A Cultural History of Fashion in the 20th and 21st Centuries

From Catwalk to Sidewalk

SECOND EDITION

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Eco-Fashion, Sustainability and Ethics

Our personal consumer choices have ecological, social, and spiritual consequences. It is time to re-examine some of our deeply held notions that underlie our lifestyles.

David Suzuki

GREEN AS THE NEW BLACK

While the 'Green Designer' exhibition was held as early as 1986 at the Design Centre in London and the label Esprit led the way with its inaugural Ecollection in November 1991, 'fashion as a design discipline has been late to investigate the theoretical greening of the design production loop, lagging behind industrial design and architecture' (Thomas, 2008: 526). Yet, interestingly, consumer activist group campaigns have tended to target fashion events more than other disciplines. Marketing strategists realize that, in the postmodernist age, when social and political commentary has become associated with both art and sartorial design, consumers now demand accurate and truthful labelling (provenance) and information relating to fair payment and healthy working conditions (fair trade) in order to make informed and conscientious decisions regarding their choice of clothing. For some, shopping has become an ethical minefield.[1] According to Thomas, 'potentially, there is an ideological connection between ethical trading and ethical fashion, thus conferring on both an altruistic intent and political stance' (2008: 532).

The dichotomy still remains that fashion, throughout history, has been driven by a desire to establish social class differentiation and status within a group through conspicuous consumption, but the desire to ally oneself voluntarily with an ideology has proved to be a stronger incentive in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In the 1970s, in particular, environmental concerns, including the energy crisis and the inhumane treatment of animals, led to major changes in the textile, fur and cosmetic industries. Subsequently, it became very fashionable to wear multilayered natural materials, such as wool, cotton and hemp, fake fur coats and to don natural complexions. Quentin Bell argued that one's degree of commitment to a cause became visibly evident in one's dress and that 'it is as though the fabric were indeed a natural

extension of the body, or even of the soul' (1992: 19). Mixing art and politics, artist Kathleen Hamnett initially exhibited her 'environmental' T-shirts (Chapter 5) in the 1980s and has continued with garments donning activist slogans such as 'Make Trade Fair' and 'No More Fashion Victims'. She then turned to fashion design and today creates 'fashionable' clothing, adhering strictly to environmental and ethical guidelines. Quite rightly, Kate Fletcher (2007), in her essay 'Clothes That Connect', also argues that, in order for eco-fashion to be sustainable, its clothing must now be fashionably stylish as well as environmentally correct. American academic Theresa Winge postulates that eco-fashion has now become depoliticized (no longer associated with anti-war campaigns and anti-mainstream activities as it was in the 1960s and 1970s) and less stereotyped as a commodity fetish by celebrities, including actors George Clooney and Julia Roberts and photographer Annie Leibovitz, who promote sustainable fashion as an aesthetic life choice 'on the red carpets and in the pages of magazines' (2008: 513).

This chapter will deal mainly with environmental, design sustainability and ethical issues that relate to the choice and production of materials used for clothing, textiles and footwear. It will attempt to respond to a question posed by fashion writer David Lipke in *Women's Wear Daily* (31 March 2008), which asked, 'Is Green Fashion an Oxymoron?' How is it that 'an industry driven by disposable trends and aesthetic whims can reconcile itself to an era of conservation'? By briefly charting past and existing practices, this chapter will consider new strategies introduced and developed in the twenty-first century to foster sustainable textile production that could impact upon both developed and developing countries. By outlining the social, economic and environmental effects of current practices, including reference to fabric wastage, recycling and reusing materials, it will reinforce the need for a symbiotic liaison between the designer, the patternmaker and the manufacturer. It will consider new emphasis on the use of chemical-free organic fibers and textiles, the use of nontoxic dyes as well as methods of construction and deconstruction informed by environmental concerns. It will outline revived historical methodologies, including examples of fully fashioned and seamless knitwear, draped garments made from uncut, rectangular lengths of fabric and one-size-fits-all styling as well as current eco-fashion practices evident in the work of leading fashion, textile and footwear designers.

MORE THAN JUST A MARKETING STRATEGY?

