

Quilts

For

Muddists

KEARA WALSH  
IP Creative Portfolio  
2021-2022



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# ProBLEM statement

This is a direct call to action. Yes, I am talking to **YOU**.

*Quilts for Nudists* tackles reformation and education of the damaging effects of fast fashion production within our society. Fast fashion, a methodology of clothing production and exploitative business tactic, prioritizes producing clothes as quickly and cheaply as possible to stay on par with latest trends and social media pressures. Through salvaging scrap and donated fabric into twin-sized expository quilts, I criticize how the popularity of fast fashion production has progressed over time, influencing an excess of consumptive greed, capitalism, and environmental damage. A manifesto can be found throughout the space: painted along the walls and printed on posters, serving as an educational aid and commentary on our obsessive consumption habits. I ask you, the audience, to question the scale of your own actions as an American Consumer. As consumers, we have the power to change the trajectory of the market! Increasing awareness and gaining supporters of slow fashion will be the **only** triumph of overthrowing fast fashion business strategies for the betterment of our societies' future livability on Earth.

# My sTarting point

As encouraged and expected, my project took many forms and luls before reaching it's final iteration. Day one, I knew my subject matter. I have been struck by and passionate for educating on the harmful influence of fast fashion culture for approximately 3 years. It drives my soul, is my go-to conversation topic, and revolves around every consumptive good I intake. While it has taken me years to source a closet strickly from second hand clothes, hand-me-downs, and slow-fashion items, I have remained confident in my desire to eduacte on the invisible reality of the fashion industry.

Thus my inital project statement read: "My project will come in 4 phases, each being separated by medium choice. Firstly, I will be composing 3 to 4 outfits entirely out of scrap, donated, and upcycled materials. They will turn out rather "ugly pretty," as I am calling it, because all materials donated must be used. I will not be able to chose color usage or patterning of each material, only the assemblage in which they are sewn and tacked together. They will have a 'maximalist' energy to them, as the outfits may become clunky and heavy with large excesses of material on top of them.

After the outfits are designed, I intend to style and photograph them in high contrasting areas. These locations include a dumpster or landfill, a chain store in the mall like Forever 21 or H&M and a thrift store. Once I have these photographs, I seek to create a catalog or publication with final proofs, process photos and other compositionally educational elements that will inform my journey in trying to enlighten those on the dangers of fast fashion. It will take form as a manifesto of sorts, both reflecting on my own explorations and trying to make the most impact as possible. I find that taking the form of a

book publication will be the most effective medium for mass education, in reproducibility. The final phase will be an installation and culmination of the previous 3 phases: the publication, photographs, and outfits on mannequins within a gallery space."



Sample 1-3  
2021



Sample Play on Mannequin  
2021

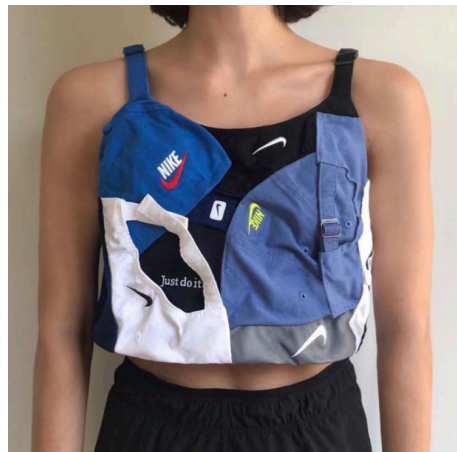
# Contextualization



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NICOLE MCLAUGHLIN

Having a strong social media presence, I have long followed Mclaughlin for her high level of dedication to her craft, specifically in promoting sustainable fashion mentalities. Her work is ground in taking “trash,” or discarded elements, and upcycling them into functional wearables. When I first started this project, I was in a constant debate whether functionality was a necessity or not.

The argument: Creating functional wearables could open the conversation to replication of mass production. My worst nightmare. Opposingly, if I were to create unfunctional wearables, would I subsequently be creating more useless waste? Or does educational art hold enough value, for me or my audience? These questions grounded out my first semester. Ultimately, how effective would it be for me to make more clothes out of clothes?

The daunting question:

# Why MAKе ClothEs out OF prEExisting ClothEs?

Wouldn't that, inevitably, create more clothes doomed for wasteland?



## CHRISTINA KIM

First semester, when I was still planning to upcycle a clothing line, I was heavily inspired by designers Yeohlee Teng and Christina Kim for their commendable efforts in zero-waste garment design and foundational cultural influence.

By definition, a zero-waste garment constitutes to seamless and efficient design, where the patterning of the finished cloth can practically be worn off the loom directly. I was vastly inspired by Kim's cultural explorations of Jamadi Saris. How could I create my own zero-waste articles? Is it humanly possible to do so? Or live a zero-waste lifestyle at all?

