points of access for consumers to find and engage with in an accessible manner; most evident in their use of print media to create a physical resource that could be used to both educate readers and host information that was not being communicated through mainstream media. Through the articles and the content promoted in these publications, slow food magazines have operated as a vehicle to promote a sense of community, using their content to share knowledge and more intimately connect consumers to producers through features and stories. These magazines have been built on the model of niche or independent magazines, that similarly share the same values towards knowledge distribution: quality is prioritized over quantity and speed. Instead they focus on topics that are largely neglected by mainstream media and try to connect readers in a more meaningful way to innovative ideas and concepts, through interviews and stories about individuals and movements that are doing things differently and making an impact (Le Masurier, 384). The way in which these magazines have operated as a point of connectivity for both producers and consumers, and

more abstractly, as a way to apply the four resolutions outlined above, inspired the creation of the Brickyards Journal.

4. At its foundation, the Slow Food movement rooted itself in people's individualistic agendas by successfully communicating how food and sustainable food production directly impacted the consumer in their daily life, positioning themselves in a sustainable way that benefits both the consumer and the wider societal needs (Ritch, 1162). As outlined above, the movement successfully implemented the fourth resolution of Resonance, through the application of the first three resolutions. It was able to apply itself to the everyday life of consumers by effectively communicating the values and ideas behind the movement through Transparency, Knowledge, and Accessibility. When consumers were able to understand the foundation of the movement, its importance and how to become involved effectively, it became a worthwhile pursuit.

With my four resolutions established and contextualized within the Slow Food movement, I began to design the informational landscape of the journal. I had to assemble a variety of articles, photos essays and interviews that explore different elements of the slow fashion industry in Canada. To begin, I set out to recruit 10-15 individuals who were active participants in the sustainable Canadian fashion industry. The sample size was smaller, as the interviews were intended to create in-depth informative pieces about the experience of the individuals in the industry. To be considered "active", the participant must have worked within the industry, for a minimum of 1 year and hold a position in one of the following: design, production, manufacturing, blogging and social media, and/or retail. Recruitment occurred through direct recruitment of potential study participants. I gathered contact information through both company and personal websites, and through referrals from my supervisor Dr. Lu Ann

Lafrenz. After reaching out to a variety of slow and sustainable companies, I interviewed 6 individual businesses, comprised of 8 individuals in total. Each of the participants were interviewed about their thoughts, feelings, and opinions on the Canadian slow and sustainable fashion industry, as well as their own business and sustainable practices in a 60-minute interview (Appendix A). The interviews were then audio-recorded and transcribed, and analyzed for their content value in terms of the journal and the accompanied written portion of the MRP. Photographs were also taken of the participants and their work spaces, or participants were asked to share photographs they wished to have featured in the journal.

After the interviews were transcribed and analyzed, I wrote 6 individual stories that focused on each business and the story they told through their interviews (“Spare Label”; “Beginning with Basics”; “Selling Canadian Made”; “Made on Site”; “Small Batch”; “Studio Diaries”) (Appendix B). Each article was written in a way that showcased the individuals behind the business and their personal sustainability philosophies and approaches. The intended effect was to depict how diverse the sustainable fashion industry is in both techniques and practices; emphasizing the wide range of ways to interact and participate within the sustainability movement. The articles also derived information from the interviews about the producers, making their work available to the readers, and photos were added to help readers visualize the sustainable process. Four more articles were written that focused on topics from within the movement, including work on thrifting (“How to Hunt”), social media (“Socially Aware Social Media”), philosophies surrounding the movement (“Slow Philosophies”) and fabric and material diversity (“Close Reading”) (Appendix B). An additional opening statement (“The Brickyards Journal”) accompanied by direct quotes from the participants about the idea of sustainability (“Defining Sustainability”) were added at the beginning of the piece as a way to introduce and

welcome readers into the conversation provoked in the journal (Appendix B). Finally, two more articles were collected from two other scholars that examined the sustainable beauty industry (“Pretty Sustainable”) and the slow print industry (“Slow Journalism; Or, You Should Read an Academic Essay”) (Appendix B). The collection of articles was chosen and curated with the intention to further educate possible readers on the intersections within the movement. The images used in the journal were either taken during the interviews with the participants from each company featured or they were shared with me from the brands own collection of images and visual materials. One central photoshoot was orchestrated with the help of one of the participants involved and the clothes were a collection of Canadian/sustainably made clothing and vintage or thrifted clothing. Once enough content was collected, I began to construct the actual journal. I used the Adobe InDesign program to piece together the journal, which was structured by a template purchased with publishing rights. I then edited and personalized the template, establishing my own font themes, adding pages, and shifting around content boxes to establish an aesthetic that best suited my vision for the journal. Photos that were taken by me including the front cover, and the various images throughout the articles were edited through Adobe Photoshop and added along with the content at the same time. Through these measures the journal was created, and the 4 resolutions previously mentioned were applied to create a piece of print media that could address the lack of knowledge about the sustainable industry. In the next chapter, I will examine how these four resolutions were applied and discuss the result of the completed body of work.

## Chapter 4: Analysis

In the final stage of the creative process all four resolutions were applied to the Brickyards Journal in an attempt to create a completed body of work in response to the lack of knowledge available surrounding the Canadian slow fashion industry and the sustainable practices used within the industry. In this chapter, I will analyze each of the four resolutions and how I specifically applied them to my work; explaining the intention and the effect that it had on the final product.

### 1. *Transparency*

To create a magazine that promoted slow fashion and sustainable values, transparency was the foundational concept in which every article was written. With every piece I wrote, I intended to showcase what each participant did and how they did it, specifically highlighting the aspects of their work that made them sustainable. In doing this, I tried to create more transparency about the term sustainable – exemplifying how diverse the term can be applied, but how it is rooted in fundamental characteristics. Within all 6 articles, the interwoven theme is their concern for both environmental and social responsibility. However, each participant valued these two aspects differently, and prioritized them according to their own values. For Sabine Spare (“Spare Label”), waste and specifically water conservation is a fundamental aspect to her own sustainable practices – I then included her methods of production and the ways that it conserved water to demonstrate how she applied these values to her work. Alternatively, social activism and ethics are critical to the owners of Victoire Boutique, Katie, and Regine (“Selling Canadian Made”), and their write-up emphasized the “meaningful interactions” they described as a core value of their business, demonstrating the deep respect they hold for their customers and the makers that provide them with merchandise. The other articles included similarly sought out

to explain the core values of each business and how they were exercised within their practices; to the effect that customers could feel confident in the information provided to them and have a better understanding of how actual sustainably-minded business owners approach the concept. In three of the articles, (“Spare Label”; “Small Batch”; “Made on Site”) the actual spaces where participants create their products were photographed and featured alongside their article. The intention behind these photographs were to give a more realistic vision of the production side of the industry, capturing the true nature of the garment industry – bright lights, cutting tables and an assortment of fabrics and garments in various stages of production. While the photos by no means share the glamour found in mainstream fashion photography, they make these spaces visible to readers who can derive further understanding of the making process through this form of transparency.

By revealing these aspects of the participants and their business, I hoped to generate the same type of trust and sense of community as witnessed in the slow food movement. By visually showing these spaces and connecting the consumers to the producers, these articles are intended to help consumers contextualize the people behind the efforts of the slow fashion movement. Therefore, creating a connection that bridges the production of clothing with the consumption of clothing. I again referenced the localizing efforts of the slow food movement and tried to relocate production into a localized space, by including the location of each participant in their featured article. All of the participants reside between Ontario and Quebec, with a large share located in the greater Toronto area. By locating them in a shared geographical space with the consumer, I hoped that it would work to eliminate the disconnect between the two spheres of fashion – production and consumption.

## *2. Knowledge*

The characteristics of the journal were all intentionally implemented as a way to help contextualize slow fashion within the reader's mind and help illuminate ways for them to participate with their own understanding of fashion and consumption. To start, I repeated the same method of using a vocabulary that built upon pre-existing knowledge to help relate to concepts that consumers would already be familiar with. Within the front cover of the journal, the combination of the name and the image used work together to conjure up thoughts of handmade, handcrafted materiality that would resonate within a consumer's ideas of quality and craftsmanship. Those two traits are particularly important as they evoke feelings of value within the realm of fashion. The title, *The Brickyards Journal*, was chosen because of its association with heritage, production and the manual labour required to physically make a brick – I wanted it to relate to slow fashion in a shared style of work, the hands-on experience of forging something from raw material. I originally intended the title to align closer with an “atelier”, a term that conjures a more romantic version of labour, often associated with glamour, creativity and more closely aligned with high fashion. I came to the decision to name the journal after a brickyard however, because it relates closer to the unglamorized side of production that I was trying to showcase in the journal. The front cover was designed to compliment the title, with the image relating to the handmade, handcrafted in the same way as the title. The use of brown paper in the background is a direct reference to the same brown paper that is used to cut out patterns and can be found in many of the participants' studios and production spaces. The image features scattered needles, spools of thread and buttons, reiterating the idea of handmade through the tools used to make and mend garments. The photograph in the image is a small nod to the Canadian aspect of this project, as it is a photograph of the Rocky Mountains from the 1980's –

the age and location of the photograph again operate to create a sense of heritage and collective identity. Connecting slow fashion to value through the concepts of handmade, quality and tradition, associates the movement with concepts consumers already are familiar with; specifically aligning slow fashion as part of fashion as a whole, rather than an outlier.

With this connection established, I arranged the articles in a way that introduced the readers to the movement, and immediately addressed some of the issues surrounding slow fashion and sustainability that may make consumers hesitant to engage with the topic. The first introduction article (“The Brickyards Journal”) explores the meaning of sustainability, setting it up as a thought process that consumers can choose to engage with. The article highlights the importance of realizing your own values and acting accordingly. The second article (“Slow Philosophies”) is an investigation into slow fashion and other slow movements, specifically highlighting the issues with the current fashion system and establishing why changes need to be made on both the consumer and production side. The article also aligns slow fashion with traditional fashion production, reiterating the connection to quality and tradition, and ultimately the value in slow fashion as a viable alternative to the fast fashion industry. In opening the journal with these two articles, I intended for the reader to feel welcomed into the movement, and to establish a fundamental understanding of the movement that would help navigate the content further back in the journal. Having this foundation, the reader can more actively engage with the topics inside, discovering ways to personally connect with the movement. As they move through the journal, reading the articles and learning about the makers and their values, I hoped to generate the same sense of shared knowledge between the reader and the makers that was so fundamental to the adoption of the Slow Food movement.