Since 2006, eco-fashion has attracted a much wider audience. It was a popular theme targeted by magazines, journals, Web sites, special events, educational institutions and corporate and commercial bodies. For example, at that time, *Vanity Fair* magazine brought out its 'Green Issue' outlining the designers[2] who had presented eco-fashion

on the runway. Other niche magazine publications endorsing eco-fashion include the *New Consumer, The Ethical Consumer* and *Ecology* (United Kingdom), *Organic Style* (United States), *Green* and *GreenPages* (Australia) plus other mainstream magazines that contain photographs and articles featuring celebrity activists with environmental issues such as *Elle, Glamour* and *Marie Claire*. Numerous academic book publications and journal articles have proliferated, including the international journal *Fashion Theory* (Bloomsbury), which in 2008 dedicated a special issue to eco-fashion with writings from scholars around the world discussing the complexity of sustainability issues in fashion. More recently, a new ethical and sustainable magazine called *SIX* was launched in 2011 to celebrate the designers, individuals, independent brands and companies that are creating a more ethical and sustainable future for the fashion industry. Online sites have flourished, including the Ethical Fashion forum (www.ethicalfashionforum.com), which outlines how to combine sustainable practice with commercial success in fashion, and fashion-conscience.com, which operates vending portals that offer different 'interpretations' of ethical fashion. Exhibitions, trade fairs, global forums and eco-friendly design competitions and awards have attracted considerable local, national and international interest. Amongst many others,[3] more recent events include the Shanghai International Fashion Culture Festival in 2009, which included the 'Green Fashion' International Clothing and Textile Expo (covering a vast area of 50,000 square metres in its International Expo Centre), and exhibitions such as 'Eco-fashion: Going Green' at the Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, in 2010, which considered ecological practices, both good and bad, over the past 250 years. In terms of education, one UK MBA business degree, in conjunction with the conservation charity World Wildlife Fund, has incorporated sustainability at its core, entitled the 'One Planet MBA' at the University of Exeter (Morgan, 2011).[4] Corporate social responsibility has influenced many fashion distributers and corporate retailers, including the Arcadia Group and Marks & Spencer, whose marketing campaign 'Look behind the label' highlighted its use of fair trade cotton and food products, becoming 'its most successful consumer campaign ever (Attwood, 2007, in Beard, 2008: 452), and the company aims to be carbon neutral by 2012. Walmart, the largest retailer in the world, became the biggest US producer of organic cotton in 2009. As well, in 2011, H&M launched its first eco-collection called Conscious made from recycled polyester, organic cotton and Tencel®, a natural manmade fiber; H&M caused a buzz when it partnered with the French fashion house Lanvin for its Waste collection, but seemingly, 'the line of dresses and bags were at too high a price point for many of its customers' (Kaye, 2011; Leon Kaye is the founder and editor of GreenGoPost.com); individual designer houses such as YSL adopted the strategy of upcycling preconsumer waste; and Issey Miyake opened his newest concept shop Elttob Tep (Pet Bottle spelled backwards) in Ginza selling innovative fabrics created from recycled plastics.

Sourcing Environmentally-Friendly Textiles

The fashion industry has relied on the production of textiles made from raw fibres that are cultivated in fields where considerable amounts of water are needed and chemicals used despite the fact that insecticides pollute both the air and water. The World Wildlife Fund has estimated that it takes 8,500 litres (2,245 gallons) of water to raise 1 kilogram (2.2 pounds) of cotton lint—enough to make one pair of blue jeans (Kaye, 2011)! Energy is expended in the spinning, weaving and knitting processes, and, along with the transportation and distribution of the raw and finished products, this increases greenhouse gas emissions. The production of synthetic fabrics depletes finite resources such as petroleum (that are nonrenewable and incapable of being fully biodegradable), and most textiles today are treated with various finishing chemicals, further polluting the environment and considered a health risk to humans. Whereas in the nineteenth century, dyes contained highly toxic chemicals and pesticides such as arsenic, in the twentieth century, one of the most polluting fibres to manufacture was viscose rayon. In Africa, mountains of plastic and polyester/synthetic throwaway apparel are being used for landfill, which will never break down. While there has been a resurgence in recent years of the rediscovered art of hand dyeing and fabric printing using natural vegetable dyes or azo-free dyeing, these craft-based techniques are too labour intensive and expensive to offer a solution to the global industry. According to Scaturro (2008: 469–88), textile conservator at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, New York, technology plays an ambivalent role in the environmental debate, as it acts as both a destructive and enabling force. Scaturro argues that it heralded the built-in system of redundancy through efficient 'fast fashion' products, which led to 'a profusion of detrimental textile manufacturing by-products and waste entering the ecosystem' as well as 'a vast amount of energy needed to make and take care of all the clothing produced'. As a more positive facilitator, she believes that, in the future, technology can serve to improve methods of clothing creation, consumption and disposal. 'This tension between technology, as a positive or negative factor in the sustainable reality of a culture's resources, is at the core of any discussion on technology and environmentalism' (Scaturro, 2008: 474). It seems that there are no easy solutions. For example, she points out that while the organic fiber advocate organisation Organic Exchange is committed to increasing the production of organic cotton by 50 per cent a year in the United States, the reality is that organic cotton does not produce the same yield or volume that conventional cotton can, making it more costly, and there is virtually no reduction in the harm that occurs during the subsequent dyeing and manufacturing process. It would seem that a national standard is required that oversees the entire production cycle not only of cotton yarns[5] but fabrics generated from renewable sources such as bamboo, seaweed, corn, soy, eucalyptus, milk and beechwood in the creation of polymers. For a successful outcome to occur, 'technology must be precisely applied to limit pollution and energy expenditures' (Scaturro, 2008: 480).