My methodology of making became culminating sheets of salvaged, patch work material. Where, afterwards, I could design a zero-waste pattern and sew the sheets into a wearable.

Kim puts an emphasis on the quality of handwork and talent, removing oneself (and brand) from factory manufacturing and explosion of mass production. There is a beauty and validation in creating unique, one-of-a-kind pieces for their high quality and durability, compared to mainstreamed cheap fashion, by hand.



\*Brown, Susan, Caroline Baumann, Matilda McQuaid, issuing body Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Susan Brown, Caroline Baumann, and Matilda McQuaid. *Scraps : Fashion, Textiles, and Creative Reuse*. New York, NY : Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, 2016.

## YEOHLEE TENG

Yeohlee Teng is a Malaysian American fashion designer known for her strategic design of simplicity and function for the 'urban nomad' consumer. Her work has architectural energy and emphasizes efficiency, low-maintenance, and high quality. She can be found as one of the most innovative clothing designers of our current age in composing fluid, functional, walking art. Teng prevails her work as intimate, geometric and empowering for the wearer. In noting that the majority of her work is one size fits all, this reintroduces the idea of efficiency in

maximizing patterning. The seam of a garment is a decorative element to a singular piece of fabric that gives the material function. The combination of simplicity of form and identifying what is essential is effective in creating powerful designs that communicate directly to a wearers aesthetic look and ease of fit.



\*Major, John S., Yeohlee Teng, Paola Antonelli, John S. Major, Yeohlee Teng, and Paola Antonelli. *Yeohlee : Work*. Mulgrave, Vic., Australia: Peleus Press, 2003.

## GEE'S BEND

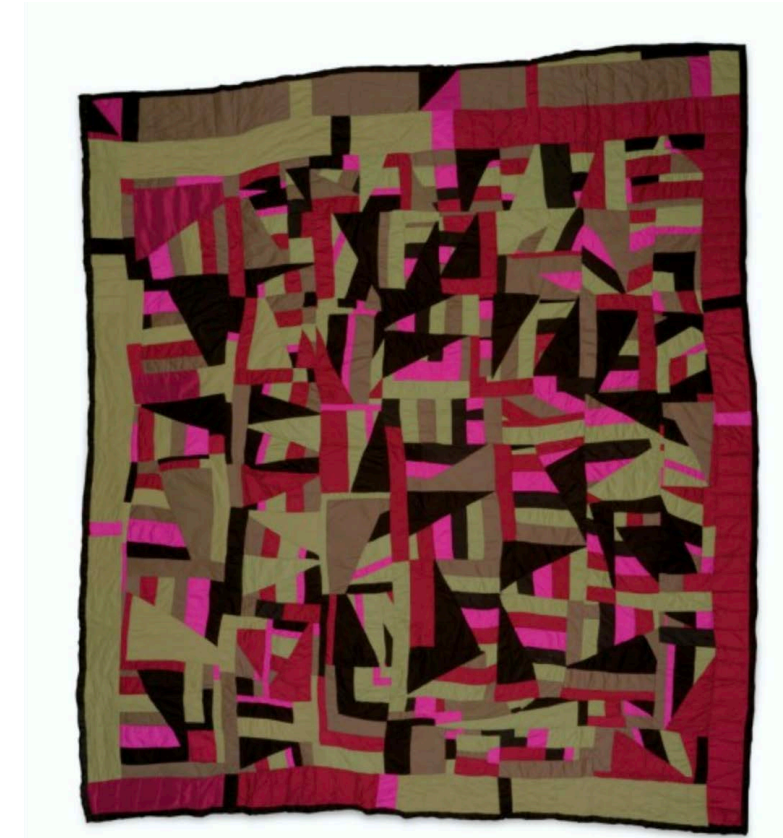
Surpassing the oxymoron of myself creating more clothes [waste] out of previously discarded clothes, I settled on the medium of improvisational quilts similar to the practice of community members of Gee's Bend, Alabama. The historical context of quilt making, in salvaging and utilizing all scraped fabrics, simultanelously fits perfectly with the culture of upcycling I was already delving into.

Residents of Gee's Bend are direct descendants of Civil Rights Era enslavment and segregation. The tradtion of quilting amongst this community has remained fruitful and inspring, composing abstract designs that are revolutionary for the realm of quilting.