### *3. Accessibility*

The third resolution was creating a source of information that is easily accessible to consumers, fostering an inclusive spirit within the movement. Accessibility was also one of the core values that influenced the creation of the journal – a creative project that resulted in a physical resource that could help distribute knowledge about the slow fashion movement and educate readers on how to participate in the movement no matter their positionality. I wanted to ensure that my contribution to the movement was one that encouraged everyone’s participation – not limiting sustainable and slow-made goods to the individuals in a privileged position. Since the start of this project, I knew that the content inside the journal would be accessible to individuals outside of academia – relating these concepts and ideas into everyday practices that could be adopted by everyone. This included the tone of voice and vocabulary used in the writing, ensuring that the information was easily interpreted and understood. The actual content inside of the journal was created to help inform consumers about ways to participate in the slow fashion industry by educating them on different avenues for engagement. The variety of makers featured exemplifies the diversity in sustainable products and avenues for active engagement through consumption.

The articles that were written as stand-alone pieces, and don’t involve participants, were written as guides to help readers better navigate shopping sustainably; one article specifically relates to sustainable beauty products (“Pretty Sustainable”) and explores the process of slowly transitioning your beauty routine into a sustainable one. Another article offers advice on how to thrift shop (“How to Hunt”) – building on pre-existing shopping habits and using them within a more sustainable space. Thrifting is an especially important aspect of making sustainability accessible, as it offers individuals without large financial resources to participate in a meaningful

way. The article that specifically addresses the relationship between social media and sustainability, (“Socially Aware Social Media”) informs readers on how apps like Facebook and Instagram create avenues of communication between slow fashion brands and consumers; by hosting images and videos, consumers are given the opportunity to connect with the making process, fostering a more authentic relationship between the two forces and a more emotionally satisfying experience. These articles were created to offer consumers an alternative to mainstream fashion media and at the same time exhibit how adoptable sustainable-conscious consumerism is. This is visually reinforced with the photoshoot that I orchestrated with a mixture of Canadian made and vintage clothing (“Something Borrowed; Something New”) – countering the traditional photoshoot that uses only new materials, instead showing the longevity of clothing by incorporating a mix of both sustainably made and vintage clothing.

#### *4. Resonance*

The fourth and final resolution was establishing the importance of slow and sustainable values and making them applicable to an individual’s every day consumption habits; ultimately aligning the larger sustainable goals of the Slow Fashion movement with the consumers own individualistic agenda and helping them understand the everyday application of sustainability, encouraging them to act accordingly. All three of the previous resolutions work together to establish a foundational resource of information that supports and sustains this fourth resolution: making this information more widely available, but also applicable to consumers pre-existing shopping habits, helps to equip consumers to make more informed decisions, creating opportunities for consumers to adopt more sustainable shopping practices in the world of fashion. This creates the opportunity for the fourth, more individualistic resolution to take root: the very present belief, and shared commonality expressed by all of the participants interviewed

in the journal that the passion within the slow fashion community creates a palpable difference in shopping experiences. Engaging with individuals who enjoy their work and are passionate about their products transitions into a shopping experience that reconnects consumers with the products they are buying and creates a sense of belonging and shared community that is unique to the slow fashion movement. As expressed by both Tonia and Laura of Twiss & Weber (“Made on Site”), and Carrie of With Love Lingerie (“Beginning with Basics”), the designers behind the Slow Fashion movement share a compassion for creating clothing that is of superior quality but also for creating spaces where consumers can engage with their clothing in a process that is emotionally fulfilling and leaves the customer feeling satisfied with their purchases. In the words of Victoire owner Regine (“Selling Canadian Made”): “I mean we always want to get more people to understand the value that you get, like truly the value that you feel. Not just the clothing that you buy and love and wear longer, but of interacting with sales people who care about the products they’re selling, and you know that the people who made them. Just getting more people in on that, and I feel like we’re gaining traction every year, we’re gaining people and it only takes a few purchases with local business to feel a difference”. The change in experience is the fourth resolution; in the same sense that organic food is better for your body, sustainable fashion is better for your well being, aligning the individualistic experience and agenda with the greater goals of the sustainable movement.

## Conclusion

The work behind the Brickyards Journal resulted in a 54-page body of work that included 6 interviews, 6 articles and 1 photoshoot. The intended impact of the journal was to create a physical resource that operated as a source of knowledge, offering transparent and accessible information about the ethical and sustainable “slow” fashion industry, helping consumers engage with sustainability in a deeper way, resonating in their daily shopping habits. The articles within the journal contain information that is not made available in mainstream media; offering readers a new way to engage with sustainability and slow fashion that has largely been unavailable in the majority of conventional fashion magazines. While the current fashion cycle is maintained by a lack of disruption in information, in making the Brickyards Journal I hoped to create a disruption, replacing mainstream media with an alternative knowledge system that makes the idea of slow fashion not only appealing but also applicable to consumers.

The fashion industry has been resistant to sustainable change and the four resolutions that I applied in my work are not going to change the current fashion system instantaneously. However, I believe that my work contributes to the larger effort towards challenging and dismantling the current knowledge system that supports and maintains the fashion industry. Further, it connects the theoretical discourse that occurs in academia about sustainability with the praxis that is needed to create change. By approaching this with an analysis of both the barriers to Slow Fashion and how similar barriers have been dismantled within the Slow Food movement, the four resolutions applied in the methodology will hopefully contribute to a greater understanding of how to approach the dissemination of information about the slow and sustainable fashion system. Further, the creation of the journal puts the theoretical methods into practice and exhibits the potential avenues of communication; that can be created between

consumers and the Slow Fashion movement through media outlets that set out to change consumer's habits. I believe that looking into the Slow Food movement's strategies can give us a more critical understanding of how to approach the same issues within the Slow Fashion movement; and its application into magazines solidifies the claim that alternative knowledge systems can foster change. Analyzing the movement allows us to better understand both our present consumption practices and the changes that need to be made in the future – and in comparing the two slow movements, it becomes much easier to visualize the possibility for change in the fashion industry. While neither the sustainable food system or the Slow Food movement is flawless, the changes made through their influence are a key step towards a greater change in how we think about and approach both the social and environmental systems on our planet in a more sustainable and ethical way. It is my hope that through the Brickyards Journal, more awareness of slow fashion and sustainable fashion alternatives can ultimately contribute to this same change.

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## Appendix A

### Ethics



#### **Ryerson University Consent Agreement**

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Please read this consent form so that you understand what your participation will involve. Before you consent to participate, please ask any questions to be sure you understand what your participation will involve.

**TITLE OF STUDY:** The Brickyards Journal: A creative pilot project dedicated to the growth of the Canadian slow fashion movement through print media.

**INVESTIGATORS:** This research study is being conducted by graduate student Jennifer Bilczuk, under the supervision of Dr. Lu Ann Lafrenz from the School of Fashion at Ryerson University. This research project is being undertaken in partial fulfilment of Jennifer's graduate degree requirements and the research will be used in Jennifer's Major Research Project.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

**Principle Investigator:** Jennifer Bilczuk, Graduate Student, School of Fashion, Ryerson University [jbilczuk@ryerson.ca](mailto:jbilczuk@ryerson.ca)

**Research Advisor:** Dr. Lu Ann Lafrenz, Associate Professor, School of Fashion, Ryerson University [lalafren@ryerson.ca](mailto:lalafren@ryerson.ca) or 416-979-5000 Ex. 7077

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:** This project is a creative exploration of the distribution of information about slow/sustainable fashion, aimed at encouraging the adoption of more sustainable consumption practices. The creative practice will take shape in the form of a published non-academic art journal that will contain an assortment of articles, interviews, and photo essays that will contribute to developing knowledge around the industry.

**WHAT PARTICIPATION MEANS:** If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

- Upon your agreement to voluntarily participate in the study, you will be interviewed to discuss your participation in the field of slow and sustainable fashion. The interview will be approximately 60 minutes in length and will give you the opportunity to discuss your

thoughts, expertise and knowledge about the production and consumption of slow and sustainable fashion. Photographs of your work and/or work space may be taken and will be published in the final form of the research project.

- The information that you share with the interviewer will be collected and contribute to the production on a non-academic journal that intends to showcase different areas of the slow fashion movement in hopes of promoting a greater adoption of conscious consumption habits.

### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS:**

- The potential benefit of participation is to support the development of knowledge in regard to slow, sustainable, and Canadian fashion.

I cannot guarantee, however, that you will receive any benefits from participating in this study.

### **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS TO YOU AS A PARTICIPANT:**

- There is a potential risk of privacy loss, if the participant chooses to share identifying information that will appear in the published work by the researcher.
- There is a business-related risk to participants when discussing their organization that may reveal management-strategies or views of the industry that may impact the participants organization.
- If you choose to share identifying information with the researcher, you have the right to review and make edits to any of the information pertaining to you or your work.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY:**

- The research collected in this study will be published in the final form of the project. Your name and identifiable information, including photographs, will be publicly available to the readers of the journal.
- You have the right to choose to remain anonymous during the research and in the final research project. At any point, you may remove your name, and any identifying information from the research.
- All data collected from the interview, including audio recordings, transcriptions and photographs will be stored on a password locked USB. The data collected will be kept until August 2018.
- The data collected will only be viewed by the researcher and their supervisor prior to publication of the final project. It will be protected by a numerical code and kept stored in a room that can only be accessed by the researcher and supervisor.

**INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION:** The participant will not receive any payment or incentive for participating in this study.

**COSTS TO PARTICIPATION:** There are no known costs to participation.

**COMPENSATION FOR INJURY:** By agreeing to participate in this research, you are not giving up or waiving any legal right in the event that you are harmed during the research.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL:**

- Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You can choose whether to be in the study or not. You may choose to only answer questions that you are comfortable with. You may at any point withdraw from participation, without penalty or explanation.
- If you chose to withdraw, please contact the researcher directly. Your interview will be destroyed, with any subsequent information (i.e., photos), and will not be included in the study.
- You may withdraw until the final form of the project is submitted to publication. After this date it may not be possible to withdraw your data.
- Your withdrawal will not impact your relationship with Ryerson University or the researcher.

**FOLLOW UP:**

- To obtain a copy of the journal and the final research results, please leave your name and e-mail with the researcher. Final research reports will be sent out electronically via e-mail, and the hardcopy journal will be sent out via mail.

**QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY:** If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact:

Principal Investigator: Jennifer Bilczuk, Graduate Student, School of Fashion, Ryerson University, [jbilczuk@ryerson.ca](mailto:jbilczuk@ryerson.ca)

Research Advisor: Dr. Lu Ann Lafrenz, Associate Professor, School of Fashion, Ryerson University, [lalafren@ryerson.ca](mailto:lalafren@ryerson.ca), 416-979-5000 Ex. 7077

This study has been reviewed by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study please contact:

Research Ethics Board  
c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation  
Ryerson University  
350 Victoria Street  
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3  
416-979-5042  
[rebchair@ryerson.ca](mailto:rebchair@ryerson.ca)

**THE BRICKYARDS JOURNAL:  
A CREATIVE STUDY OF INFORMATIONAL DISTRIBUTION TO PROMOTE THE  
PRACTICE OF SLOW FASHION THROUGH PRINT MEDIA.**

**CONFIRMATION OF AGREEMENT:**

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to participate in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement. You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I agree to be audio-recorded for the purposes of this study. I understand how these recordings will be stored and destroyed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I agree to allow my work and work spaces to be photographed for the purposes of this study. I understand how these photographs will be used in the published final form of the project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I agree to be photographed for the purposes of this study. I understand how these photographs will be used in the published final form of this project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I agree to allow my work, including essays, artefacts and photography to be used for the purposes of this study. I understand how these items will be used in the published final form of this project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Interview Guide

### **Complete the Consent form**

All interviews will begin with the completion of the consent form. The participant will be reminded that they can choose to not answer questions that make them uncomfortable and that they may choose to remain anonymous.

