

LESSONS FROM GRANDMA

Your grandmother was at the cutting edge of sustainable fashion.

Through her upbringing and ancestors she learned the value of clothing. When she shopped, she looked inside the garment at how it was made.. she knew the difference between something well made and not .. as she knew how to sew herself.

Each piece was purchased as an investment in her wardrobe – a piece chosen to make her feel good about herself and was the best quality she could afford. Clothing our children was also an investment or often home made to save money. Beautiful clothes were handed down to a younger brother or sister as they were outgrown.

Second hand clothing , charity shops were always a great source of finding inexpensive pieces that were a higher quality than one could afford new.

Rental was also a usual way to afford something better for a one off occasion – a wedding or evening occasion.

Inevitably , as the clothing was expensive and valuable, if something happened to damage the garment , then time would be spent to repair it. It was a treasure to be kept , loved and passed down or on.

Through time, we started to disregard the wisdom of these observations about how to dress.

Fashion morphed into a big business.

Companies mechanised and industrialised the production of clothing and convinced us we can 'get the look' for a fraction of the price thereby promising us we can have the latest looks without the heavy price tag of investing in a designer product.

Even designer fashion and luxury brands started to source production overseas as otherwise it was impossible to offer a competitive price to the consumer. Local factories closed and with it valuable skills were lost.

So inevitably we bought more as clothing became cheaper. We revelled in wearing something new and added more frequently to our bulging wardrobe. The new clothing didn't last as well, it fell apart or wore out after only a few wears. .. but it didn't matter. We could simply throw it away and buy something new.

Design continued to be valued but it no longer mattered if there was any technical knowledge – there is no longer any need to know how to cut and sew a garment to be a designer. It's all about the new ideas.

There was no value in repairing something that was so poorly made and cheap enough to simply replace. It also became more expensive to cut and make a garment at home than to simply buy it – so we slowly forgot how to sew. That skill is no longer valued or passed from generation to generation.

MARIA GRACHVOGEL

LONDON

In the last two decades we have followed this new way of shopping for clothing without considering the downside.

We are now becoming wiser about how our clothing is produced and the human cost of cheap clothing. We are also becoming aware of the impact on the environment from the harmful dyes in our water to the fibres that cannot be broken down or recycled ending in landfill and waste.

Fashion is necessary to our lives , not only to clothe us and keep us warm, but as an expression of our identity and who we are.

Perhaps it is time to look at fashion with a new lens .. to explore how a garment is made from start to finish and value clothing again in a new way