Experimental interdisciplinary research projects that investigate the possible interface between textiles, clothing, biological science and health are increasing. This collaborative work, based on nanotechnology, has created 'smart' fabrics, 'interactive textiles' and thermal shape memory fabrics, which can change colour through light and heat applications, control body temperature through microfibres, absorb odours and create scents that enhance well-being, protect skin tear and block out ultraviolet rays. Since the 1990s, wearable technology incorporating hybrid textiles and garments has been an expanding field requiring the expertise of scientists, computer analysts, electrochemistry and electronics specialists as well as textile and fibre engineers and, of course, fashion designers. Recent innovations have been developed by design professor Helen Storey of the London School of Fashion in collaboration with scientist Tony Ryan in dissolving fabrics, producing catalytic clothing that is both futuristic and life-changing. Their catalytic clothing (Dezeen, 2011) is a radical project in which photocatalysts, washed into the fabric, bind to the textile, creating an anti-pollutant surface that purifies the surrounding air. The photocatalyst gains its energy from light and breaks down pollutants in the air and turns them into non-harmful chemicals. This clothing technology has the power to change the way we live by making our lives greener and more sustainable.

Pattern Making—Fabric Wastage

Fabric in particular and fashion in general, by their very nature, are vehicles of built-in obsolescence—it's about waste. Pattern making is integral to the design process as technical and aesthetic considerations must be considered simultaneously. In today's fashion production, fabric (preconsumer) wastage equates to 15 to 20 per cent in traditional cut-and-sew methodologies. When methods are informed by environmental concerns, designers look back to historical precedents, including fully fashioned knitted garments that have no cutting, tube-knitted seamless garments informed by advanced technology (Miyake's APOC) or one-size-fits-all made from uncut rectangular lengths of fabric. When there are fabric off-cuts, this material must be able to be recycled, and this could include using it for quilts, as fibre, or as rags to make rugs, blankets, stuffing or other small craft items. This would allow all off-cuts to be made into new fabrics. Chemical companies like Wellman USA, an early leader in synthetic fiber recycling, and Japan's Teijin, which introduced Eco-Circle, have established successful polyester-recycling technology schemes.

In general terms, waste reduction is preferable to recycling or disposal, because 'recycling can impact negatively on the environment through transportation (fuel, emissions) and reprocessing (in particular, water, energy and chemical consumption)' (Gertsakis and Lewis in Rissanen, 2005: 3). Historical precedents established in fashion history present more sustainable constructive methods than are used today. These included ancient traditional and national costumes such as the Greek peplos made from two large rectangular pieces of fabric pinned at each shoulder, the Japanese kimono, which was made from eight rectangular pieces of fabric sewn together, and the Indian sari, which wraps around the body. Madeleine Vionnet and Madame Grès (Plate 26), renowned as masters of drape in the early decades of the twentieth century, were admired for their genius in manipulating cloth rather than cutting it; Zandra Rhodes's textile designs determined the shape and form of her garments in the 1970s and 1980s; Hishinuma's experimental use of triangles in the 1980s fitted together to form a modular unit as a means of preserving fabric; Miyake's APOC vision introduced in the 1990s used a tubular knitting system as a means of revolutionizing and simplifying garment construction; and the label MATERIALBYPRODUCT was created by Australian co-designers who developed a new system of pattern-making in the 2000s where the off-cuts are used as a decoration or extension of the main garment.[6]

