

WHERE FASHION + FIBER MEET

THE MISSING LINK

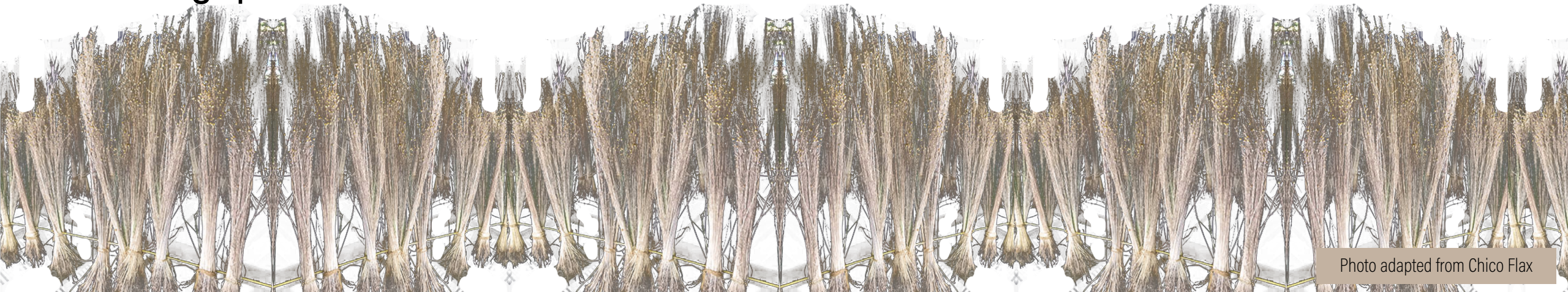
INTRODUCTION



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.

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 INVESTIGATION: INTERVIEWS

* Interviews with Farmers, Fashion Designers, and Sustainability Experts



BRITTANY DICKENSON

- * Fashion Designer
- * Sustainability Advocate



ANGELA DAMMAN

- * Fashion Designer & Owner of Angela Damman Yucatan
- * Henequen & Sansevieria Farmer



MAX HOLDEN

- * Flax & Natural Dye Farmer



JESS BOEKE

- * 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



LIZ RICKETTS

- * Fashion Designer
- * Hemp Farmer
- * Founder of The OR Foundation



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.

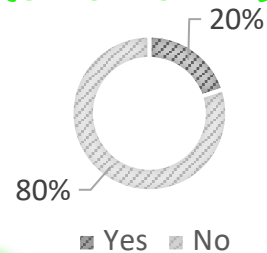
- * What does your textile/fiber/farming/design education look like?
- * What have your interactions with farmers/designers looked like?
- * In what ways does fiber inform your final product?
- * What is the most difficult aspect of farming/designing?
- * What is the most rewarding aspect of farming/designing?
- * 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

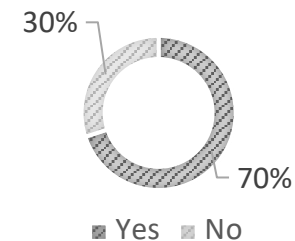
* Comparisons of Fashion Companies Website's Approaches to Fiber

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

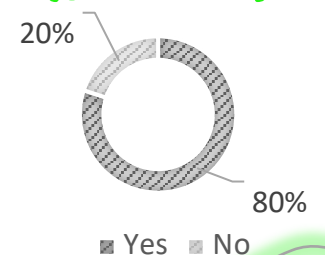
MENTIONS FARMER (SPECIFICALLY)



