WHERE FASHION +FIBER MEET

THE MISSING LINK

INTRODUCTION



AS THE FASHION INDUSTRY BEGINS TO SEE MORE CLEARLY THE EFFECT THEY HAVE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, MANY DESIGNERS ARE TAKING STRIDES TO BECOME MORE SUSTAINABLE IN THEIR PRODUCTION METHODS. WHILE THESE EFFORTS ARE IMPORTANT, MANY FAIL TO CONSIDER THE ORIGINS OF THE "ECO-FRIENDLY" NATURAL FIBER OPTIONS THAT BRANDS ARE QUICKLY ADOPTING. THUS, PLACING LESS VALUE ON FARMING AND EQUALITY FOR THE STEWARDS OF OUR LAND. THIS RESEARCH STRIVES TO EXAMINE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FASHION DESIGNER AND FIBER FARMER AND THE GAPS THAT MAY EXIST.

Artwork by Amanda Coen

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- ★ Where does the gap between fiber farmer and fashion designer exist?
- ★ How do we evaluate what inequities exist between fiber farmers and fashion designers?
- ★ Where are there opportunities to create connections and help close this gap?

PRIMARY NVESTIGATION: INTERVIEWS

★ Interviews with Farmers, Fashion Designers, and Sustainability Experts







BRITTANY DICKENSON

ANGELA DAMMAN

MAX HOLDEN

JESS BOEKE

- ★ Fashion Designer★ Sustainability Advocate
- ★ Fashion Designer & Owner of Angela Damman Yucatan★ Henequen & Sansevieria
- ★ Flax & Natural Dye

 Farmer
- ★ Founder of The Rust Belt Fibershed
- ★ Natural Dyer & Owner of Drift Lab Textile Co.









GEANA SIEBURGER

★ Fashion Designer & Owner of GDS Cloth Goods

★ Sustainability Advocate

★ Hemp Farmer★ Founder of The OR Foundation

* Fashion Designer

LIZ RICKETTS

SANDY FISHER

★ Flax Farmer★ Weaver

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

THESE QUESTIONS ARE LARGELY DRIVEN BY WANTING TO UNDERSTAND HOW EACH INTERVIEWEE VIEWS THEIR ROLE IN THE FARMER/DESIGNER RELATIONSHIP, THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO RAW FIBERS, HOW THEY HAVE GAINED KNOWLEDGE ABOUT FIBER IN THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELD, AND WHERE THEY FEEL THERE MAY BE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THEIR FIELD OF WORK.

- ★ What does your textile/fiber/farming/design education look like?
- ★ What have your interactions with farmers/designers looked like?
- ★ In what ways does fiber inform your final product?
- ★ What is the most difficult aspect of farming/designing?
- ★ What is the most rewarding aspect of farming/designing?
- ★ In what ways do you practice sustainability in your work?
- ★ What do you wish the general public knew about farming/designing?
- * What do you feel inhibits farmers and designers from having a more connected and direct relationship?

PRIMARY INVESTIGATION: COMPANY COMPARISONS

★ Comparisons of Fashion Companies Website's Approaches to Fiber

COMPANY NAME	MENTIONS SUSTAINABILITY	MENTIONS FIBER	MENTIONS FARMER (SPECIFICALLY)	MENTIONS FARMING PRACTICES	MENTIONS FARMS (GENERALLY)
Boyish Jeans	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Girlfriend Collective	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Mate The Label	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Reformation	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Patagonia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
For Days	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Eileen Fisher	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Everlane	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Mara Hoffman	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Pact	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes

MENTIONS FARMER (SPECIFICALLY)

80% Yes No

MENTIONS FARMING PRACTICES

30% - 70% No

MENTIONS FARMS (GENERALLY)



GOMPANY-GOMPARISONS. Our goal for this year was to partner with Retraced to build real time traceability into our supply chain. We've been working on mapping the supply



Meet Our Regenerative Wool Farmers



More pesticides are used for conventional cotton than any other crop, making it the dirtiest crop in the world.





We have 100% traceability into our Tier 1 and Tier 2 suppliers. We've also mapped 57% of our products down to Tier 3 and are working on making it

100%. Once we get there we will focus on going deeper into the supply chain to know exactly where our fiber is coming from-like the farm where

chain of each of our products so you can easily track every step directly on the product page. It's a journey and can't be done evernight so we wanted to

To map the supply chain, it's important to understand the different levels within the supply chain.

give you an update into where we're at.

w Clothing Dresses Tops Active Jeans Weddings Sweaters Collections Sustainability Q Search from. We want to be able to answer

our clothes" at every level of the . Our goal for 2020 was to reach

bility into our Tier 1 & 2 suppliers

100%

subcontractors

TIER 2 Finished goods assemblers &

Dvers & printers, finishers, weavers, knitters

the cotton is grown.

