

Question 4:

Outline a current environmental, political, or social issue that requires redesign. Explain how you will solve this issue over the duration of your future design career. Underline the tool and approaches that you will use and discuss how and why.

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Fast Fashion, as we know it, is the second biggest source of pollution after oil, in the world. The production and consumption of fashion has now become a serious health hazard for our planet and for ourselves. As many of our climate change problems, this necessity of having to clothe one's self has been over produced and has come from our greed and want to possess everything. Greenpeace's "9 reasons to quit fast fashion" states the facts of the effects of our consumption on the environment and makes you wonder how it has come to such an extent and how are we living right in the middle of this madness. Not only do we have to live with the consequences of the production of our cheap garments but also with the immense waste that it generates everytime we decide we need a whole new wardrobe for the upcoming season. According to Greenpeace, every second of every day and night, '2,625 kilograms of clothing becomes waste that needs dealing with in some way' (Greenpeace, *9 reasons to quit Fast Fashion*, article published in 2019). Unfortunately, fast fashion is like an addiction, we are aware that it is unhealthy but we do it anyway because we like the way it makes us feel and it will be harder to recover from it.

Nonetheless, our job as consumers of fashion, is to give up this urge to follow trends and become more creative with our style and our consumption methods. We can reduce our environmental impact just by looking out for a few things from the way we shop, take care of our clothes, to the way we dispose of them. "The most environmentally sustainable jacket is the one that's already in your closet" said Lisa Williams, Chief Product Officer of Patagonia, a brand known for creating a sustainable, eco-friendly produced jacket. If we intend on reducing our carbon footprint, we need to buy less things in general. 'A root of the problem lies in our excessive consumerism: we buy 10 while our grandmothers bought 2', (Sustain Your Style, *What's wrong*

with the Fashion Industry, article). Whether it is from a sustainable brand or not, buying less in general, will already slow down the industry's production as there will be less demand for it.

As well as buying less we need to revisit the World War II slogan, 'Make Do and Mend', only not just for housewives. This was brought on by the rationing of new clothes, the Ministry of Informing was 'urging people to repair, reuse and reimagine their existing clothes', (Imperial War Museum). We need to teach ourselves how to sew and mend clothes and maybe make our own again. As well as upcycling or donating each other clothes we do not need or want. We already have all the fabrics and clothes we could ever need, we are only missing a little creativity.

As new designers, we should think of new ways of educating and changing the mindset of consumers, as well as telling them how to be more sustainable and environmentally friendly. We need to let ourselves be inspired by important climate change activists such as Greta Thunberg and David Attenborough, and join hands with them.

Greta Thunberg is known for, at a very young age, having challenged world leaders and blaming them for not taking action yet concerning the climate change crisis. She's also known for having taken time out of school to protest. Her activism started when she managed to convince her parents to reduce the carbon footprint.

David Attenborough is best known for presenting natural history documentaries. He is considered to be a national treasure as he has spent most of his life protecting and creating awareness for the natural world. At the age of 94, he has seen so many species come on and off the list of endangered

species and unfortunately has seen some species slowly go extinct because of our human race.

In this day and age, most of the population is connected to the internet and social media. Everyday, we consume an enormous amount of information from these platforms. Creating short yet powerful films, showing the consequences of our consumerism and showing and sharing more of the fast fashion production process would make people more aware and educate about the source of their clothing. As social media has become a big part of our daily lives, we also need to come together with social media influencers who are our best opportunity to influence on the decisions and investments we make.

Actively protesting this way of consuming is also an important part of changing this industry and is a way for more people to get involved with the movement. As new designers and students we need to join hands in creating “mob style” and peaceful protests that could take place in shopping centres or fast fashion filled streets such as Oxford Street in London. During these protests, we, designers could plan temporary art installations, that will leave a trace of our voices in hopes to make shoppers reflect on their spending. These installations need to be impactful and contain big words so that the message is clearly received . The inspiration behind this idea is Suzie Blake’s *Blood Mountain* and *Guerra de la Paz, Mort*.