MENTIONS FARMING PRACTICES

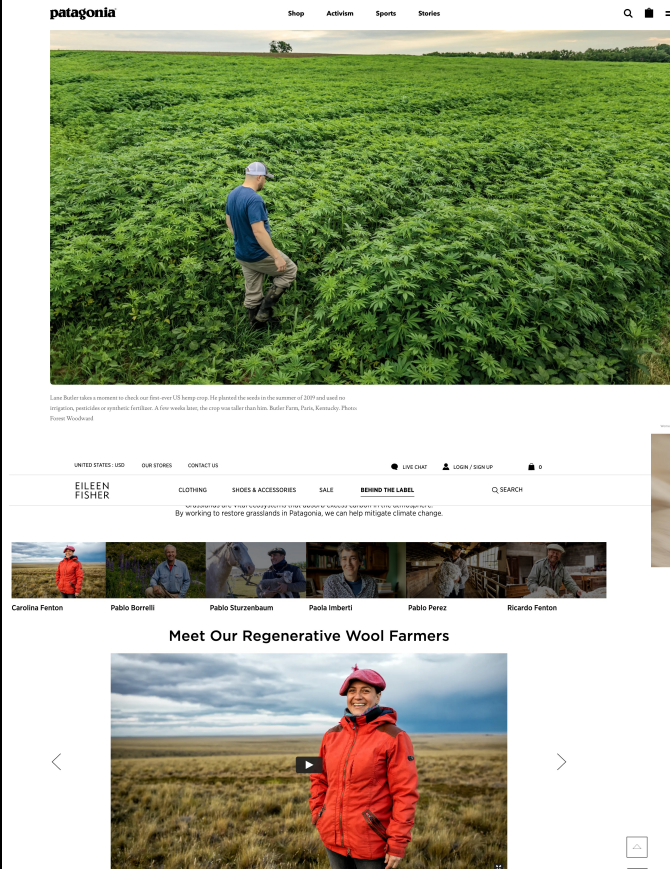


MENTIONS FARMS (GENERALLY)