### **Preliminary Questions:**

1. Can you please describe what you do?
2. How long have you been in this field?
3. How did you start in this field?
4. How long have you been in your current position?
5. How do you describe slow or sustainable fashion practices?

### **In-Depth Interview Questions:**

1. Please describe a day at work for you.
2. What are the core values of your business?
3. Why was this a key area for you to get involved in?
4. Do you try to incorporate slow or sustainable practices into your work?
5. Do you have a specific slow or sustainable goal for your business?
6. How do you try to incorporate slow or sustainable practices into your work? (If no, why not?)
7. What aspects of sustainability are important to you? (Why?)
8. What is the biggest challenge that you face in your industry? (Why?)
9. What do you think is the biggest challenge facing the industry as a whole? (Why?)
10. Do you see a shift occurring in the industry? (How?)
11. What do you believe is important for consumers to know? (Why?)
12. How do you try to promote your slow or sustainable values?
13. Can you please describe some of the other types of businesses that you work with?
14. What do you look for in business partners? (i.e.: factory owners, store owners, retailers, media outlets, designers)
15. Do you incorporate sustainability into other aspects of your life? (How?)

## **Appendix B**

### Content

#### **The Brickyards Journal**

What does sustainable fashion mean?

Defining sustainability comes as no easy task. The word seems to shift in use and context, and is used seemingly interchangeable with ethical, fair trade, organic, without any guide to help discern the varying definitions and ever-changing meaning. To be sustainable is to think of the future while considering the present. It means that in every action we think of both current and future consequences and find ways to act more thoughtfully.

There are diverse ways to act sustainably – and there is no singular way to act or be perfectly sustainable. It depends much more on deciding what matters to you and how you choose to act in accordance with your values. Discovering what parts of being sustainable you support and making the changes to help you align your own values with your purchases. Taking the time to research and become informed about your own role as a consumer and how you interact with the global chain of fashion and clothing.

Being sustainable doesn't need to be difficult or complex – it just requires actively thinking about your purchases and making decision that impact more than just you.

This journal is a collection of articles and stories that aim to give you, the consumer, some perspective on fashion, sustainability, and consumption. It features interviews with some of the individuals dedicated to creating a more sustainable industry – by investing in slow, ethical, and fair business practices.

It also aims to be a space to find information about fabric, manufacturing and garments that can help consumers make more conscious decisions in and outside of the mainstream fashion industry. It hopes to explain some of the more difficult concepts and create a clearer view of the industry as a whole.

## Defining Sustainability

Katie & Regine

[Co-Owners, Victoire and the Guild]

Regine: “For me its about meaningful interactions. We like that when we meet with our designers, we’re meeting them face to face, were learning about their process, getting to know them as people. They have relationships with their contractors that they sub contract their designs, their manufacturing to. I love that there’s such a small chain”.

Katie: “We’re one of those links in the chain. We’re having those conversations in the shop and we’re dealing with the designers or the pattern makers and its all disseminated really quickly”.

Regine: “We love fashion, we love pretty things, but that’s not enough for me. I want the layers of depth”.

Sabine

[Owner & Designer, Spare Label]

“I think that there’s several factors involved in sustainable and slow fashion practices, and often people will focus on just one aspect. It’s better to focus on one aspect than no aspects, but I do try and be mindful of all the processes, materials, and makers involved in my collections.

I would also say that even more broad than sustainable making, thoughtful making. Thoughtful to me, encompasses, sustainable, ethical, slow fashion that keeps in mind every step in the process and how to be as empathetic as possible”.

Laura & Tonia

[Co-Owners & Designers, Twiss & Weber]

Laura: “I think sensibility comes with sustainability, there’s a sensibleness. You have to realize you can’t overuse stuff, you can’t take it for granted, you have to be respectful of the items. So being sustainable is using your garment. How are you treating it, how are you using it, are you going to treat it like garbage, or are you going to use it like over, over, and over again”.

Tonia: “Being Canadian made is awesome, but it’s the way we consume our products which is what is really difficult, because we just don’t think about it anymore. We want you to consume our product, but we want you to, no matter what, think about it and love it. Because we’re not just making it to sell it to you for four dollars, we want to you to take pride in it”.

Carrie

[Owner & Designer, Made with Love Lingerie]

“For me, sustainable means trying to produce things that don’t create a ton of waste, and something that is going to last and appeal to someone for a long time - not just a one-time wear and then dispose. I really only produce what I know is going to sell, so I don’t have a ton of wasted labour and wasted product or production.

It's a growing process. Even [for] myself, things change each year, and I try to adopt more and more sustainable practices. It's always worked into my growth strategy, but there's times where it's just difficult to take on as many changes as you'd like to. So, you just try your best".

Marie-Anne

[Owner & Designer Milijours Studios]

"For me, sustainable design is very important to exist long term . . . If you use cheap materials, no matter how hard you're try to make a good product, you'll end up with a crappy product . . . A product should last. Otherwise, it is a design error"

Charmain

[Owner, Integrity Designs]

"I'd say just thoughtful production numbers. I think it's evolving every season and every collection and being very aware of what you're making, and what you're making it out of and where it's actually going and anticipating the change that could come. So, I think it's just being thoughtful, every step of the process.

I'm not out there planting trees, I'm not shutting down factories and protesting things, I am selfishly making pretty clothing because I love it. But it was really important to me to make sure my impact is positive in the areas that I care about, and just human rights, and the ethics of it and the environment especially. Being sustainable just makes sense, I want to be here on this planet".

## **Slow Philosophies**

The Slow movement was initiated in 1980's. Carlo Petrini, the founder of the Slow Food movement, was an activist against the integration of fast food restaurants into Italy, specifically for taking up space in culturally important areas – like the Spanish Steps in Rome . The movement saw fast food as challenging their historic gastro-traditions of quality and pleasure; and mobilized to counter this integration with a revitalization of traditional Italian food culture, focusing on elements that reconnected Italians with their gastro-heritage.

The relationship between slow and fashion can at first seem to be an oxymoron of sorts – with the fast paced and ever-changing nature of fashion inherent to its essence. Yet the current system of production that supports the fashion industry is a relatively recent development – and looking into the not so distant history of the industry reveals that we had a very different relationship with our clothes, even prior to the 1990's .

“Fast fashion” is a term that has been used by mainstream fashion media at an increasing rate over the last few years, but its only really been in our fashion vocabulary for the last 20 years . The term entails the type of production and consumption that is practiced by mainstream consumerism, and its products can be found at large in retailers like Zara, Forever 21, and other large chain corporations.

There's many aspects that make a garment “fast fashion” but it predominately relates to the rapid rate at which a garment is made, consumed, and used, eventually to be tossed away. These garments are also characterized by their cheap prices and quality, often at the expense of the welfare of the workers and the environment.

It evolved from major companies looking to increase production at reduced rates, and manufacturing was moved to locations outside of the main consumption region. Garment manufacturers at first predominantly moved into China; a country which at the time was looking to revitalize its own economic situation . The shift was mutually beneficial for companies and the government – with little regard to all of the workers that would be impacted (both in North America and in China). As China has grown into a strong economic and industrial country, production has moved into other locations where labour can be sourced cheaply, and governments are looking to enter the global economy.

This type of production is predominantly the way garments are made now: with production occurring in “far-away” places for consumer groups in North America and Europe. The process completely removes the product from its production, and the consumers rarely face the individuals who make their clothing. The disconnect allows for a number of environmental and social atrocities to occur without any response from consumers, and little regard for the garments themselves.

The slow fashion movement is fundamentally opposed to these practices; it looks to produce clothing in a way that is ethical and sustainable, elongating the lifecycle of garments. Like the slow food movement, it looks into history, towards a time when production practices were done slower and more thoughtfully, connecting people with their products and bolstering a relationship between the producers and consumers. Its cause has been taken up and developed by Kate Fletcher in 2008– a household name in sustainable fashion, who has worked to

conceptualize alternative sustainable ways to interact with our clothing and the industry as a whole .

Before the development of “fast fashion”, our relationship with our clothing was much deeper than the superficial nature often applied to the industry. At one point, textiles and garments were a form of currency; because of their value, we took care of garments, mending them when needed and often modifying them when styles changed . We’ve all but lost this cultural history in modern society; and slow fashion seeks to reinvigorate it.

The designers and individuals behind slow fashion brands follow a set of methods behind production that reflect the more traditional practices of the garment industry.

A slow fashion collection often observes the traditional fashion cycle, a 2-season rotation between Fall/Winter and Spring/Summer; whereas fast fashion companies alternatively can create up to 20-50 “seasons” within the year. Following the traditional calendar decreases the impulse to constantly buy, instead following the natural seasons, replacing garments as they need to be, not simply when they become boring or out of style.

A garment, whether produced within the fast or slow fashion cycle, requires the same amount of work and time – in this way “fast” fashion doesn’t really exist, but slow fashion does respect the making process in a way that fast fashion production does not. In slow fashion, garment workers are treated with respect and paid a living wage. They have the time and the space they need to produce clothing in a way that ensures quality and longevity, and they are given fair payment for the work they’ve done.

This is radically different from the way garment workers are treated in factories that manufacture fast fashion, where workers are often abused and denied basic worker rights. In valuing the work of the production team, slow fashion also places greater value on the garments themselves; and hope that the wearer is able to foster a relationship with the garment out of respect for its production and value. In doing so, it hopes to elongate the lifecycle of garments, separating itself from the disposability of today’s consumerism.

Slow fashion also considers the relationship between garment production and the environment – acknowledging the environmental resources that are used in textile production, and the impact that textile waste has on the Earth. Fast fashion largely ignores its impact on the environment, and its large contribution to pollution and contamination – the industry also generates some of the worlds largest quantities of waste.

Instead, many slow brands will look for ways to responsibly source fabric, like using deadstock, upcycling, recycled materials, or using fabrics that are sustainably produced, like hemp or bamboo rayon. It is also important in the movement to minimize waste, and often designers will find creative ways to either repurpose or use any off-shoot from the production process. In respecting the environment, many slow fashion brands will look towards historical methods of textile production that works in harmony with the Earth – giving slow fashion a unique culture rooted in heritage, very similar to the slow food movement.

