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Six ethical, ecological trends reshaping the fashion industry



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PLUS:

Lester Brown's plan to save civilization

Daniel Goleman's tips for smart shopping



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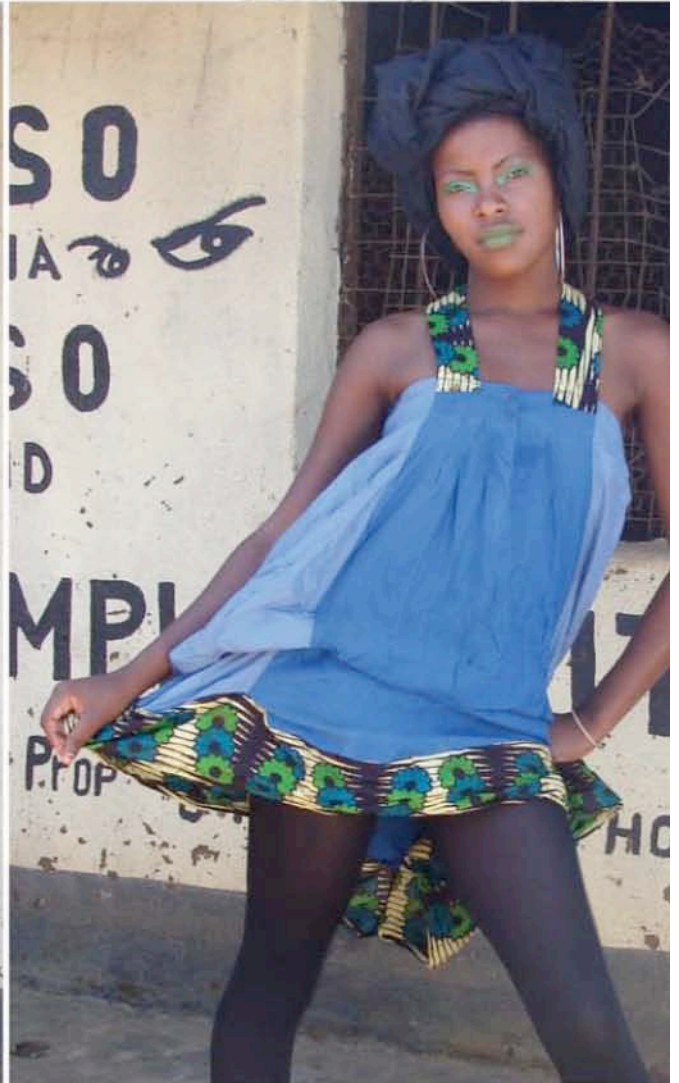


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POSSIBILITIES: ENERGY



DESIGNS LIKE THIS ONE BY MIA NISBET ARE MADE FROM CASTOFF CLOTHES, IN THIS CASE PURCHASED IN AFRICAN MARKETS.



3 Close the loop

WHEN YOU WEAR OUT A PATAGONIA garment, you don't have to feel guilty about disposing of it. Just take it to a Patagonia location and it'll be recycled into something new. "When you look at this raw material, which is in essence the same raw material as the end product, reusing it makes sense," says Patagonia's Dumain. The company's directors are working to make all products recyclable by 2010. The firm has already seen energy and carbon emissions reductions as a result. "The more we learn about how much energy it takes to grow, extract or mine raw material, the more we're convinced that closed-loop cycles make sense," says Dumain. Adds the California College of the Arts' Grose:

"The old model was linear; you make it, sell it and dispose of it. The new model is cyclical."

4 Start upcycling

WITH MILLIONS OF TONS OF PERFECTLY usable clothes thrown away every year, designers have started tapping into this waste stream for raw material and inspiration. Britain's Junky Styling and Canada's Pre-loved brands have both made fresh "upcycled" designs constructed from clothes that would otherwise end up in the landfill. U.K.-based designer Mia Nisbet has gone a step further. In her fashion studies at the Glasgow School of Art, Nisbet discovered one of the disturbing side effects

of fashion's fast-consumption model is that old clothes get dumped on markets in Africa. "When these clothes are exported to African countries, it can be devastating to the fashion economy," she says.

To turn this situation around, she started a business based in Malawi. She purchases castoff clothes from street markets and hires local tailors to construct her creative designs, which mix Western styles and locally produced traditional Malawian textiles. Her clothes, sold in boutiques in London and Los Angeles, bring lost fashion wages back to Malawi's economy. Nisbet hopes her initiative will inspire consumers to look at their own closets differently. "The way the disposable fast fashion market is going these days, it's important to take stock of what we've already got. People don't realize what they've already got in their wardrobe may have the potential to be something different."

PHOTOGRAPHS: MIA NISBET