Figure 11.1 MATERIALBYPRODUCT (MBP), Susan Dimasi and Chantal Kirby (collaboration 2005–11), brown digitally printed wood grain silk satin dress with tapes revealed, Melbourne, Australia, 2008. Photo: Sue Grdunc. Courtesy of MATERIALBYPRODUCT.

Recycling and Vintage Clothing

Historically, recycling has been embedded in the fabric of society. Throughout the ages, garments were passed from mother to daughter, father to son or to other family members or friends. Worn parts were eliminated, clothing was resized and, in some cases, stylistically modified or redesigned. The 1970s back-to-nature era saw the mushrooming of secondhand clothing or charity stores opening in towns and cities across the Western world. Driven by a global energy crisis, these outlets allowed buyers, often of limited means, an opportunity to be seen as environmentally conscious. Many of these clothes that were recycled or 'upcycled' were originally made from 'good' materials as the integrity of the fabric prolonged the life of the garment, and their construction was based on quality craftsmanship. Garments originating in the 1920s and 1930s, for example, were valued for their uniqueness, their hand-beading and embroidery and for their ability to be easily transformed into contemporary pieces. It was a nostalgic decade, very much in keeping with postmodernist trends, which appropriated not only fashions from the past (Plate 26), but classic films and furniture also became popular modes of consumption as well. In humanistic terms, this heralded the reemergence of emotional connectivity—of acknowledging that clothing with links to the past can have an in-built memory. This tenet is now widely accepted and has proved to be an incentive for contemporary designers such as Yohji Yamamoto and Martin Margiela. Yamamoto's famous quote that he liked clothes that were old and worn and that throwing out an old coat was like throwing away an old friend (see Chapter 7) is testament to this statement. Margiela experimented with the concept of degeneration and 'the effect of decay on the material structure of fabric', a theme 'that has been central to the work of many contemporary artists' (English, 2011: 138).

According to Kaye (2011), the stark reality of today's recycling dilemma is that in the United States alone, almost 11 million tonnes of textiles ends up in landfill. In Britain, 1 million tonnes of discarded apparel needs to be recycled annually. He points out that some of this post-consumer waste is used creatively: denim is making a comeback as a building insulator, and Walmart is working with vendors to increase the recycling of polyester and nylon for industrial use. Some clothing manufacturers are moving towards a closed-loop system: Patagonia, for example, allows consumers to drop off unwanted clothing bearing its label at company stores and allows consumers to post unwanted clothes back to its Nevada (US) service centre. In a recycling centre, 70 per cent is sent to be used as fibre, and 'items of higher quality end up in Eastern Europe or China where there is a market for used clothes that will not sell in "vintage" shops'.

According to Alexandra Palmer in *Old Clothes: New Looks*, second-hand clothing can adopt a form of exchange value, especially if the unwanted garments are high-end designer labels. Websites such as vintagecouture.com, established by Linda Lattner

in 1999, have become lucrative businesses as the old garments are seen as a unique sign of individuality and connoisseurship. As in the art world, when the original designer becomes deceased, the clothing becomes more valuable. Vintage shopping can be viewed as a continuation of discount culture, while simultaneously achieving an individual identity and exclusivity that the brand names have lost (Palmer and Clark, 2005: 199). Designers such as John Galliano often draw inspiration from vintage clothing (Plate 27).

As the repurposing of textiles and the recycling of clothing has become the most responsible practice in eco-fashion in the twenty-first century, it is not surprising that the Internet now plays an important part in disseminating and sharing information, through commercial sites, online editorial magazines and blogs and social networks about ideas associated with reconstructive sewing methods and distribution outlets or Web sites such as eBay for preowned merchandise. Some vendors will operate smaller stores within these sites, reselling items sourced from local outlets. These online vending options, facilitating the global distribution of old clothing, are the antithesis of today's 'fast fashion' where newness and expendability have been canonized and ideals of novelty and profit firmly embedded in the industry's agenda. Fashion's inherent consumerism has increased exponentially since the Second World War, fuelled by the media, but is now being questioned following tragic world events and the global economic downturn experienced since 2000. Have these events forced some sectors in society to reevaluate their ethical standards, value systems and environmental concerns? Is the world developing a growing social consciousness?