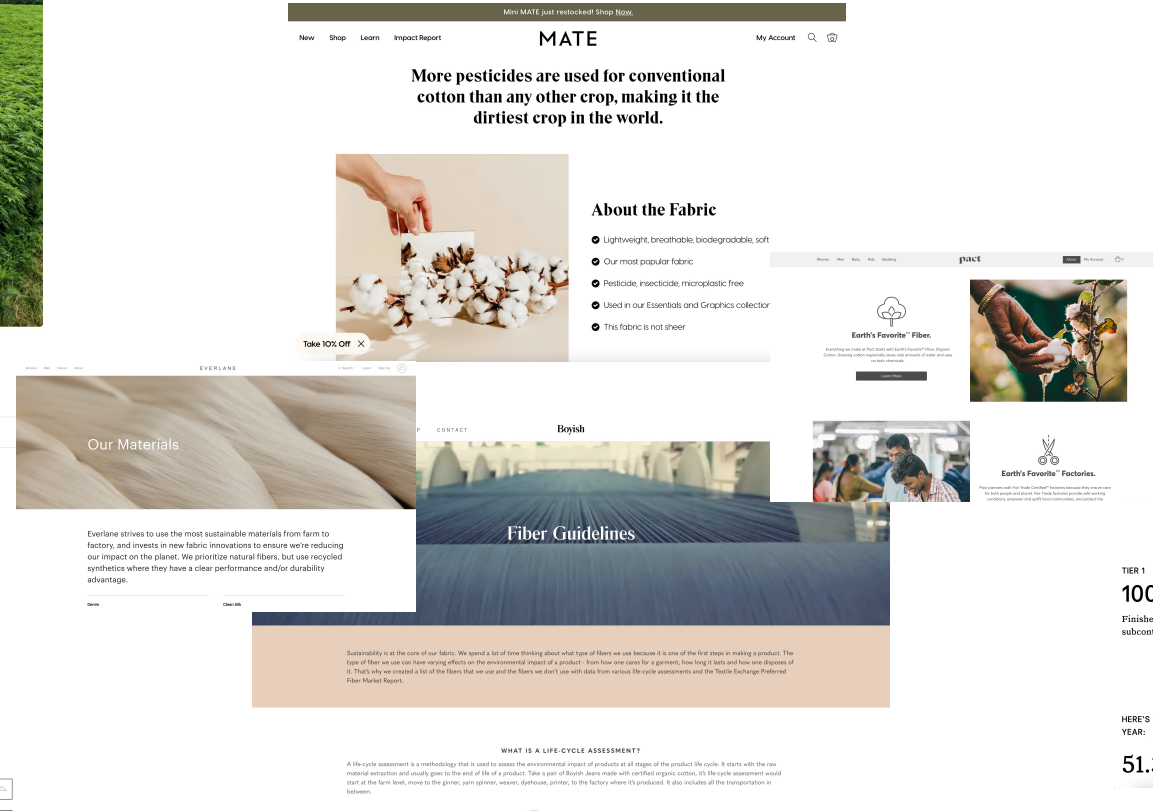


COMPANY COMPARISONS:

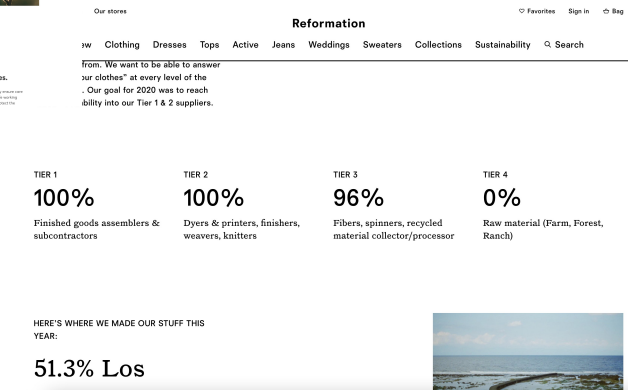
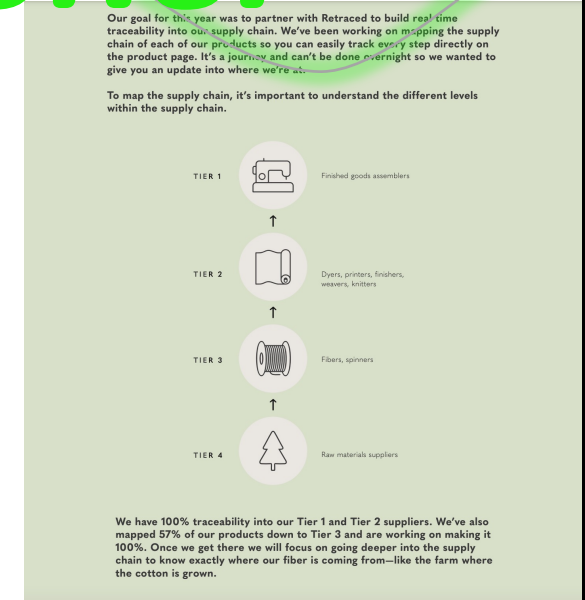
APPROACHES TO FIBER



FEW INTRODUCE THE FARMER



MANY TALK ABOUT FIBER



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

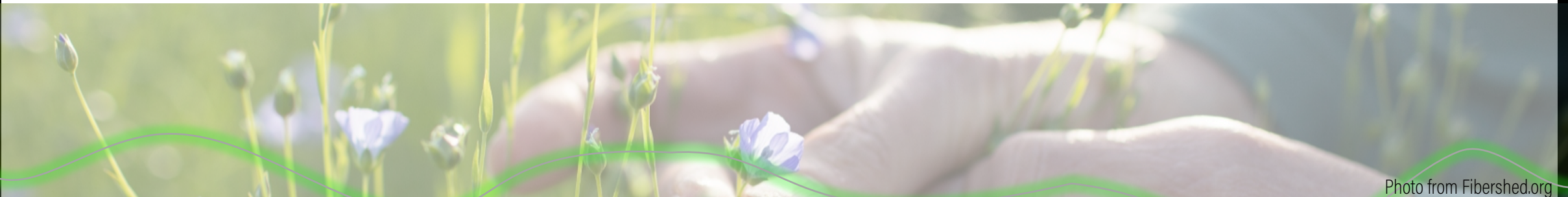
PRIMARY INVESTIGATION

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.