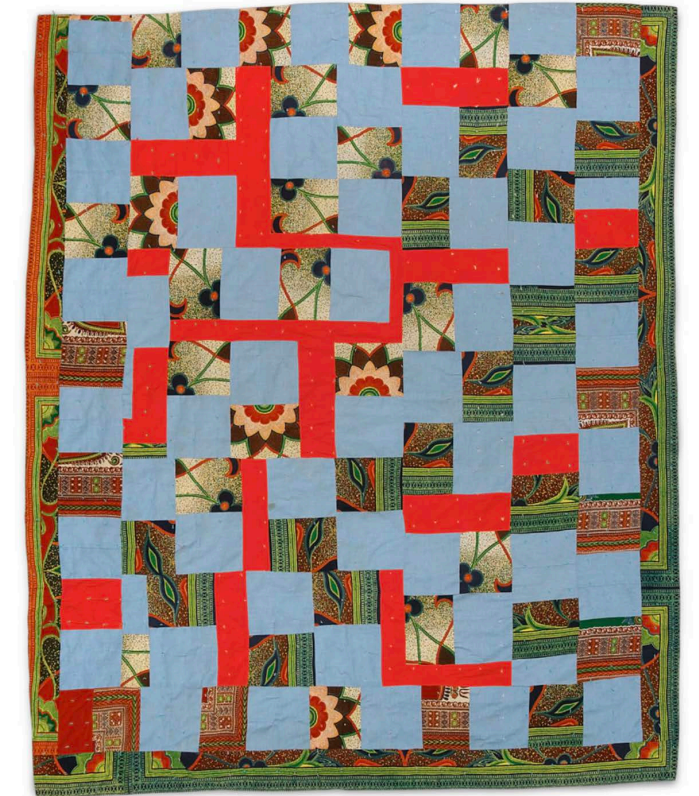
I am particulairy moved by the asymetrical and imper-fect quality many of the designs have. I hoped to similarly inspire a level of free-formality and spontaneity, not becoming overly concerned with the final aesthetic of the quilts but more, the complex and overwhelming reality of the vast amount of scraps used.



"Housetop" - "Half-Log Cabin Variation"  
Aolar Carson Mosley  
c. 1950



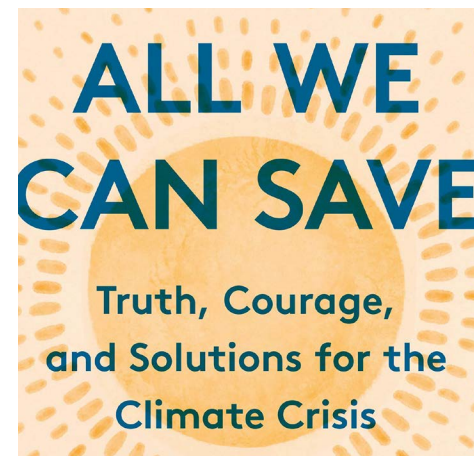
"Broken Pieces"  
Marlene Bennette Jones  
2008



"One Patch," Tied  
America Irby  
1970

\*Arnett, William, Paul Arnett, Joanne Cubbs, and E W. Metcalf. Gee's Bend: The Architecture of the Quilt. , 2006. Print.

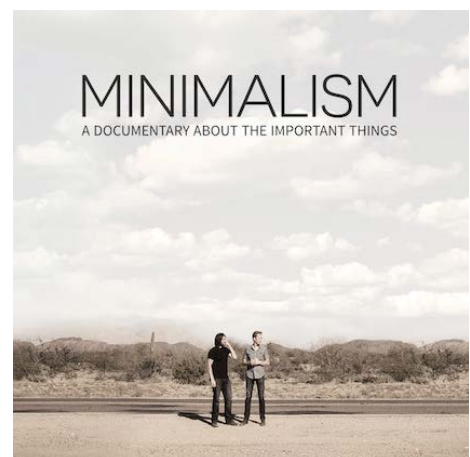




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## All We Can Save

By Ayana Elizabeth Johnson & Katherine K. Wilkinson

*All We Can Save* is a collection of essays, poems, and stories written by a variety of verse and insightful women to inspire a sense of hope on our current climate crisis. The book, being entirely composed of female authors, empowers women to speak up and bring about the change we as humans, and certainly women, deserve for our future. I found myself increasingly engaged with the text as the read didn't feel burdening. Rather, there is a sense of attainable change and resolution in collectively acting as a community, a band of power in numbers. It is beautiful the way the book welcomes all voices, opinions, and ideas to the table. Oftentimes women do not have the same opportunities to participate in governing panels, they are not offered a seat in the "room" of decision making. However, Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Katherine K. Wilkinson, the editors, were successful in composing a range of courageous voices to set a new precedent and invoke unity. Through these writings, each author hopes to gain traction and support of overthrowing environmental, political, and societal injustices. It becomes a common theme that the "climate crisis [is] a leadership crisis," where those in power prioritize individualized self-gratitude, profit, and domination. We must join together as a community under one goal, environmental equilibrium, where we will only be heard when there is an entire deconstruction and reconstruction of our governmental structure. The climate crisis is detrimental to all life, humans and other organisms. Yet, it is wealth and racial prejudices that divides the crisis unjustly. Those in power are at much less risk of life-altering realities. It is the minorities, the underserved, that will suffer first and longest. Thus, we need voices to cause commotion and get attention stirring. We need these brave women.