According to Alexandra Palmer, the revival of second-hand clothing, in most cases, has little to do with environmental concerns. She argues that few 'vintage whores' (Palmer and Clark, 2005: 197) are motivated solely by altruistic motives, such as a concern for sustainable fashion, and are drawn, in part, to the aura of the clothing in its past life, its history concealed beneath the surface of the garment. Vintage wear also appeals to the younger generation for financial or economic reasons because it allows for a fast turnover of clothes in one's wardrobe. Historically, clothing was often used as barter, exchanged for cooking utensils for example, and this practice has been reinstated in modern society. This act of bartering, where one item is exchanged for another, has long been an inherent part of everyday life in the markets of Zambia and other parts of Africa, amongst other cultures, where nothing is wasted and the concept of reusing and modifying is indicative of the cultural ethos.

ECO-DESIGNERS

In today's society, individual designers have responded to this global issue by adopting a more responsible design methodology that can be formulated within existing technology. By using more holistic approaches, their work reflects sustainable practice in terms of textile development, minimizing fabric waste, manufacturing methods, and aftercare and disposal with an emphasis on innovative research to develop new products. Large footwear corporations, amongst others, in order to build a successful brand identity, have embraced eco-design as an effective marketing strategy. Nike, for example, recycles used rubber trainers for playground surfaces (Delong, 2009: 109).

While some designers recycle old products or use only organic materials, others are concerned more with design integrity, insisting on the evolution of an idea rather than responding to consumerist demands. Eco-consciousness is fundamental in the work and philosophy of both established and emerging international designers in their quest to reduce the fashion industry's environmental footprint. They include, amongst others, British designer Jessica Ogden and her use of secondhand fabrics; Russell Sage (Plate 28), who revamped trademark fabrics like Burberry; Katherine Hamnett's use of organic cotton and eco-awareness statements printed on her T-shirts; Americans

Figure 11.2 Jessica Ogden, brightly coloured checked sleeveless cotton summer dress, London Fashion Week, Spring/Summer 2006. Photo: J. Tregidgo/Wirelmage.

Susan Cianciola, who used vintage fabrics for one-off garments, and Miguel Adrover, who presented a 'garbage collection' using unusual recycled products; and Yeohlee Teng, who produces one-size-fits-all garments and fights to preserve local rather than overseas production by producing nearly every garment she sells right in the Garment District in New York City. Luxury eco-brands are limited, with the exception of Stella McCartney and Ciel in the United Kingdom, Noir in Denmark, Fin in Norway and Linda Loudermilk in the United States.

Sustainability of craft, or the incorporation of hand-worked techniques, now referred to as 'slow design' has become central to the philosophy of eco-conscious designers. Brown's *Eco Fashion* (2010: 13) states that 'these traditional craft skills have become more valued and used, and eventually incorporated into the fashion industry through partnership with high-end designers'. Brown cites examples of fair trade, community-based liaisons that have produced 'Indian embroidered sundresses, African beaded jewellery and Peruvian knitted sweaters'. With the eradication of traditional craft talent in the developed nations of North America and Western Europe, she argues, a greater appreciation has developed for the indigenous and inherited craft expertise in communities around the world. She provides specific examples of this practice:

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Figure 11.3 Linda Loudermilk, full-skirted dress with short jacket, Spring collection 2005. Photo: J. Sciulli/WireImage for Linda Loudermilk.

> Noir in Denmark is in partnership with Ugandan farmers and supports their development and production of organic long-staple cotton. Carla Fernandez of Taller Flora works with Mexican artisans, reinterpreting their techniques into highly sophisticated designs while learning from their knowledge: a truly collaborative process. With every design and every stitch, Alabama Chanin honours the women of the south of the USA, their history, their struggles and their everyday skills sets. Her work is a labour of love. (Brown, 2010: 13)

African designer Lamine Kouyate, with his label XULY.Bët, deconstructs and reconstructs recycled clothing 'by applying stitches on the outside of his garments to focus attention on the (frayed) edges where threads hold garments together' (Rovine, 2005: 215). According to Rovine, 'The garments incorporate visible seams, like healed wounds that have left their mark (by using red thread), the past lives of clothes that have been re-shaped into new forms' (2005: 219). Kouyate incorporates torn pockets and discoloured collars along with the old collar labels of used shirts and pant waistbands to visibly exaggerate the links with the garments' past lives and as a way to 'document the changing identities of these garments . . . and their attraction lies in the imaginative potential of their former life' (Rovine, 2005: 221).