Fig 1. *Blood Mountain* by Suzie Blake, 2019.



Fig 2. *Blood Mountain* by Suzie Blake, 2019.

Blood Mountain is a 3 meter high mound of donated red clothing exhibited at Grau Projekt, Melbourne, Australia, in 2019. It refers to our fast fashion industry as well as the hypocrisy of feminist slogan Tee's that are most likely made by underpaid and abused women in Asia. "The idea was to reimagine this archetype in the form of greed and waste" said Suzie while talking about her choice to give her installation the form of a mountain. "Mountain is considered the archetype of ascent and power", (Suzie Blake, *Blood Mountain* - an art installation by Suzie Balke artist, by Fashion Revolution, 2019). The mound could also symbolise our landfills. As Suzie Blake is making a statement on the fast fashion industry and its production, the reason she could have chosen the color red would be to symbolise the blood spilled by labour exploitation in poorly maintained factories such as the Rana Plaza in Dhaka, Bangladesh. During this incident, a building containing 5 garment factories collapsed resulting in the killing of at least 1000 people and injured 2500.



Fig 3. *Mort* by Guerra de la Paz, 2010.

Alain Guerra and Neraldo de la Paz, two Cuban artists in Miami, came together decades ago to practice their artistry in collaboration and form Guerra de la Paz. Through the use of discarded, second hand clothes and shoes, Guerra de la Paz create art installations with strong political and environmental messages. "They explore the expressive qualities of discarded textiles, a journey that has produced an impressive array of dynamic sculptures and tactile installations", (Artworks for change, Guerra de la Paz article, 2020). This installation in particular, titled *Mort*, meaning "Dead" in French, represents, with no doubt, our fast fashion society. Made using a fold out bed, a pair of boots and a huge pile of clothing, all in dark colors, this installation gives the image of a body lying on the bed that, given the title of the piece, most likely suffocated in silence, underneath the mount of clothes. We buy clothes to follow trends and to make ourselves happy but in the end, each one of us is drowning in our own clothes. Fast fashion could be the cause of many deaths if we do not change our ways and habits.

In the hopes that these protests make people more aware, we should hope to get noticed by our fast fashion giants such as Topshop, Primark, Zara or Urban Outfitters, for example. As a start to converting the Fast Fashion industry in a more sustainable industry, high street shops could make their customers shopping experience a more educational one. Maybe by printing the garments stories on walls, where they were made and by whom, customers could reflect on whether they really need to buy more. Shops could also inform on a variety of events such as cleanup organisation dates, and also provide clothes bins for their own branded clothing and have their own second hand sections.

As our careers develop, we designers need to be more involved in the industry to be able to convert it. For this change to happen, fast fashion brands need to

change their marketing and production methods. Marketing, in the fast fashion industry, is a direct conversation between the brand and the customer, informing them about the urgency of their ownership of this garment. we need to be able to change that conversation and take example in Patagonia's marketing method.



Fig 4. Patagonia's campaign on Black Friday

Patagonia was born through a small company that made tools for climbers. Today they make outdoor apparel. As you visit their online store and hover over the shop category, their used gear comes up before their new products. As well as shopping for outdoor gear, you can get involved with many humanitarian and environmental projects. In fact, it seems like they have a bigger focus on their stories, projects and activism than their actual business. They also have a very different marketing strategy regarded their black friday

sale, as seen in Figure 4. Unlike other brands that will rush you to buy anything and everything before it is too late in order to make a profit off their customers, Patagonia is deliberately telling you to not buy this jacket because you probably already have it in your closet. Their values are also the complete opposite to fast fashion brands.

‘Build the best products’

‘Cause no unnecessary harm’

‘Use business to protect nature’

‘Not bound by convention’

(Patagonia website, Core values)

In terms of production, fast fashion brands are considered to be the supermarkets of the Fashion Industry. Their production lines need to be consistently running full-time in order to meet the need for quick product changeover in shops. However, in order for these clothes to be at very low prices and the reason behind so many sales events, brands take advantage in developing countries which usually results in the exploitation of workers, very low wages, no benefits and terrible working conditions. Looking at Patagonia again, they endorse fairtrade production. Which means that workers are taken care of, have rights in their place of work therefore creating a more efficient production line of clothing (Patagonia, Social Responsibility, 2016). In our developing careers, we designers need to make sure, when working for companies, that they are or working on being fairtrade certified.