Fibers, spinners, recycled material collector/processor

Raw material (Farm, Forest,

HERE'S WHERE WE MADE OUR STUFF THIS

51.3% Los

factory, and invests in new fabric innovations to ensure we're reducing our impact on the planet. We prioritize natural fibers, but use recycled FEW INTRODUCE THE FARMER

MANY TALK ABOUT FIBER

SOME ADMIT THEY HAVE NO IDEA OF THE **ORIGIN OF THEIR FIBER**

VESIIGAIM

SECONDARY RESOURCES:

- ★ 2020 Fibershed Annual Report
- ★ USDA Economic Research Service Reports
- * Ellen MacArthur Foundation Publications
- * Textile Exchange's *Preferred Fiber and Materials: Market Report 2020*
- * Sustainable Fashion & Textiles by Kate Fletcher
- * Empire of Cotton: A Global History by Sven Beckert
- * A Stitch in Time: The Cleveland Garment Industry by Sean Martin
- ★ Special Crops in Ohio Before 1850 by Robert Leslie Jones

CHALLENGES - OPPORTUNITIES

- Connecting with farmers was challenging during this research. This was due to the COVID-19 pandemic and limited scope of my own network.
- I was able to use past connections and local community members to gather resources for the *Fashion Meets Fiber Flax Program* and connect with potential interviewees.
- Social distancing and travel restrictions made visiting farms and conducting in-person interviews impossible. Inability to gain hands on research and knowledge was a limitation of this preliminary investigation.
- I was able to connect with more people outside of my immediate area due to the virtual nature of the interviews.
- My inability to travel allowed for a much broader scope in types of research, such as the website comparisons.

FINDINGS

- * There exists a clear gap between farmer and designer and often little to no direct communication between the two groups.
- * There is a lack of education amongst fashion designers about fiber, farmer, and even textile.
- * Farmers rarely gain acknowledgement or are only abstractly mentioned by fashion companies.
- * Fashion companies are beginning to put more pressure on fiber farms to transition to more sustainable methods, but they fail to consider both the financial expense of that venture and that there are few widely dispersed resources to cultivate that transition making it feel impossible for many farmers.

- For designers, discovering who farmed the fiber that makes up any given textile can also often prove to be an impossible task.
- * To understand, relate to, or empathize with someone's life can add value to their life, your life and your products.
- * It is clear that education and providing local connections can help close both the information and social gaps that exist between the two groups.





Summer 2021



A program designed to connect fashion students to the origins of their textiles



With the support of the Rust Belt Fibershed



Participants will experience planting, harvesting, processing, spinning and weaving



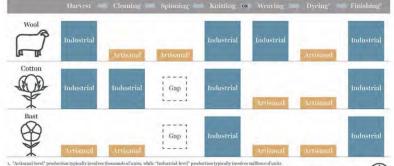
Provide opportunities to connect with regional farmers and farms

* FIBERSHED

- Regional Fiber Economies
- Soil to Soil
- * CIRCULAR FASHION
- * DESIGN IN PLACE

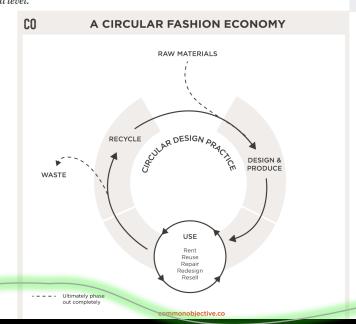
Current Capabilities of Western U.S. Fiber Manufacturing

The Western U.S. fiber manufacturing ecosystem suffers from gaps in production capabilities, as well as bottlenecks where only artisanal-level production is currently available.



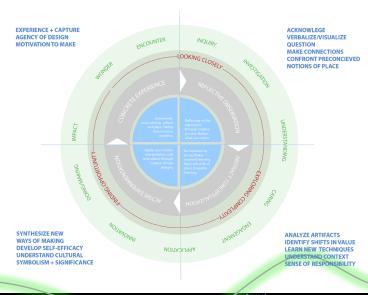
- 1. "Artisanal-level" production typically involves thousands of units, while "Industrial-level" production typically involves millions of units
 2. Refers to natural dyeing as opposed to synthetic dyeing, which is a well-established industry in the Western States; dyeing can occur at multiple places in the production proce
- 3. Finishing at the industrial level exists for all knit fibers, but is currently lacking for sween plant fibers
 4. Limited types of wool spinning are available at the industrial scale for blankets and carpets, however most wool produced in the West is not spun in the region

The high-level results of our ecosystem mapping work. Hide tanning (including sheep, goat, cow, and deer) exists at an industrial scale. However, natural tanning only exists at the artisanal level.





