



**DAISY LOWE**  
A TEEN ICON IS BORN

**MARRY HIM!**  
THE ADVICE  
EVERY SINGLE GIRL  
MUST READ

**ETHICAL FASHION**  
NICE IDEA, BUT DO  
YOU ACTUALLY WANT  
TO WEAR IT?

*what  
really works*

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# the green dream

WE WANT TO BUY CLOTHES THAT SAVE THE WORLD, BUT BRANDS AREN'T COMING UP WITH THE GOODS. **JESSICA BRINTON** REPORTS ON THE PROSPECTS OF AN ECOFABULOUS FASHION FUTURE



Last week saw the launch of a shiny new rebranded Oxfam. In London, three stores have been refurbished and restocked, with plans to roll out the big idea across the country. Students from the London College of Fashion will customise Oxfam's stock of second-hand clothes to transform them into future pieces of fashion history. And the big idea is that there is a black Hugo Boss jacket cut up and restitched with fancy new epaulettes. A pair of jeans artfully ripped in strips down each leg (very Christopher Kane). Some Barratts shoes covered in a patchwork of vintage ribbon. And a piece of fabulous glittery gold brocade made into an empire-line shift dress – with a stuffed tiger sewn onto the shoulder. Well, they are students.

The premise, of course, is that, traditionally, when you buy something from Oxfam, the first thing you do is attack it with your sewing machine. Now fashion students have done that for you. Donate your unwanted clothes to Oxfam and, hey presto, they will become one-off masterpieces by the designers of the future. The students even get to sew their own labels into the clothes, so, you never know, one day you might own a bargain piece by a future McQueen or Galliano.

Clever, huh? No surprises, then, that it's the brainchild of Jane Shepherdson, the former Topshop branding director, whose uncanny instinct for what girls want is credited for the rise of the monster fashion monolith. So, why hasn't there been more fanfare? Ordinarily, the relaunch of a famous chain of shops, particularly one spearheaded by Shepherdson, attracts a spot of industry buzz. But no – it has been very quiet. Fashion people are more interested in what Shepherdson will do with the womenswear chain Whistles (where she is now chief executive) than what she's up to at Oxfam.

Is it Oxfam's fault? Or is it ethical fashion? It is undoubtedly hip to be green – we buy free-range chicken, pour Ecover into our washing-up bowls and grow our own veg – but is it time to admit that ethical fashion isn't actually fashionable?

It's eco-sacrilege to say it, but it's true. Telling someone "My blouse is Mincap, my leggings are from Conscious Giving and my cardie was knitted by little old ladies in Peru" doesn't have the same ring to it as "Check out these three quid earrings from H&M" or "I do love my new Luella handbag".

The blame for us not buying it must, therefore, be levelled at the lack of ethical fashion you really want to wear. And I don't mean a hat bought off a man at a festival after a rousing set by Femi Kuti, or a Love Our Earth T-shirt from a charity stall at a street market. I mean sharp, modern, impress-your-boss ethical clothes, none of which has so far been available on the rails of Oxfam – or almost anywhere else.

"Guilt doesn't drive change, desire does," Shepherdson says. "If you want someone to buy a Fairtrade dress, then make sure it looks absolutely gorgeous. You can't expect people to do it altruistically, because they won't. It needs to be stylish first, and the ethical part needs to be added value, as in, 'Oh, it's ethical, too – perfect.'"

## DRESSES

1 Asymmetric dress, \$89, from Silka; 020 8858 8158. 2 Long panel dress, £240, by From Somewhere; 020 8743 7051. 3 Cap-sleeve dress, £205, by Wildlife Works, from Equa; equaclothing.com. 4 Summer dress, \$180, and 5 Jersey smock, \$133, both by Park/Vogel, from Yates Buchanan; 020 7229 5884. 6 Knitted dress, \$185, from Keep & Share; keepandshare.co.uk. 7 Koffan, £200, by From Somewhere, as before