Rebecca Earley from the Chelsea College of Art, London, transforms and reinvents discarded blouses from charity shops. She employs upcycling techniques, using heat photograms and overprinting the surface of the reshaped garments. Stains are covered with the reactive overlaid dyes, and when it completes its second life, the garment can be transformed a third time into a quilted waistcoat. A Textile Environmental Design student, Kate Goldsworthy, who works with Earley, has developed a method of bonding a lining made of recycled polyester fleece to the original textile without the use of adhesives or bonding agents to produce the textile for the waistcoat. Laser etching creates a delicate lacelike effect, with melted transparent materials digitally controlled to facilitate the process of fusing (Brown, 2010: 164).

ETHICAL CONCERNS

Exploitation and Reflective Practice

Fashion, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, has finally found its consciousness, and its designers, models and business entrepreneurs alike have joined global musicians to attempt to make the world a better place (Plate 29). It began in the 1970s and 1980s—a time when unethical practices were publicly highlighted in the fashion and associated industries with attention on the wearing of fur, feathers and animal skins and the inhumane and barbarous treatment of animals as well as their use in the research and development units of cosmetic companies.

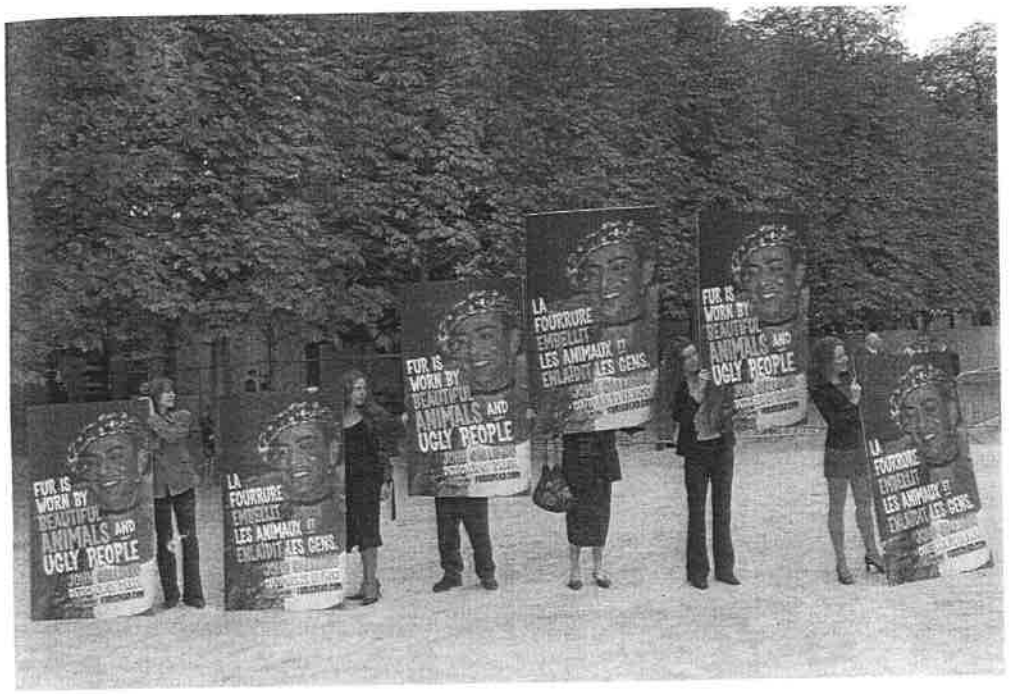

Figure 11.4 Protesters rally against the use of fur by designers outside the Dior fashion show at Paris Fashion Week Spring/Summer 2005, 5 October 2004. Photo: Michael Dufour/Getty Images.