## The True Cost

By Andrew Morgan

*The True Cost* is a documentary that seeks to expose the dangerous reality of fast fashion production on both our environment and the humans behind the making. Instead of 2 seasons a year, there are 52 profitable weeks to produce and sell clothes. The structure of the film falls as an interview-style narration in which Morgan travels to a variety of countries to reveal the true story of how we got to this point. He immediately grounds the unjust exploitation of Western ideologies on third-world countries as the basis of corruption.

I found myself to be in a state of disgust and sadness after watching the film. I was uncomfortable to imagine how my actions can greatly affect the world and society we live in. To that degree, I do believe that everyone should watch this film and be moved by these horrors. I find that we will only be able to achieve change, a desperately needed overhaul of the entire fashion industry, when public perception is altered. When enough people collectively agree that our consumerism habits are morally wrong and the guilty conscious will no longer allow them to purchase unnecessities, is when real change will happen.

## Minimalism: A Documentary About the Important Things

By Joshua Fields Millburn & Ryan Nicodemus

"Love people and use things, because the opposite never works." Joshua Fields Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus call themselves the Minimalists, a best-friend duo who seek to promote the beauty of living a life filled with only necessities. Opposing the stereotypical American view of consumerism where bigger, more, and just owning "things" is better. *Minimalism: A Documentary About the Important Things* follows Millburn and Nicodemus on a 10 month book tour, where they desire to spread the knowledge and wealth of living a life that feels satisfactory and fulfilling, by consuming less. We learn about their journey in becoming minimalists, through experiences of death, divorce, abuse, illness, and general dissatisfaction with life. The epiphany hits them: consumption is an addiction. We, as Americans, are wired to become dissatisfied and constantly seek more. Yet, the hole we aim to fill via consumption will never make us whole.