DESIGN IN PLACE



AMS

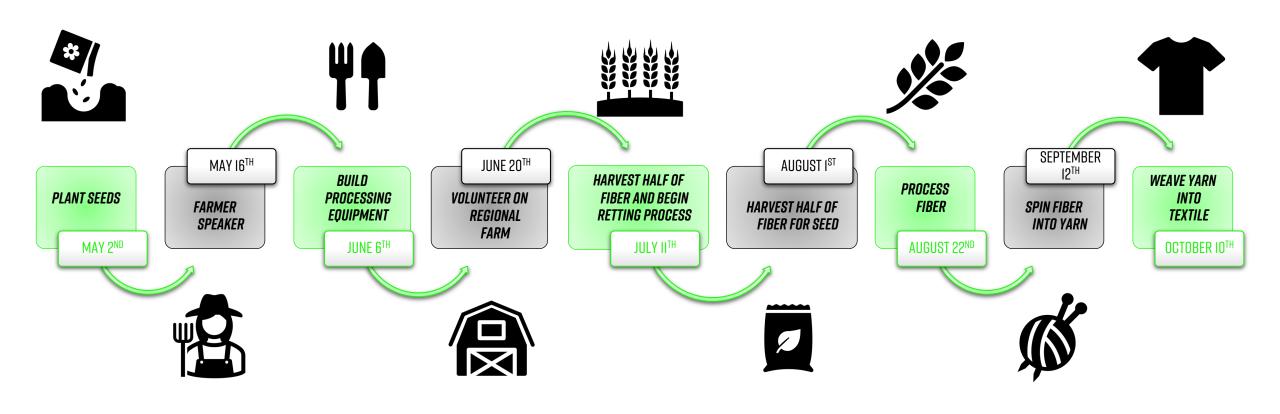
OUR HOPE IS THAT STUDENTS
WHO PARTICIPATE GAIN MORE
KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE
FIBERS THAT THEY INTERACT
WITH DAILY AND ABOUT THE
LIVES OF FARMERS WHO
CULTIVATE THESE FIBERS.

- * A better understanding of natural fibers
- * A better understanding of the lives of farmers
- * A better understanding of the history of flax fiber in Ohio and textile industries of the Rust Belt
- * An appreciation for farmers and farming
- * Feel more of a connection with fiber and farmer
- ★ A confidence in exploring fiber and connecting with farmers
- * A better understanding in the processing that natural fibers go through

HOW

- * A survey given at the beginning and end of the program
- * Ask at the end of each meeting to share one thing they've learned or experienced regarding the cultivation of fiber
- * A textile made by each participant

TIMELINE



*

Dates subject to change based on student and farmer availability

IN OUR SMALL WAY AND IN OUR DESIGN COMMUNITY WE HOPE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR BETTER CONNECTING WITH THE STEWARDS OF OUR LAND, TO SEE THE IMMENSE VALUE OF THIS WORK AND BETTER UNDERSTAND THE SYSTEMS NATURAL, SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL AT PLAY.

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INTERVIEWEES:

LIZ RICKETTS (HEMP FARMER AND FOUNDER OF THE OR FOUNDATION)

ANGELA DAMMAN (HENEQUEN AND SANSEVIERIA FARMER AND DESIGNER)

MAX HOLDEN (FLAX AND NATURAL DYE FARMER)

SANDY FISHER (FLAX FARMER AND WEAVER)

JESS BOEKE (FOUNDER OF THE RUST BELT FIBER SHED AND NATURAL DYER)

BRITTANY DICKENSON (FASHION DESIGNER AND SUSTAINABILITY ADVOCATE)

GEANA SIEBURGER (FASHION DESIGNER AND OWNER OF GDS CLOTH GOODS)

THE COLLEGE OF DESIGN ARCHITECTURE ART AND PLANNING MYRON E. ULLMAN JR. SCHOOL OF DESIGN
FASHION DESIGN PROGRAM
THE RUST BELT FIBERSHED
AND KAREN KAHLE OF THE CIVIC GARDEN CENTER OF GREATER CINCINNATI