The concept of slow involves so much more than simply the timeline to design and make a garment – it considers the entire process of creating a garment, prioritizing the experience of everyone involved in the process, and the impact the garment has both socially and environmentally. In doing so, the movement strives to re-establish a connection between the

consumer and the producer in a way that we no longer experience within the current fashion system. Understanding where our clothing comes from is one way to establish how sustainability fits into our own lives. The closer we get, the easier it is to understand.

## Spare Label

Spare Label is a Toronto-based collection of clothing and accessories that are hand-marbled by Sabine Spare, a textile designer who has been working in fashion since university. Spare found her love for fabric marbling during a workshop in New York at the Textile Arts Center. Before New York, Spare had the opportunity to work with a weaving co-op in Guatemala and a residency opportunity in rural Oaxaca, Mexico, working with a master weaver. She learned traditional, pre-Colombian techniques that physically connected the weaver with the making process. “When I came back to city I felt I had outgrown the costume work I had been doing, I wanted to do something that felt more personal and more aligned with my interests”. Spare Label was launched in May 2017 after Spare circled back to her fabric marbling finding a more personal niche in design and fashion.

What does slow or sustainable mean to you?

I think that there’s several factors involved in sustainable and slow fashion practices, and often people will focus on just one aspect. It’s better to focus on one aspect than no aspects, but I do try and be mindful of all the processes, materials, and makers involved in my collections. Everything from sourcing dead stock fabric, trying to use up as much of the waste as possible, designing pieces that can be created using the off-cuts, or reusing water whenever possible. In the textile industry, the biggest issues from an environmental perspective include water, contamination and usages, material wastage; and from an ethical human perspective, labor practices and the way people are treated and paid for their work. Any time I need other makers to help me in the creation of a piece, I’m very aware of making sure it’s a positive interaction, as opposed to exploitative or finding the lowest rate possible. To me that’s important, making sure everyone at every step of the process feels good about what they’re making, how they’re getting treated and how they’re getting paid.

What does an average day look like for you?

I would say every day is pretty different. If I were to take an average day, often I’ll spend the morning doing e-mails, applying to things, doing web orders, the computer side of stuff. After a few hours I will put my apron on and get to the fun stuff. Sometimes that means I’ll be washing fabrics, or I’ll have pieces of leather being treated and I’ll be marbling them in the afternoon. There’s steps in the pattern making process and the marbling process and it involves a lot of drying so obviously its time based. I can’t force the fabrics to dry any faster, so when something’s drying, I’ll try to be doing something else in the meantime. It might be sampling if I’ve been working on some new pieces. Or I’ll meet with a client, either meeting with them to bring them something, to show them a sample or muslin or to talk through an idea with them. Sometimes, I’ll be sewing, cutting – it all depends on what projects I have in the works.

What are the core values of your business?

Collaboration is really important to me. Collaborating with customers and collaborating with other designers and makers which also ties into my teaching practice. I think that learning and teaching are very important to me and my brand. It’s not just about making things and selling things, it’s about the entire interaction and the entire story of making.

I would also say that even more broad than sustainable making is thoughtful making. Thoughtful to me, encompasses, sustainable, ethical, slow fashion that keeps in mind every step in the

process and how to be as empathetic as possible. It is also important to do things that are exciting and interesting because there is obviously a lot of products out there and I aspire to stand out with Spare Label.

Why was this a key area for you to get involved in?

I think I have a bit of an interior conflict, which I'm sure a lot of people have as well: if you love fashion and you love stuff but you also hate consumerism and capitalism and the big machine of it all. The interior dialog is something like, "What do I do, how do I navigate this? I really enjoy beautiful things, but I also don't want to support unethical labor practices and I don't want to be over consuming". Spare Label centers on the idea of creating a very curated life. You can have some items that are really exciting and beautiful, and you treasure them. Those items might be a bit more expensive, but they're going to be important to you and they're going to last for a long time – rather than having a whole bunch of stuff that you don't care much about. Just having a few things and getting to a level where everything in your life can be special was the original motivation for the collection. That's why custom development has been important to pursue because it takes the product to the next level by making them very personal. I think when customers are involved in the design process, it heightens the experience of the product and it becomes special.

How do you incorporate slow and sustainable values into your work?

A key component is my fabric which is deadstock. Deadstock means it's new and has never been used but it's left over from a fashion brand that closed down or is left over from when a brand over ordered. It's a way to use high quality materials for a bit of a lower cost while not creating demand for more textiles and using up what already exists. As a result, everything is limited edition and small batch. Once I run out of fabric I cannot get more which makes all the pieces in the collection even more unique.

The textile industry is one of the largest contributors to water pollution, so it is a big issue. The technique that I use is predominately marbling is an aqueous surface design technique. It does require water, but that being said, I do what I can to use as little water as possible. I'll print fabric all at once in batches, that way it's using substantially less water, rather than doing a couple of pieces at a time, and I'm able to use the same size (the size is the liquid you marble over and over). If I wash something in a Ph neutral soap with warm water, I'll leave the basin of water and wash something in the same water because it'll be fine. I just try to be aware of not using too much or pouring too much down the drain. I also use dye, but the type that I use is called "acid dye" which sounds scary but its only called acid dye because it uses vinegar, which is an acid. If you do the calculations properly, most of the dye is absorbed by the fabric, and when you remove the fabric from the dye pot, the water is almost clear because it's just water and vinegar left over. This is great, because it doesn't involve pouring toxic dyes down the drain. I am very aware of that, I definitely don't want to be dumping chemicals into our water system.

What do you think are some of the challenges facing the industry of slow fashion?

I think there are several big challenges in the industry. For one, awareness of how things are made and the importance of making positive consumption choices. I think there's a lot of "I don't see it happening, so I'm not going to think of it" – an out of sight out of mind mentality with fashion in general. This is really problematic, but people are becoming increasingly more aware and caring more. There's definitely a movement towards supporting makers, but I think ignorance is big challenge. People might balk at a price tag, and it actually hurts when people are like "Wow that's how much it costs" because they don't think about how long it takes to make something ethically and sustainably. I think the marketing side of things is also challenging. There's just so much out there and so much competition, that it's hard for people to even know about brands especially when they are trying to support sustainable brands.

I think that it's becoming cool to be a maker. There is a lot of political turmoil in the world right now, and that's making Canadians a little bit prouder of who we are. Wanting to support "Made in Canada" and to support our own economy, because we do have a great country and we should. I don't think it's necessarily bad to have things be made overseas, that's not what I'm saying at all, but there's a lot more space for things to be unethically produced when they're manufactured far away, because again, it's the out of sight out of mind issue. Brands can claim ignorance: "well I didn't know that was happening in the factory, I didn't know that these workers were being exploited, I didn't know that they were just outsourcing to making in their homes". There's all those issues, and then obviously importation is a huge environmental burden. To be flying, or using boats, or train or trucks, to bring all this product to this country. Supporting local is a huge step in the right direction. At the end of the day I am an optimist and believe that everyone is trying their best. If we all just take a bit of time to consider our purchases and the impact that they have, we will all be better off.

## **Socially Aware Social Media**

For the mainstream fashion industry, social media has become a centralized portrayal of communication between brands and consumers; creating networks of consumption linked between businesses, influencers, and users. In many ways these social media networks promote consumption in a way that is antithetical to slow fashion: the constant encouragement of buying and consuming, the promotion of short-lived and ever-changing trends, the state of desire and need for material gratification emphasized by branded imagery. Instagram alone has 300 million active daily users, with 4.2 billion likes exchanged everyday – the sheer volume of the network creates a vortex of information that can be difficult to engage with on a personal level.

Yet, social media also operates in a way that also connects consumers with alternative brands, in a point of access that is pocketed away from the mainstream feeds, creating communities that gather to support and sustain one another. These pockets are spaces where users can find businesses that exist on the fringes of mainstream fashion, and brands that are not supported by the mainstream fashion media. Often, they are smaller, ethical, and women-owned – and supported by consumers who share their values and morals. For these brands, social media gives them access to their consumers needs directly and gives the consumer the opportunity to connect with the making process, fostering a more authentic relationship between the two forces and a more emotionally satisfying experience.

These spaces allow brands to engage with their consumers in a multitude of ways, allowing them to market and sell at the same time. It is especially useful for brands that may not have the time or financial resources to invest in an online store or other selling platforms. Localized brands are able to access consumers beyond their geographical reach, expanding the market for ethical goods while maintaining the close connection. Tonia of Twiss and Weber explains that “Instagram has really gotten us a lot of attention lately. Especially online, we’ve gotten more clients, like ones in New York, a couple of people in Toronto”. Her business partner Laura adds, “[online selling is] an area of business that we want to eventually focus on, but we just can’t right now, like we can’t dedicate any resources to it just yet”. The connection however that they try to foster in their boutique remains present in their online exchanges: “because we manage that client and reach out to them by email phone or DM, is so much more intimate than click-shop-put it in your cart, and then away you go”.

Social media has also become an avenue for the evolvement of greater transparency in the slow fashion industry. Carrie from With Love Lingerie speaks of how the slow aspects of her business are supported by Instagram and its sharing features, in ways that allow her to give access to her followers that show how each garment is made by her: “Instagram stories and hashtags and things like have really brought a lot of people to the fore front that didn’t know it was basically a one woman army most of the time but they see the stories and they’re like, “oh you did make all of that”, and I’m like “yeah!”, that’s exactly what I did Friday night, I just sewed till midnight”. Its an opportunity to consumers to identify directly with the making process in a personal way, seeing their own garments made and creating a greater depth of understanding and appreciation for the less celebrated side of fashion.

There is a duality to this avenue that brings into question brands that don’t make these aspects of their business available to consumers, leaving their lack of transparency to be criticized. As described by Sabine of Spare Label, this is something that should be considered by all consumers, “[social media is] opening the curtain to all the secrets of the fashion industry that

were previously there and now its like if you're not showing that transparency what do you have to hide? So, I think that the biggest resource people have is the social media accounts of brands. If you like a brand and they're not showing you any of the behind the scene stuff you have to ask yourself why".

Social media is also capable, through videos and images, of exposing the non-glamorous sides of the fashion industry. For Charmain of Integrity Designs, we can no longer ignore what is directly in front of us: "especially in the digital age we can't really hide from what's happening". There is an omnipresence of information about factory collapses, worker exploitations and environmental damages; and it becomes difficult to claim ignorance towards the issues impacting the garment industry. This stakes out social media as an unlikely ally to slow fashion, operating as one of the easiest points of access to the movement, offering quick-access information to both the positive and negative aspects of the industry. Collaborating together over social media allows for community and belonging to foster between alternative brands and their consumers, ultimately promoting the core values of the slow fashion movement. Where its fast nature might seem to oppose the fundamentals of slow and sustainable fashion, it might just be able to bring consumers up to speed on the evolution of this movement.

