

EVA KRUSE

CEO, GLOBAL FASHION AGENDA

As the founder of Global Fashion Agenda, the initiative behind the Copenhagen Fashion Summit and a leading forum on sustainable fashion, Kruse encourages the industry to converse on and collaborate towards a sustainable future. Her biggest challenge has been “to ensure that the discussions continue outside the event and conclusions lead to tangible actions—that the industry walks the talk when it comes to bringing about actual change and solutions.”

What’s one myth about sustainable fashion that you would like to dispel?

“That in order to be sustainable, businesses have to sacrifice long-term profit. On the contrary, our research has proven that sustainability is an opportunity to improve efficiency, reap financial rewards and develop a business model to meet the demands of the future.”



PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT...

THE FOUNDERS’ CLUB

‘SUSTAINABILITY’ HAS A PROBLEM. AS WITH ALL OVERUSED WORDS, IT HAS REACHED A STAGE WHERE IT IS STARTING TO LOSE ALL MEANING. TO HELP MAKE SENSE OF THE BUZZIEST BUZZWORD IN FASHION, WE CAUGHT UP WITH EIGHT WOMEN WORKING TOWARDS A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE, AND ASKED EACH OF THEM ONE BURNING QUESTION. BY PAHULL BAINS

AMANDA HEARST

CO-FOUNDER, MAISON DE MODE

Amanda Hearst founded the sustainable fashion retail site Maison de Mode in 2012 and has championed ethical fashion, both personally and professionally, ever since. Last year, she walked down the aisle in a completely sustainable Oscar de la Renta wedding gown and frequently reps eco-friendly labels. “Both Emma Watson and Gisele Bündchen have been dressing sustainably on the red carpet, and I think that has opened the doors for other celebrities to do the same,” she says. “It’s a process, but I think we are on our way.”

What’s one way to be a more conscious consumer?

“Buy less and buy better. Buying less means wearing what you have and renting items you want. Buying better means asking questions like, ‘Who made my clothes? Where did this come from? What is it made of?’”



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EVELYN MORA
FOUNDER, HELSINKI FASHION WEEK

As the founder of a sustainability-focused fashion week, Evelyn Mora understands the complexity of that buzzword better than most. “There is a real need for change, and sustainability as a word is ruined because it means everything yet nothing at the same time. The words ‘natural’ and ‘sustainable’ are being misused a lot. Sustainability is not an ‘aspect’ of your work. It is the vision behind every decision and every action, and must be approached simultaneously from multiple angles.”

What is the biggest challenge in organizing a sustainable fashion week?

“The challenges mostly revolve around a lack of collaboration, not only for Helsinki Fashion Week but for everybody. Sustainability is not a competition, it is something we all have to reach for and help each other achieve.”

SABENA PURI
CEO AND CO-FOUNDER, STAGE3

After living in the US for 15 years, Sabena Puri returned to India and was struck by the way fashion consumption in the country had changed. “Millennials were obsessive social media users and avid Bollywood enthusiasts who watched TV 24/7. They wanted to look glamorous and stylish all the time, but this was all designer-led and available at price points that young India could not afford.” So she launched Stage3, a clothing rental company that offers pieces by designers such as Payal Singhal, Sabyasachi and Anamika Khanna.

What is a misconception people have about making sustainable fashion choices?

“A lot of people believe that sustainable fashion is expensive and outdated, but there are rental options for trendy, glamorous fashion.” >





CARRY SOMERS AND ORSOLA DE CASTRO
FOUNDERS, FASHION REVOLUTION

It was the Rana Plaza fire in Dhaka, Bangladesh, that spurred this duo into action, leading to the launch of Fashion Revolution and the viral social media movement #WhoMadeMyClothes. “I remember the overwhelming shock and sadness over the news, but also inevitability—we had all warned that a disaster of this scale was likely to take place,” says Somers. “I realised this had happened because of a lack of transparency in supply chains.”

How can people better understand the true cost of the garments they’re buying?

“Dig deeper, find out more about the brand or retailer and make sure that your purchase matches your principles. And ask questions. Apps like Good On You can help answer them,” says de Castro.

SAACHI BAHL
FOUNDER, SAAHRA

“In 2016, I founded Saahra with a vision to create India’s first platform for conscious luxury fashion and lifestyle,” says Saachi Bahl. As a retail store and soon-to-launch e-commerce platform, Saahra endeavours to meet global standards of sustainability, carrying only brands that qualify as sustainable, fair-trade and cruelty-free, such as Akaaro, Ekà and Doodlage.

Is it a myth that ‘ethical’ equals ‘expensive’?

“When we talk of ‘ethical’ manufacturing, we must take into account that positive production practices involve a more detailed, considered approach, whether it is sourcing raw materials, focusing on locally-made garments or ensuring fair wages for artisans. This increases the production cost, making an ‘ethical’ product seem more expensive, when in reality that’s not true. In essence, it’s unfair to even compare an ethically made product with those that do not comply with ethical trade practices.”



REBECCA VAN BERGEN
FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NEST

Rebecca van Bergen’s grandmother, a seamstress, taught her that using one’s hands to create is an act of power and beauty. “I became interested in better understanding the economics of craft and their role in fashion—specifically whether artisans were reaping the rewards of their hard work in a country like India, where most women are involved in some form of craftwork.” So, she founded Nest in 2006 to connect artisans with brands to make sure underserved communities could be fairly employed. “Artisans who typically work out of their homes or small workshops tend to be the most invisible, and therefore, exploited,” she says.

Is there one aspect of sustainability that is often overlooked?

“Social sustainability (the human aspect) is as important as the environment, so home workshops and small establishments should strive to be safe.” ■