Lastly, in our careers, we should strive to innovate in new materials. As well as convert the fast fashion industry into a sustainable, environmentally friendly and ethical business, we need to reinvent the term fast fashion. What if we did

exactly what it says on the tin? Creating fashion that is ephemeral and that has a physical expiration date. In our Changemaker module, we were asked to create a biomaterial that we already have the recipe for and innovate it somehow. As well as making sure brands start to sell clothing made from natural fibres, us designers need to find a way to create fabric through our waste.

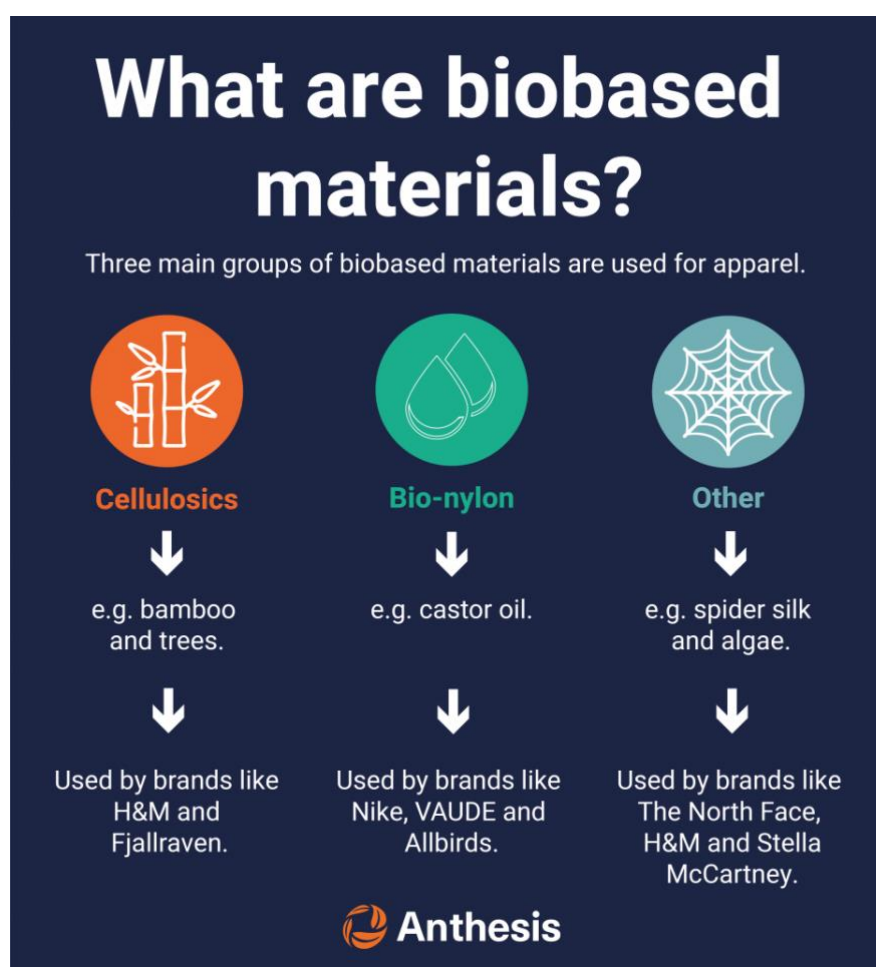


Fig 5.

Some commonly known brands such as H&M, Nike and designer Stella McCartney have already started to implement new materials into their clothing lines such as leather made from mushroom roots and fiber made from citrus fruit waste. However in order, for these new materials to become more

present in our well-known brands we need more designers to work on making them durable, stylish, and simply making a wider variety of these bio-based materials.

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