## Beginning with Basics

In producing her own line, With Love Lingerie, Carrie Russel believes there is priority in respecting the making process. Every factor of her supply chain is handled in an ethical manner to the best of Carrie's ability: there is no exploitation in labour, there are fair wages, and a good environment to work in. "It means luxury intimate pieces are legitimately being made with love and respect".

For Carrie, the intimate aspects of lingerie are contradicted when created with questionable labour practices. Her process instead incorporates the spirit of traditional European ateliers: "pieces were really beautiful, and they were made exquisitely; and part of the attraction was that you knew it was made exquisitely because it was made by these amazing people that you'd get to go and visit and see their work". Aware that she wouldn't be able to open an atelier quite like Dior, it was a making process she could encapsulate with lingerie – and it grounds her in her growth: "I want to keep that in mind and I want my studio to look and feel as great as the pieces leaving it. It steers me in so many decision-making things, it's a good sort of compass to stick by".

Sustainability starts with production for Carrie. Aware that her biggest impact or footprint is going to be fabric and lotion usage, Carrie Russel tries to produce garments that will last – while not creating excess amounts of waste. To ensure this, Carrie only produces what she knows is going to sell, minimizing wasted labour and product. This is made possible through very small controlled runs, producing orders that include only four to six pieces per colour and size. For her boutique stockists, she offers a 2 to 4 week turn around, maintaining a relatively small stock pile in her studio. When she does have overstock, she creates events, like "sip and shops", where she can connect with her customers and find homes for any extra sets or pieces.

Working in lingerie, Carrie has found unique ways to be sustainable in her production process that are specific to her industry. From sourcing fabric, she searches for material that can be used in different grains and stretch directions, optimizing their versatility. The tiny details so specific to lingerie are created through hand detailing, using the scraps from cutting to make ruffles and trims – a process that is relatively inexpensive and leaves her with little waste at the end of the week. "I also tend to buy large yardage of lace so that I then can cut out applique from the waste and also use [it] within some larger designs as well. So, if I'm doing a black lace kimono, you'll see little pieces of that lace translated into a half sock applique or an applique on a bralette or something like that."

As With Love grows, she hopes to eventually move into more natural fabrics, working with silks and silk tulle. These are stepping stones for her business, as natural fabrics are so much more expensive than synthetic fibers, which keep her prices within an accessible range: "it's a delicate balance between being able to bring those fabrics in and getting them to the customer at a price tag they can still indulge". This type of consideration for her consumer creates a connection that transforms her customers into clients.

These fabrics are also hard to secure for sustainable production, "it's so hard to chase the chain down, when you're trying to run your business and fact check that it is a sustainable business:". Designers that are sustainably-minded also have to weigh aspects of their production against one another: "it basically is really tough, you have to draw the line between how sustainable you are

and what your brand is. And what is maybe personally sustainable for you and your business and its just a delicate tightrope”.

“It’s a growing process, even myself, things change each year, and I try to adopt more and more sustainable practices. And its always worked into my growth strategy, but there’s times where its just difficult to take on as many changes as you’d like to. So, you just try your best.”

While the majority of With Love Lingerie is made by hand, by Carrie, she does contract some production to a small batch production house in downtown Toronto. Working within the slow fashion industry, finding other businesses that align with her values remains a priority – both on a sustainability and integrity level.

“When I started out obviously I was just trying to make my business work, and I ended up compromising a few times and it never ended well. If your values don’t align it just doesn’t work”. This extends into the stores Carrie decides to stock with “they have to same sort of level of customer care and involvement and engagement that I like to have with them my one-on-one clients too.” This usually results in partnerships with other small-scale businesses and women-owned businesses.

“We just give more a damn I guess, I think that’s what it comes down to.”

Working in such an intimate way with customers requires extra care towards the relationship between the consumer and their body. The topic of body positivity is at the forefront of fashion commentary, but its with small ethically-produced brands that we see important conversations happening on the ground level. “I would say most small businesses are super body positive. Its not only because we care, we have our own company, so we care about people and bodies and our clients and potential customers. But we have to be body positive most of the time because you have to work pretty closely [with clients] and you’re trying to grow your brand, and you’re trying to appeal to different shapes and sizes”. Taking the measures to ensure she can cater to all clients is an inherent aspect of Carrie’s business; but she also emphasizes how customization is incredibly important to slow fashion as a mutually beneficial exchange for designers and clients. Working with smaller resources, customization gives With Love Lingerie the best chance at providing something for everyone, when she can’t necessarily accommodate more than a few garments per size and colour in a run. “We would love to [always provide for people], because it’s really satisfying to have someone wear something of yours that was maybe difficult for them to get before . . .I just wish there was a little more give and take in understanding that I’m not a large company”.

Despite her size, Carrie’s commitment to her sustainable practices remains constant; and she finds encouragement in the growing awareness of the movement. Finding her customers returning to buy again and again, she sees the impact of ethical and sustainable production on the mentality of consumers. “I am lucky that more and more people are tickled by and attracted to the fact that I make this all mostly myself, that’s really exciting for a lot of people, and I’m glad they appreciate that”.

## How to Hunt

The idea of changing those habits can be hard to imagine. Buying a garment in the mall is a guaranteed success. You can often find exactly what you're looking for, there is a wide selection of sizes and you are almost always going to buy something that is within the sphere of stylish and on trend.

Leaving the comfort of the mall can be daunting at first. When you shop at either local or second-hand stores, a lot of those guarantees are gone. It becomes harder to find basics, and sizing options, especially when shopping second hand. There is rarely more than one garment per size available and standards can vary and the experience of trying to find one specific item can be infuriating. Yet, shopping second creates opportunities for new and exciting ways to engage with fashion and your relationship to clothing – while contributing to less waste by prolonging the lifecycle of already manufactured goods. While to some extent, shopping second hand requires an updated set of habits to acquire in order to make your shopping successful, the first rule to approaching second hand stores is to act the same way you would in a normal shop: treat thrift stores and second-hand shops the exact same way as you would a regular store. In doing so you eliminate any mental barriers that might prevent you from enjoying the experience. Go in with the same hopes of finding a cute item that makes you feel great. Once you've settled into the thrift store environment the next few tips become easier to apply.

1. Figure out where you're going and what you're looking for.

Thrifting, consignment, vintage, second hand while all essentially sell the same thing, they are also vastly different.

**Consignment:** these shops are middle man between you and another fashion-conscious consumer. Goods are collected from other shoppers and sold by the store, with a split in profits between the store and the customer. It also means that prices can vary and become quite expensive depending on the store, the brand of clothing and the quality of the garment. High end consignment stores are great places to find bargain designer items but be weary as prices can inflate from the two-party interest.

**Vintage:** These shops often carry a very particular type of second hand clothing. They are often meticulously curated by the owner with an eye for superior quality, high stakes clothing with historical value. They often boast rare or hard to find garments that can be expensive based on their scarcity and relationship with the past.

**Charity Shops/Second Hand Shops:** Goodwill, Salvation Army, these stores are usually not-for-profit with a majority of the funds going into the charities affiliated with the charities. They are great places to find a combination of basics and unique pieces donated from someone's grandma's attic. Normally their prices are much cheaper compared to vintage shops because of their stock is primarily donations and the funds go into the charity.

2. Take a mental check of your clothing.

What do you already have? Checking in with your closet can help break purchasing patterns supported by cheap prices. If you already own 5 blue crewnecks, buying another one because you found it for \$5 isn't a productive purchase.

What do you need? You can never be sure of what you're going to find in a thrift shop, so it's good to carry a mental checklist of things you could look for. Not all second-hand clothing is vintage, and you can easily find recycled trendy items or classics that are in great condition. Before buying a brand-new item, see if you can find it second hand.

### 3. Keep an open mind but be realistic.

It's easy to get wrapped up in one-of-a-kind garments, they're unique, they're fun, it's a "new" version of you. But realistically, are you going to wear it? Buying a really fantastic garment because it is \$6, isn't sustainable. Instead leave it for someone who will wear it, not keep it in their closet for "one day".

### 4. Learn to read clothing.

Second-hand clothing can be expensive, especially in vintage and consignment shops. Learning to read a garment for its make can help you identify its value and makes sure you're investing money into it wisely. Do you recognize the label? What is the fabric content? What is the construction like? Is there any non-fixable damage? Always check for stains, smells and holes – these are three important factors that can't be easily fixed. Being able to assess the value of garment ultimately can save you money and closet space.

## Selling Canadian Made

Katie and Regine of Victoire boutique have been collaborating with makers since 2006. Still in fourth year university and working with a variety of craft sales, shows and events, they were placed within a DIY community and alternative economy that “had nothing to with “fashion” fashion or the malls, or the more traditional way of spending money”. The maker scene was beginning to emerge at this point, with Etsy only in its second year, and Katie and Regine found themselves plugged in. Organizing a craft sale in Ottawa, entitled, “Not Your Grandma’s Craft Sale” ultimately inspired the idea behind Victoire: R: “we loved it, so we wanted a shop that made that purchase possible on every other weekend that the craft sale wasn’t going on”.

Finding designers to carry was a task in itself, and the path to sourcing their brands happened in a very organic way; sometimes looking in the back pages of Bust magazine or asking after brands they found in other stores: K: “Sometimes it would be like “oh I loved the illustration you did for that album cover”, and then they’d be like “Oh I also sell like screened t-shirts” and it was like “oh awesome, you’re an awesome illustrator, we want in”. These weird path ways to finding what is now so omnipresent.”

These connections have manifested themselves into a business that is based on meaningful interactions, as described by Regine: “we like that when we meet with our designers, we’re meeting them face to face, we’re learning about their process, get to know them as people ... We love fashion, we love pretty things, but that’s not enough for me. I want the layers of depth”.

These meaningful interactions compliment the pairs approach to sustainability, valuing the specific individuals within the community. Often this mentality is lost within the consumerism we know from H&M, Zara, and other large companies – it makes it difficult to conceive of the actual people involved in every step. Victoire, alternatively, sets out to reconnect their consumers with the making process, asking them to acknowledge the complexity of the production side of the fashion industry: K: “There is such a small amount of designers that have the skills that are necessary to actually be able to do this job. There is such a small amount of people who know how to cut, people who know how to sew, people who know how to do all of these things, that its sustainable because its so small.” ‘

Small and sustainability connect in multiple ways for Victoire. As a small business, Katie and Regine find there was rarely other options to being sustainably-minded, R: “Its had to be a slow and sustainable business because I feel like when you build something pretty steady because of the way we’ve grown, slowly, and that’s sustainable.” The two share key characteristics, with aspects of being a small business easily lending themselves to the fundamental aspects of sustainability; maximizing the use of all resources, the emphasized value of every object, and the development of a supportive community. K: “The real thing for us is, its not a concept, or something that’s in vogue right now, we are a small business which means we have very, very little money and resources to do anything with, so everything is sustainable because we are going to reuse it in a million different ways.”