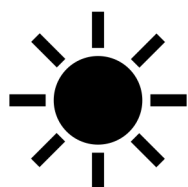


FINDINGS

- * 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.

FROM HERE:

FASHION MEETS FIBER FLAX PROGRAM



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

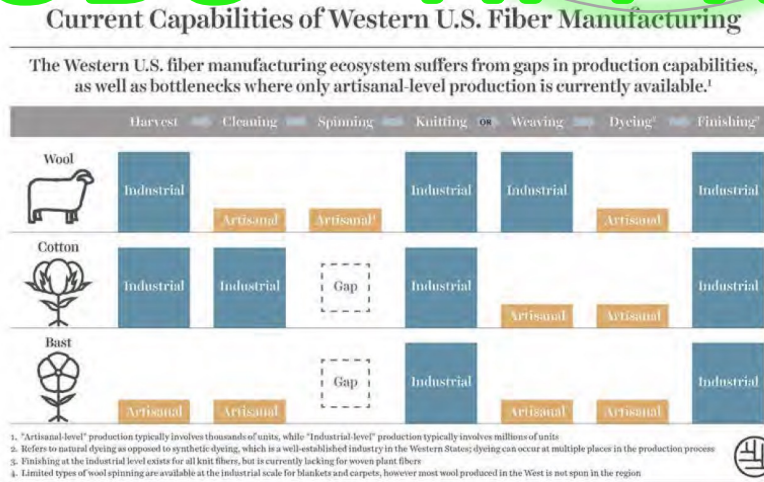


Provide opportunities to
connect with regional
farmers and farms

METHODS + APPROACH

* FIBERSHED

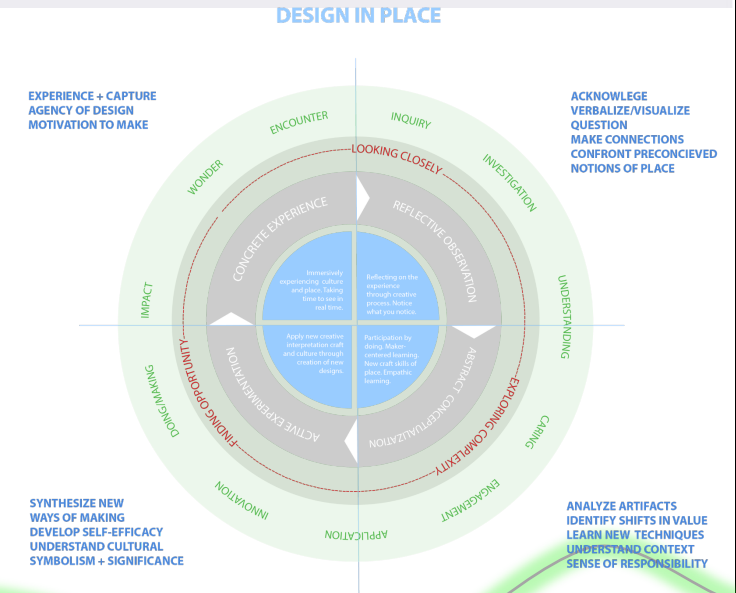
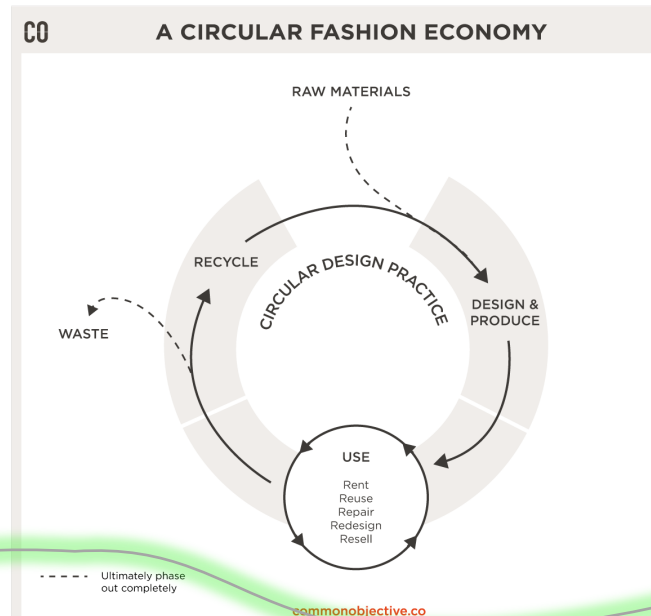
- Regional Fiber Economies
- Soil to Soil