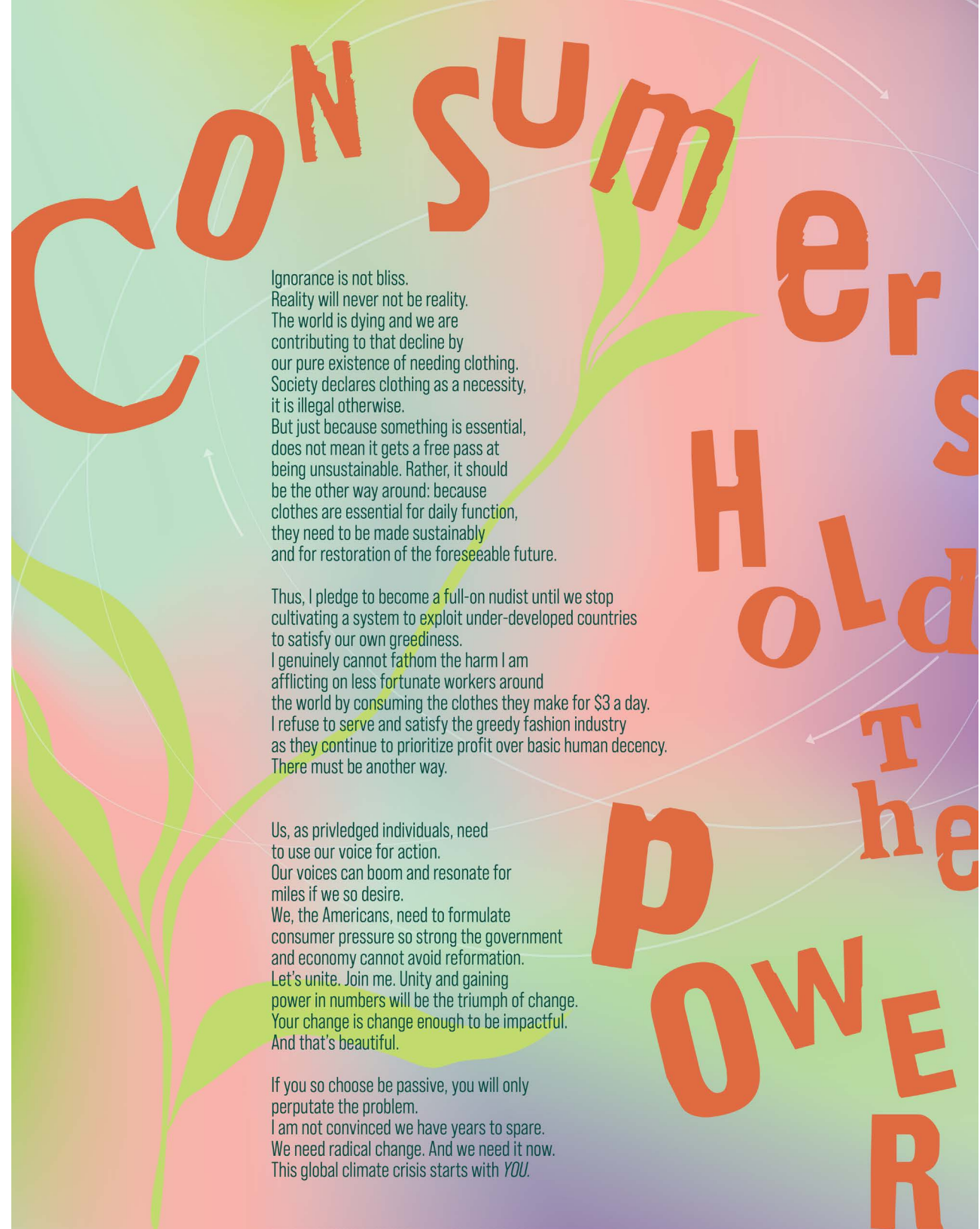
The film exclaims that 'The American Dream' is a template of living to gain wealth and success. Yet, it doesn't have to be the template. There are other, more satisfactory, ways of living life to find fulfillment. For Millburn and Nicodemus, it means finding purpose in every possession. The idea that every item has a joy factor to it, it brings the owner contentment. Where, minimalism seeks to encourage living more deliberately, with less. Millburn quotes "I don't think theres anything wrong with consumption. The problem is compulsory consumption. Buying stuff because that's what your supposed to do." I find this to be a moving philosophy. In which, you don't have to change your entire lifestyle to enact minimalism as the correct option to sustainable gratification. Rather, this mentality seeks to inspire that your possessions have purpose. If that looks like a rock collection for you, then so be it. As long as you find it perpetually fulfilling. It comes down to the basic structure of quality over quantity. Minimalism doesn't have to be a radical lifestyle, just a quality one.



Final Exhibition  
Quilts for Nudists  
2022



Consumers Hold the Power  
Final Poster with Text From Manifesto  
Quilts for Nudists  
2022