Within this space of Canadian-made and independent designers, there is an emphasized feeling of femininity, a femme-centric approach to community and belonging: K: “I think something that attracted us to the type of business that that we are, that is like immediately obvious in every visual you see, is we are girl girls. We are capital W woman, we love girl culture, we love stimulating female relationships, we love that big part of the world and running a store allows

you to solely interact with awesome super great women and we love that. Like it fuels us all the time.” Approaching their business this way, counters the approach used by bigger retailers to minimize the customer and their needs. Instead, Victoire encourages their female customers to indulge in themselves; with their latest tagline reading “a wardrobe to reflect your beauty, your ideas and your ethics”.

Katie: “I think its really important that those three things exist together. I think a lot of people in fashion, in beauty, in retail, think that women are one way . . . no, you’re always your complex self, and so you can embed every purchasing decision with your ethics, your ideas, your values, your beauty, and that’s what people want to do and that’s our core tenant. Whether you’re buying a \$5 patch or \$250 dress you want your full self to be spoken to”

This plays into the sustainable aspects of Victoire’s business as well. While not only using their space to empower their female customers and host predominantly female designers, the two are critical of overtly feminized female labour force in the mainstream garment industry, and the exploitation of female labour. They challenge the form of consumerism that ignores these issues, especially in juxtaposition to the cultural rise of feminism. K: “If you are making those purchases on the backs of women and their children in foreign countries, and it’s a pink sweater at Zara that says “feminist”, like you can’t anymore, its not allowed . . . Every time you’re making that purchase you’re making it off a woman”. In rejecting this form of consumption, Katie, and Regine circle back to the concept of meaningful interactions. They encourage customers to explore beyond the mainstream fashion industry and experience the change in value you can feel when you seek out slow and sustainable options in local stores. R: “I mean we always want to get more people to understand the value that you get, like truly the value that you feel. Not just the clothing that you buy and love and wear longer, but of interacting with sales people who care about the products they’re selling, and you know the people who made them. Just getting more people in on that, and I feel like we’re gaining traction every year, we’re gaining people and it only takes a few purchases with local business to feel a difference”.

## Slow Journalism

Speed has become a defining trait of the twenty-first century. Being fast is a virtue — from computers, to cars, to fashion trends — and our lives have become shaped by the need for speed. Interestingly, our pursuit to keep pace is often tied into material culture; the more we consume, the more we want to consume, and the quicker we need to do so. It's an endless cycle, except when it's not. What about the things in life that simply can't be completed quickly? Getting to know a good friend, falling in love, learning a difficult new skill, becoming an expert in your field... these things take time. Developing a position in the world is an undeniably slow process.

This tension between fast and slow, translated into the world of media, of websites, news sources, magazines, and journals, can be felt viscerally. In modern culture, the phrase “content is king” is well known; the more content put out, the more responses garnered. Human beings are still creatures of connection, and as much as building a strong readership is about revenue, it is also about relationships. Conversations take place online and offline, in the comments section, over text and in person, adding an entirely new layer to media consumption. With so much content being put out there, the question becomes: how much are readers really able to take in?

It is this question which has prompted the rise of the “slow print” movement. As Megan Le Masurier, scholar of slow journalism has argued: “In the flurry of speed and immediacy, the possibility of considered reflection, of narrative, of contextualized information, disappears, for both producers and consumers of journalism” . Because of this, journalists and content producers have been pushing back against the pressure to consistently produce new content. Though Le Masurier takes note of slow print within academia, the movement has been gaining traction in popular media as well. In the past five years, major outlets like *The New Yorker* and *Man Repeller* have noted both the endless stream of content produced online, and the need to consume in a more active, thoughtful manner. In the *New Yorker* article “On Slow Journalism,” author Evan Osnos understands this type of writing as “meticulously” producing “the sturdiest work” . Author Haley Nahman of *Man Repeller*, on the other hand, does not overtly mention slow journalism; yet her article, comically titled “I Think I Figured Out Why My Brain Is Always Fried,” seems like a cry for a slower consumer process in the world of content . Nahman writes:

“I eschew true engagement in favor of quantity, speed, and immediate like ability. Our unbridled access to creative work may be a modern wonder, but what happens when nothing's placed in context? What happens when we become fans — not of specific writers, thinkers and artists — but of consumption in and of itself?”

Like Nahman, as I continued to research the slow print movement I couldn't help but take stock of my own consumption. Websites, news sites, social media, Netflix... It was easy to notice that I, too, consume content rapidly throughout a single day. However, as a current master's student, I also often disengage with these outlets to engage instead with my own research and studies.

It was then that I turned my focus towards academia. In a world where so much happens so quickly, the academic journal, essay, thesis, or major research project remain outlets which can take months, or even years, to complete. With preliminary research, literature reviews, multiple drafts, revision processes, and peer reviews, a piece of academic work cannot be published without considerable investment.

Slow journalism as a movement does not necessarily refer only to speed. As Le Masurier explains, “These editors and journalists see themselves as participants in a cultural community ... a way to develop the culture, not a neutral reporter” .

Neither is it a question of fast versus slow, or of one type of writing being better than the other . Both have their place in the twenty-first century. Rather, my understanding is that the slow journalism movement encourages active, decisive, and purposeful production and consumption; at whatever pace, if these goals are met, I would place the finished work in the category of slow journalism. With these values in mind, academic research becomes a primary foothold within the slow journalism movement. In their way, bodies of work which align with the principles of slow journalism are sustainable because of their longevity. A well-researched, thoughtful argument stands the test of time. As well, being mindful of what you consume, as a reader, is powerful. Slow journalism, in whatever form you choose to engage with it — reader or author, academic or journalistic, subjective, or objective — is just one way to approach media consumption and production in today’s culture. And though it might seem counterintuitive, the next time you feel overwhelmed by all of the content out there, I suggest you pick up a big, heavy book; or, a nice, long academic essay.

## Small Batch

Charmain Bertram has been sewing since she was 9 years old. If you ask her, this is what she does. Her first opportunity to design a collection came from a call for volunteer designers in a charity fundraiser fashion show for Gay Pride when she was in high school. Her work earned her first client, a 6'4" drag queen who gave the young designer creative liberties in designing a collection of outfits for Pride events. "She'd say, "this year its fuchsia, gold, and black. I need a gown, I need a cocktail dress., I need a daytime outfit, I need a skirt, top, and go. It definitely sparked the creativity right away with no boundaries, no rules, whatsoever, just the louder the better. And its runway, so no ones looking inside to see if its made perfectly so I just smashed stuff together before you learn all the rules".

Moving forward, Charmain worked on producing her own collection of clothing, and eventually began production for other designers as well. "Being a contractor kind of happened by accident . . . [I was] kind of just this idealistic 22-year-old and I was like "Oh I'm not making enough money to survive" and I was just getting started . . . it was just a way to supplement some of my income to pay the bills. And then I just really started". She then opened Integrity Designs, a company named after the values Charmain tries to uphold in every aspect of her business. "I need something that will always pull me back and remind me. That's how I ended up with Integrity Designs because there's always going be a way to opt for something easier, something cheaper, something a little less ethical, but its making you more money or saving you time. And every day I'm reminded of why I do this and what actually matters".

Now Integrity Designs is a 10-person operation, with a number of contracts that keep the production team consistently busy: "I have 9 people helping me, and I'm still working 110 hours [a week]". The space is filled with cutting tables, sewing machines, yards of fabric and racks full of clothes destined to be repurposed; beautiful vintage leather and fur garments are hung together, the predominate materials Charmain uses in her own collection. Despite the abundance of materials, Charmain is dedicated to finding a way to use everything. Her approach to sustainability is holistic in nature; her values are interwoven into every aspect of her business and her daily life. Like many makers, she balances the need to create and indulge in fashion, but she does so in a responsible way:

"I've had such environmental convictions since I was a kid, but I'm selfishly doing what I love. I'm not out there planting trees, I'm not shutting down factories and protesting things, I am selfishly making pretty clothing because I love it. But it was really important to me to make sure my impact is positive in the areas that I care about and just human rights, and the ethics of it and the environment especially. Being sustainable just makes sense, I want to be here on this planet".

If she can make something more sustainable or approach it in a more impactful way she will; down to the shipping materials she uses to send her products (of which are recyclable). All of this is rooted in a mindful mentality; "its just being thoughtful, every step of the process, what you need, what's actually going to sell, where its going to go, what resources its actually going to take to get there". Putting this into practice, Charmain operates her production house without minimums – no matter how small your order may be, Integrity Designs will take on the contract and produce exactly the amount that you need. Not only does this minimize waste, operating on a "by-need" basis, but it also allows smaller labels to evolve in a way that's more economically sustainable, fostering the development of more local and ethical brands. "There's such incredible creative people over here, and they don't have access, they can't go to a factory and produce

2000 pieces minimum to get started . . . I've watched some of those clients and we started with 15 pieces, and now I'm one of their smaller contractors because they've had to branch out and get other people, and I'm doing 150 to 350 pieces and that's a small order, because they needed the room to grow alone or without an investor”.

Charmain's dedication to ethical and sustainable production is truly a passion. There is little of the glamour of editorials and mainstream fashion media to be found in the production side of the industry. “At every level, and every facet of this industry, it's a lot of grunt work”. She holds a lot of compassion for her own staff, acutely aware of the demands of the job. - a compassion that is extended to all the garment industry workers re-emphasizing the need for mindfulness and thoughtfulness when considering production. She hopes to eventually open her production house for consumers to engage with the process, and in doing so, hopes to instill more mindful consumption in people. “I want you to see the reality of it is not glamorous all the time of people draping fabric and talking about fashion, it is 10 hours straight of cutting out garments and then its pressing, and standing over a steamer for 8 hours, and it's a lot of work”.

Establishing this empathetic connection between consumers and their products plays a key role in Charmain's goals for her business and her approaches to sustainability. “We're so disconnected. Even just where our paper products come from and just our stuff. And in this industry, where we buy so much, we use so much, we throw out so much, nobody knows where it comes from or how its made”. In order to overhaul the current system, she states that consumers will have to change their mentality towards fashion, and consumption in general; choosing to accept the difference in price, and how often they will be able to afford to buy something – in exchange for superior quality, and greater care for the environment and people involved. Charmain does however see these changes occurring, even if they happen slowly. With her company in its 12th year of business, she sees this as palpable change: “I can tell just because of how much my business has grown. Especially, at such a small level, my clients do not get crazy excess produced, if they aren't selling, if people aren't out there paying more money for their products. . . just watching my small clients that used to bring like 15 pieces and its now its 300, and just the fact that I've been able to hire people”. More than anything, Charmain urges consumers to consider how their own actions influence the system, sustaining and supporting companies that produce unethically. She strongly believes in the ability for consumers to help mobilize the movement with their own purchases. In staying mindful, she finds power: “People have power, empathy is the way to recognize what you're doing when you make a shitty choice but knowing the power you have when you make a good choice, even the power you have when you make a bad choice. Power of choice”.

