

# CLOTHED IN PURITY

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## VANCOUVER ECO-FASHION WEEK HAS PROVED ONCE AGAIN THAT ETHICAL FASHION CAN EXUDE ELEGANCE AND STYLE

Gearing up to showcase this year's Autumn/Winter collections, New York, London, Milan and Paris were hotspots for the most outlandish, head-turning outfits – and that was just the press. But in Vancouver, eco-fashion was the prime focus between 22 and 25 February, as designers such as Jeff Garner and Jason Matlo unveiled their A/W collections, while adhering to detailed guidelines to stay true to what the event represented. The result being proof that you really can combine style with sustainability.

Presented by Aveda, the four-day event allowed designers to showcase their collections, each with a different inspiration behind them, each on a mission to drive environmentally friendly fashion to the fore. Myriam LaRoche, the president of Vancouver's Eco-Fashion Week, wasn't surprised at the number of participants, both designers and manufacturers.

**'THERE IS TOTALLY A PLACE FOR A PLATFORM LIKE ECO-FASHION WEEK. THE industry is ready for it. That's why designers around the world are contacting us to be a part of the change,'** she said.

With a huge amount of experience within the fashion industry, LaRoche's exposure to practices essentially influenced her involvement in Eco-Fashion Week.

'I saw how damaging and unsustainable the fashion and clothing industry could be, and if we want it to change, we need to speak with an international voice,' she explained. In similar vein, Margarita Angelatos, who showcased both her lines *Red Jade* and *Peridot Kiss* at EFW, felt it was important to create a line that didn't include practices that are potentially dangerous to health.

'When I was at design college, I was fascinated by the textiles course. That was when I became aware of how much petroleum was used to make fabrics, and how many chemicals were used to treat them. One of my instructors was diagnosed with life-threatening illnesses, and she had worked in a fabric mill for years. I wondered just how much of those chemicals had affected her health.

'I also went on a textiles-buying trip to China, and saw first hand the effects of the chemicals being used. The city I visited focused on chemical-based textiles such as polyester and acrylic. The pollution in the city was the worst I had ever seen,' said Angelatos.

But as we move forward, there is growing support for eco-fashion and everything it stands for. 'The weekly increase in our Facebook fans and Twitter followers shows that people want to know more. Yet still, most of the population do not even know what sustainable practices are in the clothing industry; they do not know how damaging it is. That's why the educational aspect of EFW is a priority for us,' LaRoche says.

**ALONGSIDE SEVERAL DESIGNERS WITH STUNNING COLLECTIONS, SUPERMODEL Gisele Bundchen** showed her support through her role as a Goodwill Environmental Ambassador and co-designer for the limited-edition SIGG bottle in order to make the event plastic-bottle free.

Nicole Bridger, another designer featured at EFW who interned at Vivienne Westwood, expressed her delight at unveiling her collection *Safe to Love*. 'This collection is about coming out of a painful relationship and having the courage to look for love again. It's about the courage it takes to be vulnerable, because it is only when we are vulnerable that we can allow true love in.'



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Her collection proves that any concept can be made a reality with ethical practices in place, using material such as hemp, bamboo and soy silk, all of which are durable and environmentally friendly.

Vancouver isn't the only city that's been paving the way for a positive movement in the right direction: Quebec City, LA and Chicago are key eco-fashion hotspots, with Amsterdam and Stockholm driving the European markets forward. With a growing number of pioneers on the same mission to spread the word about eco-fashion, Myriam has an optimistic outlook for the future of eco-fashion, predicting: 'It will bloom, and we will eventually be able to let go of the word 'eco' and just say 'fashion'.' ■

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