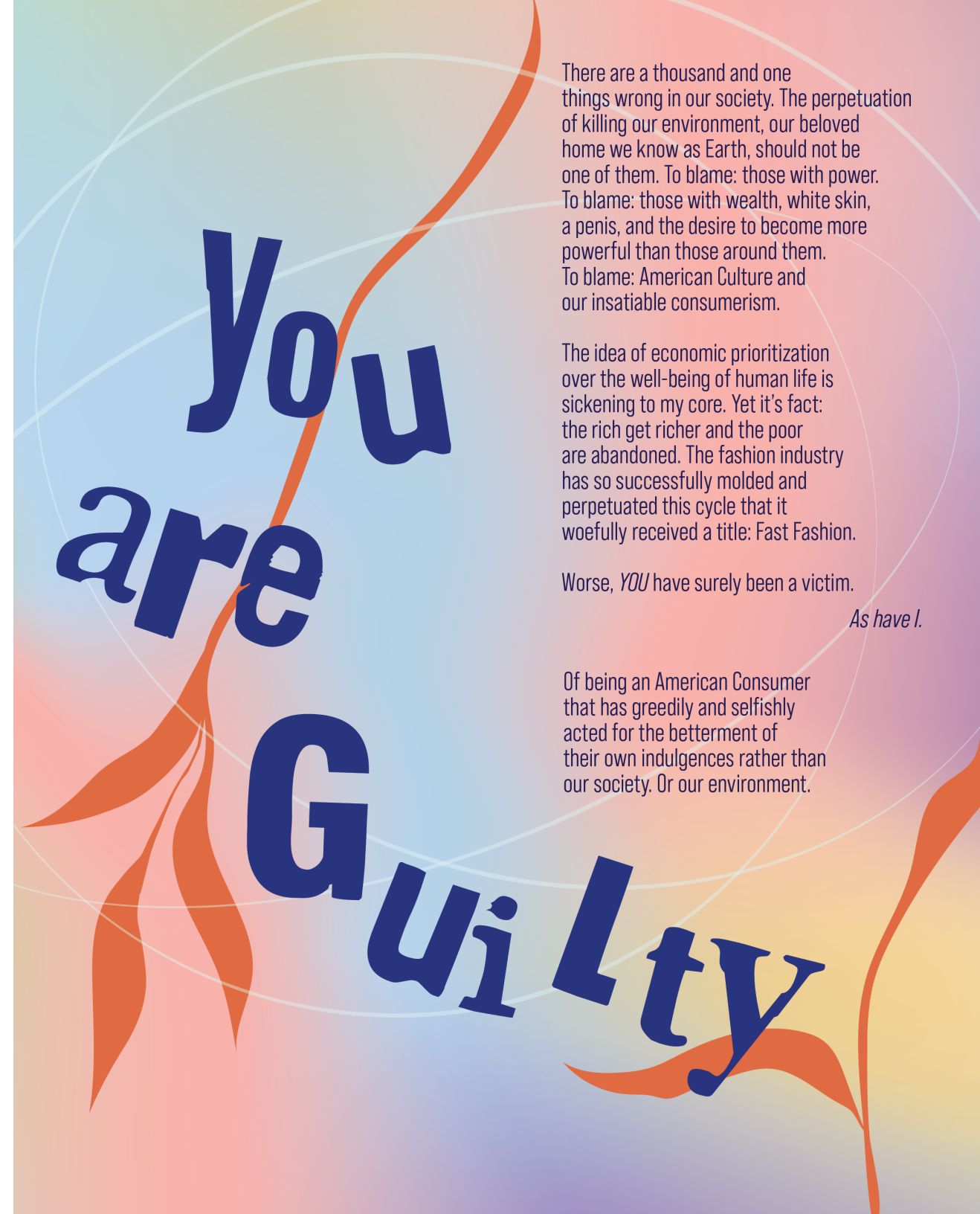
Ignorance is not bliss.  
Reality will never not be reality.  
The world is dying and we are contributing to that decline by our pure existence of needing clothing. Society declares clothing as a necessity, it is illegal otherwise.  
But just because something is essential, does not mean it gets a free pass at being unsustainable. Rather, it should be the other way around: because clothes are essential for daily function, they need to be made sustainably and for restoration of the foreseeable future.

Thus, I pledge to become a full-on nudist until we stop cultivating a system to exploit under-developed countries to satisfy our own greediness.  
I genuinely cannot fathom the harm I am afflicting on less fortunate workers around the world by consuming the clothes they make for \$3 a day. I refuse to serve and satisfy the greedy fashion industry as they continue to prioritize profit over basic human decency. There must be another way.

Us, as privileged individuals, need to use our voice for action.  
Our voices can boom and resonate for miles if we so desire.  
We, the Americans, need to formulate consumer pressure so strong the government and economy cannot avoid reformation.  
Let's unite. Join me. Unity and gaining power in numbers will be the triumph of change. Your change is change enough to be impactful. And that's beautiful.

If you so choose be passive, you will only perpetuate the problem.  
I am not convinced we have years to spare.  
We need radical change. And we need it now.  
This global climate crisis starts with YOU.

You are Guilty  
Final Poster with Text From Manifesto  
Quilts for Nudists  
2022



There are a thousand and one things wrong in our society. The perpetuation of killing our environment, our beloved home we know as Earth, should not be one of them. To blame: those with power. To blame: those with wealth, white skin, a penis, and the desire to become more powerful than those around them. To blame: American Culture and our insatiable consumerism.

The idea of economic prioritization over the well-being of human life is sickening to my core. Yet it's fact: the rich get richer and the poor are abandoned. The fashion industry has so successfully molded and perpetuated this cycle that it woefully received a title: Fast Fashion.

Worse, YOU have surely been a victim.

*As have I.*

Of being an American Consumer that has greedily and selfishly acted for the betterment of their own indulgences rather than our society. Or our environment.



Detail Photos of Textile Quilts and Nudist Mannequin  
Quilts for Nudists  
2022



Detail Photos of Textile Quilts  
Quilts for Nudists  
2022

You and me, the American Consumers, have been culturally structured and “raised in a world in which we put profit over people and the planet in an attempt to grease the wheels of capitalism and keep the machine running.”  
-First Things First Manifesto 2020

There are a thousand and one things wrong in our society. The perpetuation of killing our environment, our beloved home we know as Earth, should not be one of them. To blame: those with power. To blame: those with wealth, white skin, a penis and the desire to become more powerful than those around them. To blame: American Culture.

The idea of economic prioritization over the well-being of human life is sickening to my core.