## Close Reading

Most fabrics and textiles are often broken down into categories that are over simplified and sorted between “good” and “bad”. But textile production is a complex process that incorporates multiple factors and steps that make it difficult to categorize different textiles as inherently good and bad. The first degree of separation is often between natural and synthetic, or natural and man-made. As we are exposed to many greenwashing tactics, its normal to assume that natural equals good, whereas man-made or synthetic equals bad. However, cotton, the most popular natural fibre on the market is in many ways the most unsustainable natural fiber – on par with many man-made fibers. When we look beyond this binary, and breakdown each major fibre on the market, we can create a more comprehensive or whole understanding of the textile market – making more informed decisions when we shop and ultimately better purchases. Having this information also means that you as a consumer no longer have to rely on shops or business to inform you on their products – this gives you greater buying autonomy.

There are essentially two types of fabric on the market: natural which are plant or animal sourced, and manufactured, which takes raw materials from plants, animals, and synthetic polymers to create fibers and yarn. No matter the fabric type there are however 4 areas of impact to consider when manufacturing textiles.

These four areas are all impacted differently based off on the type of textile, and most, if not all, textiles have some impact on all four areas. However, according to Kate Fletcher, “in sustainability there is no such thing as a single-frame approach” – and it would be impossible to find one singular textile that is perfect. Instead, by focusing our energy on making informed decisions, we can ultimately consume in a way that is less environmentally damaging and more consciously connected.

1. Water and pesticide use for growing and harvesting
2. Emissions to the air and water
3. Use of energy and non-renewable resources during manufacturing
4. Ethics behind production, including human labour and animal welfare.

## Cotton

Cotton has been long cultivated throughout the world for centuries but over the last few decades, we have seen cotton usage and production triple in size, requiring heavy use of pesticides to ensure its availability. The fibre alone accounts for 25% of all worldwide agricultural pesticide use, as the plant is highly susceptible to pests, drought, and rain, requiring meticulous care that is supported by heavy resource use: to produce one kilogram of cotton (essentially one pair of jeans) uses over 3000 liters of water.

Organic cotton uses less pesticides, it still remains relatively high maintenance. The process of making cotton more organic includes the introduction of natural enemies to pests and a frequent rotation process of the crops to help better maintain soil nutrients. However, once harvested, organic cotton is still processed and cleaned with chemicals that remain toxic. It can only be produced in small quantities and doesn't meet the demand for non-organic cotton.

## Wool

Before cotton was introduced to Europe, wool had been an important fibre, cultivated for over 6000 years. Cotton and other man-made fibers have replaced wool as a fundamental fibre, and it now only accounts for 1.5% of total fibre production worldwide. As it is produced by an animal, the fibre is natural and arguably a renewable resource. Sheep are also raised on non-farmable land, meaning that maintenance doesn't heavily impede on other agricultural resources. It is also fully biodegradable.

Animal welfare must be considered when discussing sustainability and the way pesticides are applied to the fibre must occur through the animal. This often takes shape in the form of a bath or injections to the animals, which is also harmful to the farmers and adds to pollution to water supplies. This impacts the lanolin – a wax that is produced by glands on the sheep – which when extracted contains pesticides, making it both unusable and difficult to dispose of.

## Rayon

Rayon was the first commercially produced manmade fibre, created in 1892. The fibre was first produced as a replacement for silk, as it could mimic the key characteristics of silk fibres, at a much cheaper rate and through an easier production process. The fibre is chemically produced from cellulose, which is derived from the cell wall of plants. This classifies the fabric as both biodegradable and manmade, instead of synthetic, as we extract a fibre rather than create one. The process is highly intensive, requiring lots of energy in order to manufacture the raw material, often taken from wood which is processed into a pulp and spun. The process is heavily polluting to both the air and water – making its production far from sustainable, despite its more natural origins.

## Nylon

With the development of rayon and the wider acceptance of non-natural fabrics and fibre, nylon was the very first fully synthetic fibre to be created in 1935. The fibre is remarkably versatile and can be altered to mimic a variety of other textiles such as wool and silk – leading to its rise in use in the textile industry in the mid-20th century (Nylon helped support the development of “sportswear” as designers began to experiment with synthetic fabrics that could be worn day to day). Like polyester, nylon is derived from petroleum oil – again, a non-renewable resource – and the manufacturing process produces nitrous oxide, a very dangerous green house gas. Nylon can be recycled, but more often it's simply thrown away and can take hundreds of years to decompose because of its petroleum base.

## Polyester

Polyester was developed in the 1940's but didn't become popular until the 60's: developing into an inexpensive but quality textile. With strong fibres, easy to launder, and wrinkle resistant, it replaced cotton as a go-to fabric. It also uses significantly less water in its production compared to cotton. However, its petroleum base – a non-renewable resource that is highly damaging to the environment. Both the extraction of the oil, and the emissions emitted during its production are harmful, even more so at the rate we produce the textile. The fabric is not biodegradable, but its strength and durability make it highly recyclable as a fibre. It is one of the most commonly recycled fibres, as it maintains its quality after the recycling process ultimately reducing garment waste.

## Lyocell

Tencel, the brand name for lyocell, is another cellulosic fibre, similar to rayon while being much more ecologically sustainable. The fibre can be derived from a variety of trees, including beech, eucalyptus, and pine – and the forests that are used to harvest these woods are carefully maintained to ensure ecological survival and growth. Like rayon, the production process is highly energy intensive.

Lyocell factories have been designed to be environmentally friendly – and the manufacturing process includes a closed-loop cycle where all, but 0.05% percent of water and only non-toxic solvent are reused. It's fully biodegradable, and efficiently absorbent making the dyeing much easier. The fibre has a flexible nature and blends easily with other fibres to create superior textiles.

## Fur and Leather

Any textile that uses animal or animal-by products are going to have ethical and sustainable implications. For one, you have to consider the well-fare of the animal and secondly its role as a resource that uses food, water, land, and has to be processed once the by-products have been sourced.

Animal by-products have long been a textile used by humans in a combination of both warmth and displays of wealth. Eventually with the expansion of manufacturing following the industrial revolution, farms came into development to produce fur in a more efficient way – with the first farm opening in 1894. 30 years later another 4500 farms had developed across North America. Along with larger concern for the environment and Western society's consumption patterns, concern for animals and the use of by-products became an issue in the 1960's and 70's. With pressure from consumers, furrier and conservationists sought out better practices. While there remains farmers and furriers who try to ethically source fur, there remains a large amount of malpractice and abuse that occurs in the industry; no matter the approach to sourcing, issues are going to arise with both breeding and trapping.

One solution is to completely abandon fur and look towards cruelty-free products that are made without harming any animals. With technological developments there are great non-fur, non-leather products – however, many of these alternatives are made out of textiles that are environmentally damaging, and non-biodegradable as opposed to fur and leather. Both aspects, animal welfare and environmental welfare must be considered.

Alternatively, there are ways to consume fur and leather products in a way that accounts for both: buying vintage is a great way to buy fur and leather goods because it doesn't support the current industry or harm any living animals. It also keeps perfectly good garments from ending up in landfills. Secondly, looking for fur that is ethically sourced, primarily from the meat industry is an alternative for meat-eating fashion-conscious individuals. Seeking out by-product goods also requires looking for fabric that has been treated through a vegetable tanning process rather than a chrome tanning process. While this may limit leather products to more subdued colours, the run off from the dye is better for the environment and doesn't add pollution to the water systems.

## Silk

Silk is derived from silkworms – and spun out of the chrysalis of the worm. Once they have cocooned, they are steamed in an attempt to kill the insect inside. The chrysalis is collected to create the very delicate fibres used to make the silk yarn. Similar to wool, we collect this fibre from a living organism and measures are taken to ensure the quality of the fibre through a very intensive use of resources including the food source for the insects that require fertilizers and pesticides. A more ethical approach to silk, is wild silk: in which farmers wait for the moth to naturally leave the cocoon and then the chrysalis is collected. This gives the silk a rougher feel, as the lengths of the fiber are shorter and have to be stapled together to make the yarn. By doing this however, we allow the moths to live out their full life cycle while still gathering beautiful fabric.

## Hemp

Hemp is often misunderstood because of its connotations to marijuana - hemp is a different strain and contains very minimal levels of THC, or none at all. It has a bad reputation in the fashion industry for its association with “eco-friendly” products and hippie culture. Yet it is incredibly sustainable and versatile. It grows incredibly quickly, improving the soil that is growing on and does not need pesticides, as it is naturally resilient to insects and has the ability to smother weeds. The plant is also carbon negative, and the manufacturing process only uses 1/5 of the water compared to cotton. However, its very time consuming and requires lots of hands-on work to harvest, and it creates thick fabric that isn’t quite as soft and smooth as other synthetic fibres.

## Bamboo

Bamboo is processed in the same way as rayon and Tencel in that it is derived from plants. The fibre can quickly be reproduced as Bamboo grows so quickly. The plant requires very little irrigation, pesticides, and fertilizers, while improving the quality of the soil. The process of extraction is less intensive, compared to other natural fibres like hemp or linen. However, it is a man-made natural fibre, and has to go through an extensive manufacturing process, similar to rayon – meaning that it’s a chemical and energy intensive process that is highly polluting. Increased production has led to rapid rates of deforestation in China. In order to continue producing bamboo is a more sustainable way, farmers and manufacturers together are working towards more environmentally friendly manufacturing and harvesting methods.

## Marie-Anne “Studio Diaries”

Miljours Studio is owned and operated by its namesake Marie-Anne Miljours, a product designer from Montreal. The label produces leather goods and is designed and made with both practicality and ethics in mind. Marie-Anne has worked in the fashion and leather industry for 10 years, studying fashion for 7 years and completing two internships with notable fashion labels, Canadian and Montreal-based Betina Lou, and NYC-based Rhié. The designer started her brand in the last year of her bachelor’s degree, which is now in its fourth year, and was built on the basis of slow production: “for me, sustainable design is very important to exist on a long term ... If you use cheap materials, no matter how hard you’re try to make a good product, you’ll end up with a crappy product ... A product should last. Otherwise, it is a design error”.

### A Day at Work.

I usually start my day with a good coffee, home brewed or at the Cafe (my boyfriend owns a great coffee shop in Montreal). Sometimes, I open the cafe with him, it makes me start my day early and fresh! I go to the studio around 9 am. If I have errands or contractor to visit, I try to do it in the morning, then I can be at the studio working. In the morning I like to organize my day, my week, my month. In the afternoon, I do, and I make!

### The Core Values of the Label.

Montreal Slow made eco-friendly leather goods, sold with no middle man.

### The Importance of Slow Fashion.

Very early in my studies, I learned that the fashion industry was polluting a lot. I always had that sensibility for eco-friendly practices, so I didn’t want to take part of this polluted industry. But at the same time, I love to create and to make. That was a big struggle! So, I kept reading and looking for sustainable fashion. At that time, we are talking 10 years ago, sustainable fashion wasn’t pretty... so I decided to take part in the sustainable fashion to revamp it! To make it look pretty and cool so that people would love to wear clothes or accessories because of their greatness and my responsibility would be to make it sustainable.