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.

* CIRCULAR FASHION

* DESIGN IN PLACE



Synthesis of:
1. Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning
2. Agency by Design: Project Zero; Harvard GSE
3. Gruenewald's Model of Place Based Education

AIMS

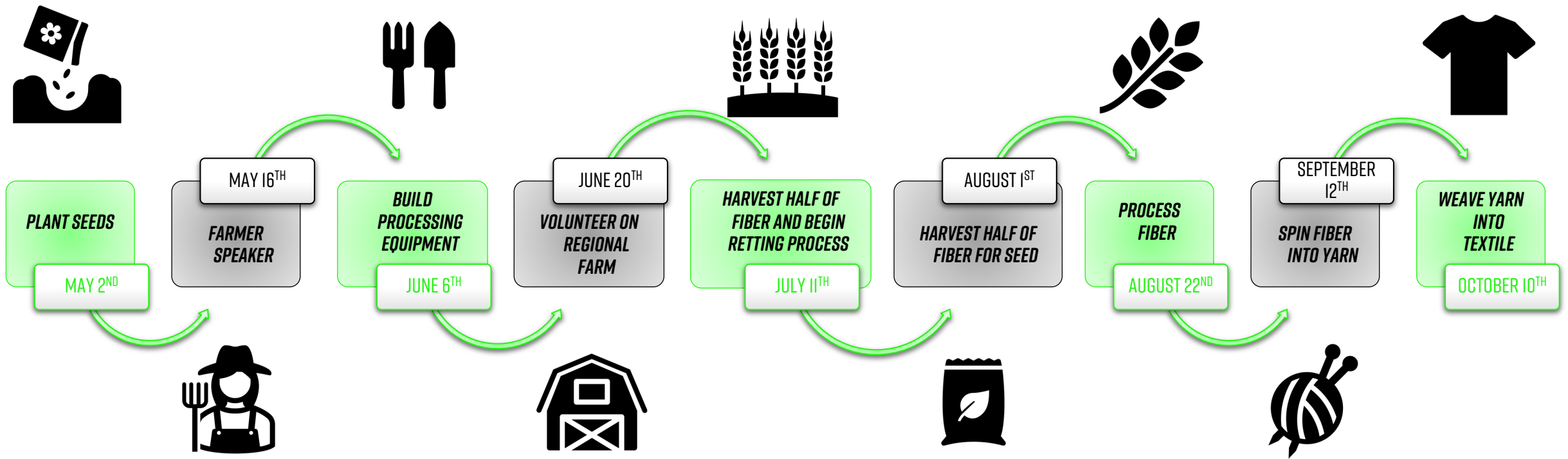
OUR HOPE IS THAT STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATE GAIN MORE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE FIBERS THAT THEY INTERACT WITH DAILY AND ABOUT THE LIVES OF FARMERS WHO CULTIVATE THESE FIBERS.

- * 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.***

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

FACULTY ADVISOR: ASSISTANT PROFESSOR ASHLEY KUBLEY

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