Yet it's fact: the rich get richer and the poor are abandoned. The fashion industry has so successfully molded and perpetuated this cycle that it woefully received a title: Fast Fashion. Otherwise known as 'disposable fashion,' fast fashion can be defined as a methodology of clothing production and an exploitative business tactic in which producing clothes as quickly and cheaply as possible to stay on par with latest trends and social media pressures is prioritized over everything else. Which includes fair working conditions and wages for employees, disposal of unsold clothes ('deadstock') into landfills, unsustainable shipping methods, and anything of environmentally conscious consideration really. Worse, **YOU** have surely been a victim. As have I.

Gen-Z culture has become the perfect breeding ground for fast fashion companies to gain traction, especially in marketing and creating a desirable social media presence. Notable companies like Zara, H&M, Forever 21, Shein, with the list continuing for miles, were able democratize fashion. Aiming to create a variety of styles to appeal to as many consumers as they can, there is an emphasis and societal pressure to include variation in sizing and body-inclusivity efforts. While I appreciate this effort of 'democratizing fashion' for the promotion of inclusivity and unity of all customers, there is always a cost. The expense at which you are willing to pay then becomes the question of ethicality. What is right and what is wrong. These industry giants inherently create a “throw-away culture,” where a large percentage of their clothing is destined to end up in a landfill.

The kicker? These companies are very aware of the vicious cycle. In fact, they play into it and use it to their competitive advantage. Of course they want you to buy more clothes as your initial purchase starts to crumble and the newest collections are released, it is money in their pocket. The cycle happens time and time again, there's an addictive quality to shopping and even more so when it's cheap. The Man is producing for the sake of eventual burn out. As pieces begin to fall apart, lose shape or go out-of-style, the consumer will feel the need to go back and replace these items. In a way, one could make the comparison of fast fashion to fast food. It's cheap and not beneficial to consume in the long run, yet satisfactory in the moment. Additionally, you want to fuel that level of satisfaction as readily as possible, forcing an addictive behavior. It is hard to convince oneself that the splurge of money will be a greater investment in the end, when the cheap and fruitful option is right in front of you.

# MA尼FeSto

*The Greedy Begs the Greedy*

The owners, managers and CEOs of these fashion giants, alongside their power-hungry brains, are the direct inflictors of this perpetuated harm. To their evils, the fashion industry has become the 2nd biggest polluter in the world, only falling short to the oil industry. How iconic is that? The luxury, materialistic, and societally desired items I am privileged enough to put on my body are the same toxifying byproduct of poor production techniques. Including, but not limited to, harmful pesticide use, water dumpage, exponential landfill waste and human death. Again, I am sick to my core.

### ***As a Consumer***

“The best thing people can do is to help put pressure on companies because they’re the ones that ultimately need to get control over their supply chains. Consumers have the power...because they have the buying power. The effectiveness of any measure has to come from the consumers.”  
-Chiara Vitali

Sooo, fuck The Man. Got it. What can be done? What can we do as individuals?

At the bare minimum, I hope to convince you that we all must become conscious consumers.

The basis of the fast fashion industry comes from Western ideologies of capitalism and insatiable consumerism. Americans will never be satisfied. Materialism is a core of American culture and economy, no matter how much I would like to not admit it. It is practically inescapable at this point. Those same Western ideologies limit consumers from actually knowing what they are buying and how they are individually affecting a greater scheme against the environment. We, as society, have mostly chosen to be ignorant and oblivious. But let me tell you, ignorance is not bliss. Reality will never not be reality. The world is dying and I am contributing to that decline by my pure existence of needing clothing. Society declares clothing as a necessity, it is illegal otherwise. But just because something is essential, does not mean it gets a free pass

at being unsustainable. Rather, it should be the other way around: because clothes are essential for daily function, they should be made sustainably and for restoration of the foreseeable future. Alas, the promotional quality of criticizing fast fashion in art is equally as important as restoring the fashion industry to be entirely sustainable. We will only achieve environmental equilibrium when enough people become aware of the problem and seek change. We need to start a revolution in order to save our environment, where firstly, I need ***YOU***.

The strategy of purposeful low quality production subconsciously lures the customer in over and over again. Fast fashion companies will keep you hooked as long as their prices remain low and designs on trend, which we know will always remain true. Other times, consumers are aware of this cycle and willingly participate. At the end of the day, it makes perfect sense: if I buy something for cheap, I should expect it to be of cheap quality. Right?

If true, I beg of you to ***DO*** better. Be the best consumer you can be. Do not surrender to the Greedy at the highest position of power. You are only edging their wealth and destruction further. This is your direct call to action. Join me.