### On Incorporating Slow Values in Your Business.

Always. Everyday. Never enough. I try, and I do it. I have lived slowly for years and I’ve even written articles about it.

### The Specific Goals of Miljours Studio.

I have many goals. One that I cherish nowadays is recycling my leather scraps. I throw away only a few things in my studio. I usually forget I have a garbage... I use leather scraps for many products. At the end, there is a very small piece of leather that I can not use, I want to make something out of it. Every little action counts. It starts with reading and asking suppliers where their materials come from, visiting them, and seeing how they treat their employees. I look for eco labels and I try to use everything that I already have to create and make before I shop for new materials. I use all my scraps, I use eco-materials and I work with people that are well treated.

## **The Biggest Challenges Facing the Industry.**

Chrome tanning, over massed production, fabrics waste and clothes waste, fast production (bad quality of clothes and accessories that go in landfill because they don't last), and then, scraps is also a challenge.

### **On Informed Consumerism.**

[Be] aware. Aware about what's going on and choose brands that you trust. I think the rest has to be made, or done, by companies. It's our responsibility. I don't ask my customers to know everything about veg tanned leather versus chrome tanning leather. I just want them to trust me to do the best for them. Then, if they want to know about it, there is a lot of information on my website, Facebook page or Instagram, or they can even ask me. Everyone has already a job, it's my job to give them a good sustainable product!

### **How to Promote Sustainable Values.**

I talk about them a lot with my customers, I exchange ideas with them, I promote a lifestyle around sustainability. It's not only important to show my customer that I wear slow fashion, it is important to promote a lifestyle: my food, my clothes, my entrepreneurial friends. I promote them to my customers because it's a whole.

### **Finding other Companies to Work With.**

[I look for] trust, honesty. Nobody is perfect, and sometimes it's difficult to be sustainable in every aspect of your business, but I want to know they want to improve. I need to trust them because they deliver my message to consumers.

I work with mostly contractors, and they are also small businesses. They have an atelier where they work, sewing machines, clicker, kwikprint. I work with suppliers, but I don't get to see them very often. I have suppliers in Montreal, but they are mostly out of Canada. However, I meet them during trade shows. I was at Lineapelle in February where I met a few suppliers. It was great. I saw their products, trimmings, leathers, they were from Italy, France, Spain, USA. It's important to know them, it's how you make good business partners. Because at the end, we all want the same: a sustainable industry, so we have to work good together!

### **And Sustainability in Everyday Life**

Yes! Food, clothes, furniture's, home products, cosmetics. I actually make my own cosmetics, because I don't trust anything else.

## Pretty Sustainable

I searched high and low for a solution to the pustules that ruled my face for over a decade. It was never normalized for me, the way a haircut or new outfit grows on your sensibilities over time. My skin dominated my mind every time I would walk into a new room, meet someone new, or take a photograph. My instinct was always to hide; through pore-clogging foundation for my first years of university, or through filters in the selfie era. My ‘good side’ and ‘bad side’ was determined by the number of pustules. If I was able to face one way over the course of a conversation, maybe I would be perceived as more attractive than the crowd of bumps on my other cheek might suggest.

All the while, my skin was being stripped, dried, burned, bleached, by the products promising retribution for my skin. The deeper I got, the more I lost my ability to recognize ingredients or even the actual purpose of the product in question. I watched the remains drain down the sink every morning and night for three months, while I waited for my skin to adjust from a purge and adhere closer to ideas of conventional beauty (i.e., clear skin) that I hoped would bring me the joy and fulfillment I had been waiting for. A three-month period of increased shame and psychological discomfort, until I declared the products useless, and filed them away to eventually end up in my garbage can.

Though there have been numerous studies published on the link between acne and mental health, statistics never seemed to totalize the all-encompassing drudgery of self-disciplining required for clear skin. The dollars spent on products on a whim, after hearing a piece of advice from a well-meaning Sephora sales clerk, or a promising online message board success story. This is it, I whispered to myself as I spent another hundred, two hundred dollars on a luxury skin product that would eventually fail both me and my bank account.

I had very little comprehension of the holistic perspectives of skincare. I sought a medical fix, pleading to dermatologists to prescribe me the most successful treatment on the market. A new acidic product would strip my skin bare of natural oils, moisture, and pH balance — though I had a very limited understanding of how each of these elements worked together, at the time. During a bathroom break at work, I would look at myself in the mirror to see a pustule bleeding down my cheek, crusty and oozing simultaneously, no one brave enough to point it out for me.

My only concern was for this to end. And it did not, until I made a discovery that shifted the way I think about my skin, my body, and crucial areas of my every day lived experience. The Ordinary is far from a perfect brand, experiencing its own tribulations within corporate drama at DECIEM headquarters in Toronto, but it opened my eyes to the possibilities of approaching skincare from a sustainable lens. From its packaging, to testing, to locally-based production, to transparency about its ingredients and its effects, it checks many of the boxes for ethical skincare. The once boutique brand has exploded over the last few years, expanding at an unprecedented rate.

Beyond this neoliberal boasting (that may well have contributed to their monetary success), their approach — which I suggest we term slow skincare — is ground-breaking. Aside from their ridiculously affordable prices (under \$10/product, generally), everything is individualized. Upon buying a single oil, that is exactly what you receive: the oil itself. Gone are the long lists of unintelligible ingredients, of exhausting chemicals that attack your face as well as the planet. Rather than purchasing a cocktail of questionable poisons, you are able to customize your own

skincare diet. It may feel, at first, like splitting hairs: my skincare routine has reached a 10-step process, pioneered by Korean skincare. That said, it has become meditative, for me. It has, in many ways, positively infected my approach to how I move around the world.

We are being suffocated with excess and scarcity. There is in fact never a day in which I ponder on my insufficiencies, the need for more, better, faster. The Ordinary served as a gentle reminder, a gentle nudge in the direction of slow skincare, and hopefully, slow everything else. I began to trust my body, trust it knew what it needed: exercise, therapy, time for friendship and connection. I am beginning to crack open; my life-long attempt to compartmentalize exhaling in defeat. My breakouts are becoming far and few in-between, and I look at my reflection with empathy rather than judgement when they do arise in moments of stress or poor eating. Skincare, an aspect of my life I only share with my close fem friends, with the risk of sounding self-absorbed or frivolous to others, has become my entry into a life that is, at the very least, pretty sustainable.

## Made on Site

Twiss & Weber is a collection of combined ready-to-wear and bespoke, ensuring every customer to walk in is able to own a T&W design. Every garment is designed and made on the premises, and customers are encouraged to engage with and experience the making process. This can mean gazing into the production side to watch the collection being sewn or working with the designers to create a custom piece, choosing between fabrics and styles.

The collection itself is focused on the experiences and lifestyles of the two designers, and the way they connect with their consumers. L: “Our designs stem from wearing clothes that we want to wear ourselves, we don’t really follow “fashion” as a criteria, but we follow things that influence us, things that feel good, silhouettes that really respond well. Ultimately, we want to look good as we get older, and we accumulate different scars, and different experiences, and different episodes that happen in our life, we want to celebrate those and still remain true to our personalities and that’s what we want our clients to feel as well”.

As a part of their philosophy, the two don’t take fashion too seriously. Clothing is superficial, but the two want to celebrate that superficiality: L: “the little bit of vanity, the self care, and that it’s okay to feel [good]”. Working at times with a mature demographic, L&T encourage women who are mothers, have full careers, or simply busy lives, to engage with clothing that feels good, and promote the idea that it’s okay to look in the mirror a little longer and spend extra time on yourself.

Working in the industry since graduating in the early 90s, the two have collected a great deal of experience and knowledge about designing and manufacturing in-house and in Canada. As the business has matured, the two have developed an incubation system within the boutique; giving aspiring Canadian designers the opportunity to gain experience, access resources, and develop their skills, while encouraging the growth of a Canadian-made fashion industry.

T: “Each one of our staff is actually a designer. . . We help them incubate their designs, we help them get fabrics. . . It’s very exciting to have this opportunity to do this for designers, because it’s very rare, and doesn’t really exist anymore. The skillset doesn’t really exist anymore as well”

Aware of the stark differences between learning in school and joining the workforce, Laura and Tonia want to help bridge that gap for their “Incubation Designers”. In listing the challenges, Tonia explains, “Production is very different from sewing an item, how to produce it, and how to do it effectively. And then, even purchasing the fabric, and how it would get sized properly, and where those sizing’s come from, and what size is your client?”. These resources were something not easily accessible when they entered the industry. Laura can recall moments when reaching out to other designers for help only to be told to figure it out on their own. “We decided, we have choices on how we want to respond to people who ask us for help and our choice is to help them. . . It doesn’t harm our day to day being able to share with you our experience.”

In doing so, the two hope to foster an industry that hasn’t existed in Ottawa, has declined in other parts of the country where fashion production was once prominent. By running the incubation program, emerging designers are given training opportunities that aren’t offered in the same as they are to other trades and skills. L: “You need at least ten years of experience sewing to be a professional just like you need to practice carpentry or plumbing. For those trades one needs to practice as an apprentice and the government supports programs, but not this industry”. The

combination of a lack of skilled workers, and a lack of resources funneled into the industry contribute to one of the larger barriers that impact the growth of the slow fashion industry within Canada. Without either, it is challenging for businesses to start and sustain with a limited workforce, while relying largely on self-funding: L: “It’s a hard industry. Really hard, there’s only perseverance.”

Efforts like the incubation program promote the development of a skilled community through gainful employment and can help create a network of similarly minded individuals dedicated to the growth and adoption of slow fashion. The homegrown talent of the incubation program also lends itself into Twiss & Weber’s own approach to slow production and sustainability: L: “Our slow thing is the fact that we don’t outsource the tasks that we need completed. We do it all, we draft our own patterns, we grade our own patterns, which means we size them, we test them out, we do our own sample sewing, we do our own critiquing, we produce them ourselves, we sew and cut them en masse”.

In manufacturing everything in-house, the process also leads to an integrity in the quality of the garments created by Twiss & Weber. The clothing is made to be consumed slowly and compliments their making process. While the mainstream fashion industry creates garments to be bought with urgency and used immediately, brands like Twiss & Weber hope consumers see value in their clothing, supported by the integrity of a well-made garment: T: “We want you to consume our product, but we want you to, no matter what, think about it and love it. Because we’re not just making it to sell it to you for a few dollars, we want you to take pride in it”. Signifying the palpable difference between fast and slow fashion brands, the connection between the consumer and the garment is fundamental to the Twiss & Weber brand. With every new customer that purchases from the Twiss & Weber label, they see the slow dismantlement of the previous consumer system: L: “Once they’re in, they’re hooked, and they keep coming back”.