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Ethical practice relates to the culture of advertising and, in particular, the exploitation of child models to promote a prepubescent sexuality in fashion advertising, which fulfils a cosmetic function, distorting social values and attitudes. Over the past few decades, socially responsible practices drew attention to the rise of racial discrimination in modelling and the very limited number of African and Asian models used. While projecting an image of multiculturalism, American *Vogue* included only a handful of black celebrity faces on its covers between 2002 and 2009.[7] Fashion photographer Nick Knight made particular reference to this commercially driven racial favouritism in his film *Untitled* (2008) featuring Naomi Campbell. As well, the promotion of a poor body image—a trend impacting greatly upon young men and women worldwide—has led to a disturbing increase in anorexia and bulimia in today's society. A number of designers have attempted to counteract stereotypical and idealized gender and body images through their styling. In Italy in 2006, fashion agents signed agreements not to use underage or underweight models for runway shows.

Greenwashing is a term (like whitewashing) that has been adopted recently to describe a cover-up marketing ploy often used by individuals, companies and organizations to downplay the unethical practices that proliferate in the fashion industry, including the use of child labour. Labelling inconsistencies and misleading classifications confuse the buyer and often compromise provenance. Sandy Black, in *Eco-Chic: The Fashion Paradox* (2007), reports that those buying fair trade cotton may not necessarily have an organic product, and some companies blur the component content of blended fabrics. Workers' wages in Third World countries are difficult to contextualize, and Western designers are often misled into believing that workers are being paid a reasonable sum for their production practices. Australian journalist Elisabeth Wynhausen (2008: 28) tried to map the supply chain or trail of a designer garment. She found that manufacture took place in China if more than 300 garments in one style were required (otherwise a surcharge was imposed), as US orders of one style were often in the tens of thousands. The garment designs (often samples made from photographs of garments seen in New York shop windows) were handed to the trading houses in Hong Kong (or existing product was purchased there), which acted as the intermediaries between foreign buyers and Chinese factories. A shirt could be made and delivered to any major city worldwide for approximately one-half of the cost of making it on-shore. For smaller orders, local factories with in-house machinists were used, but a certain amount of outsourcing or subcontracting to sweatshops was also used, where migrant workers were unlawfully paid below minimum wage, contrary to restrictions imposed by the Australian government. A number of unscrupulous employers get work done outside their factories without registering with the Australian Industrial Registry, a requirement under the federal clothing trade's award. While unsustainable levels of clothing production and consumption may exist in the developed world, a more far-reaching problem is 'the negative economic, social and environmental effects (that) tend to fall upon developing countries where an ever-increasing proportion of clothing is produced' (Rissanen, 2005: 7). With an estimated 30 to 50 per cent of British, European and American fashion manufactured goods now being produced off-shore, the subsequent exploitation of local and national factory and industry workers in terms of health and working conditions has led to concerns about the treatment of garment factory workers in locations such as the Pearl River Delta in China and the ghettos in India. This exploitation includes the use of very poorly paid sweatshop labour, using dangerous chemicals to produce textiles and clothing and the use of limited fossil fuels (already exhausted) to sustain the supply chains, leading to the gradual degradation of the environment.

It seems that there is 'no single organization or government body to regulate any specific "code of conduct" for the fashion industry although there are several trade associations with schemes set up to monitor and encourage ethical practices amongst commercial firms such as Ethical Trading Initiative in the UK, Solidaridad and the Clean Clothes Campaign in the Netherlands, Fair West in Australia or the Fair Labour Association in the USA' (Beard, 2008: 450). Regarding other problems such as 'counterfeit

chic' (see Chapter 10) and the theft of creative intellectual property, some fashion industries are attempting to establish both formal and informal ethical codes. For example, in New York, Diane Von Furstenberg, as president of the Council of Fashion Designers of America, has been seeking greater government regulation of intellectual property design and fair trade policies. Despite highly globalized consumer markets, individual designers have fought to retain financial independence, allowing them to maintain a moral responsibility towards worker exploitation and providing protection for their own intellectual property. However, due to the limited supply of eco-friendly material, products often display an inflated exchange rate. For the limited, yet expanding, eco-conscious consumer base to become part of the mainstream or dominant culture will take time and money. Luxury sustainable goods offered by leading style labels help to reinforce the notion that eco-fashion of the twenty-first century represents a commodity that has an appeal to a much broader consumer market than its counterpart of the past. It also underlines the fact that guilt doesn't sell fashion, desire does.