### ***The Future seeks a Future***

In exploring the true faults of fast fashion companies, they become less and less idealized with time. The clean shapes and lavish feel begins to fade as secrets are revealed and the truth becomes impossible to avoid. Truth be told, they intentionally drag their customers into a vortex of buying low quality items for cheap because they capitalize on consumer weaknesses, wants and desires. They listen to their customers so that they can directly target them with what they believe they ***need***.

Ideally, what does a fashion-friendly world look like then?

My answer is a declaration of nudity. In which, pledging nudity is the only solution to avoid the otherwise unsolvable doom of further fast fashion production. Yet, that is not realistic, legal, or enticing for a mass audience. Thus, the only foreseeable answer, in my rather blunt opinion, is to be mature and reclaim your individualized strides towards becoming a conscientious consumer,

well aware of your importance on Earth. While you may be a speck on Earth, so am I. And I will not be silent. I want to be a loud-mouthed speck on our home, recognizing that I am a society-affecting being and no longer complacent in living a consumptive lifestyle of necessities- exploiting the less fortunate around the world for my own satisfaction.

With an over-looming scare of world-ending climate change amongst todays culture, it would be inadmissible and selfish of companies to avoid the reality. It has become trendy within it’s own self to become “sustainable,” showing that you care about the environment. Behold: greenwashing. Greenwashing can be defined as a technique of purposeful false advertising of environmentalism efforts. It can be very easy and manipulative of marketing teams to craft ads that look “good.” Good meaning sustainable, healthy, clean, attractive and irresistible. The basics of advertising is propaganda. The craft and art of marketing tricks you into thinking that happiness is consumption.

For example: without product \*whatever you want,\* you will never be satisfied. But that’s just it. You’ll never be satisfied period. Ever. Obsessive and continuous consumption will not bring you happiness. As the cliché goes, money does not buy happiness.

Fashion companies have nailed this technique down to a tea. Reality is, these brands have a long road ahead to escape the whole they dug themselves at the birth of their creation. The pioneers of rapid clothing production have subsequently backed themselves into a corner. In order for them to feasibly create change and produce ethically, each company would need to come clean. Start entirely fresh. Which, in turn, means they would need to erase the factors of flexibility and speed from their production, the two most important and effective differentiations from competitors. They would have to rebrand entirely. If not a fast fashion based company, what are they? I don’t think many fashion-consumers could answer or support that question.

It will take years, decades, for them to reach the sustainability levels they need to be at in order to be effective in proving beneficial results. While any steps forward are better than none, I am not convinced we have those years to spare. We need radical change. And we need it now.

### ***Me, a Nudist, Reflecting***

Quite frankly, I am embarrassed and revolted to call myself an American. It seems as if I, by both association and my consumerism habits, am single handedly killing innocent people around the world who are slaving away to make the clothes on my body. How dare I? And seemingly what a hypocrite I am. I am sitting here, writing this, at the college I choose to attend, sitting on my own bed, and wearing whatever clothes I want to be. The privilege speaks volumes. I am disgusted and furious.

I, in recognizing myself as an individualized society-affecting being, have become overwhelmed with the anxiety of greedy, capitalistic desires destroying our Earth. Specifically, through the rise and popularity of fast fashion production imposed upon our shopping habits. Something about my own interactions within consuming culture has led me to question the scale of myself within this world. How much do I actually matter? How much do I actually understand? Will I ever be able to make change, or influence change?

Earth is falling apart. However, in my Western culture, and yours, that is a hard reality to visualize, for many reasons. The bubble. My bubble: a white suburbia with more privilege I can fathom. Yes, that bubble, would never have to think about our dying environment if we didn't want to. Climate change is a silent killer, invisible to the naked eye if you aren't willing to look for it. Nonetheless, a violently pressing issue. An overlooming image of Earth dying a slow, painful death is constantly swirling above my head like a raincloud. As anxiety-inducing as that is, I have found a

mixture of calmness and urgency in recognizing that as an artist I have the individualistic power to make whatever statement I feel necessary for social change.

Thus, here it is: I pledge to become a full-on nudist. Because, the lengths at which we, Western Culture, actively cultivate a system to exploit under-developed countries to satisfy our own consumptive greediness is sickening. In promoting my half-joking pledge of nudity, I genuinely cannot fathom the harm I am afflicting on less fortunate workers around the world by consuming the clothes they make for \$3 a day. I refuse to serve and satisfy the greedy fashion industry as they continue to prioritize profit over basic human decency. There must be another way.

Reflecting. If you've stuck with my rambling this long, I would assume that you agree there is an unavoidable global climate crisis we are in. Moreso, you agree that the fashion industry needs an entire reformation in order to ever be sustained. Best, you pledge to take a stand with me and become **THAT** conscious consumer (or nudist in my extremist case)!

thAnk  
you.

