

SUSTAINABLY TRANS — SUSTAINABLE GENDER EXPRESSION IN THE AGE OF FAST FASHION

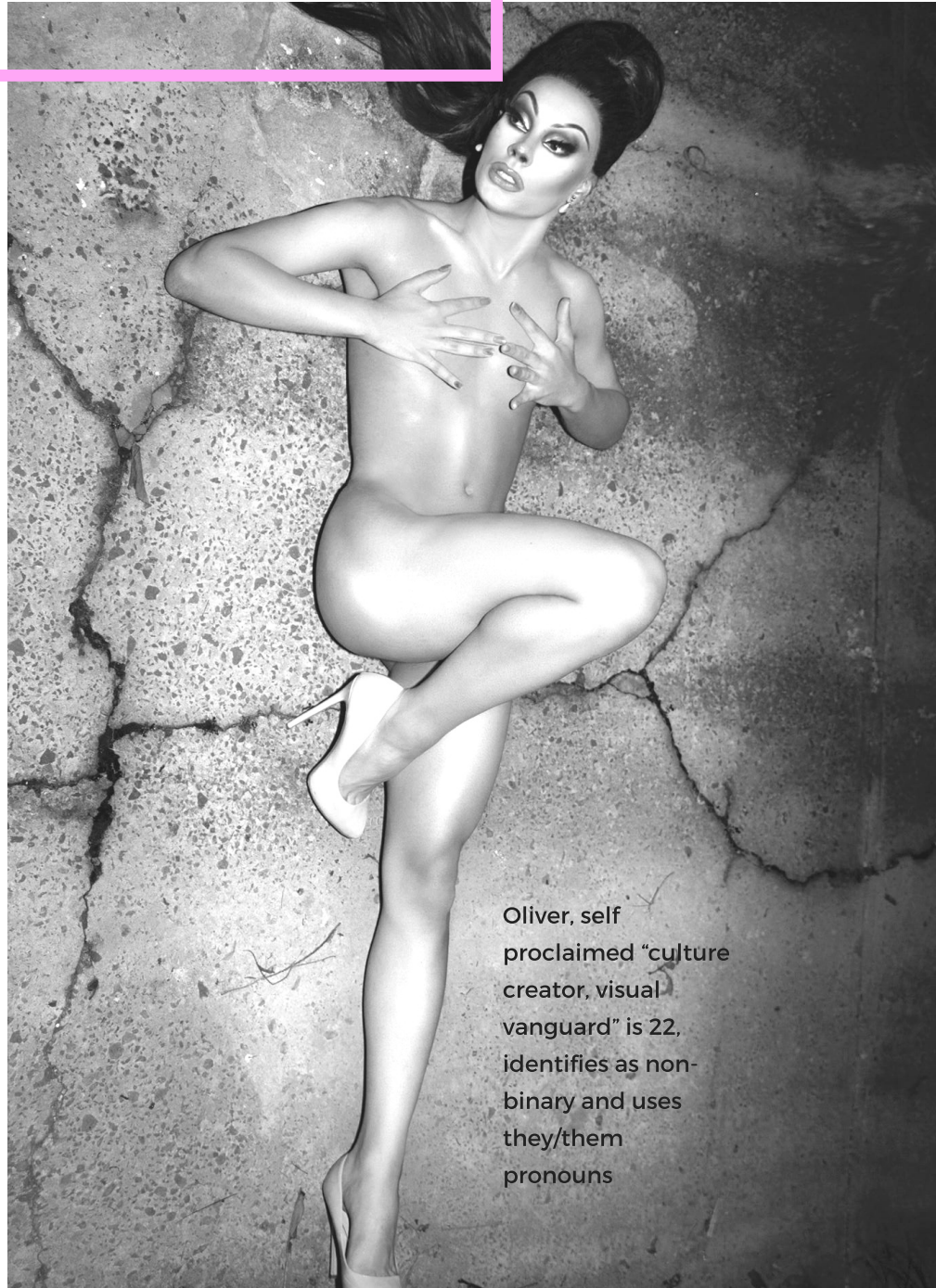
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**“NOPE, I DON’T
WANT TO WEAR
THIS ANYMORE, IT
MAKES ME LOOK
TOO MUCH LIKE A
BOY”**

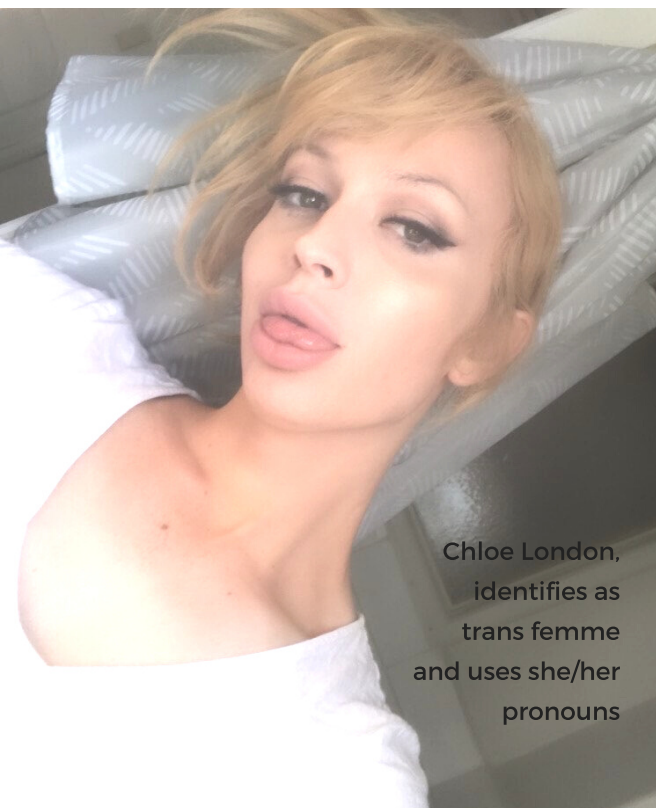
This is something I’ve found myself say plenty of times in regard to my wardrobe over the past few years. However I failed to ask myself how or why this was.

Over the past two years I have been on a gender journey that at times has felt more like a gender crisis. This alongside studying fashion design educated me on how fashion and dress influenced my identity and my own consumption habits as well as questionable practices where being sustainable was concerned.

Texts such as ‘Roadmap to sustainable textiles and clothing’ by Laitala, K. Austglen, MA. Klepp, I.G. discuss consumer responsibility, explaining that due to the majority of the textile and fashion industry being unwilling to take responsibility for being one of the biggest contributors to landfill, the responsibility is largely left to the consumer.



Oliver, self proclaimed “culture creator, visual vanguard” is 22, identifies as non-binary and uses they/them pronouns



With great responsibility comes great power. We as consumers, have the power as well as the responsibility to change the way we approach the fashion and textile industry. I spoke to Oliver Levi Malouf who identifies as non-binary, Oscar McGregor; a trans man, and Chloe London, who identifies as trans-femme about their experiences with fashion in relation to their identity. We also discussed how they approached fashion as their gender identity evolved throughout their transition and whether their approach was sustainable. Using personal research, and these interviews, I have compiled a resource to help others adopt sustainable fashion and wardrobe practices throughout their transition and general life.

Looking back on my own experience, I wish I knew what I know now as I could have been much more sustainable and cost effective. I wanted to speak to others that are a part of my community being the LGBTQIA+ but more specifically the Trans, NB and GNC communities to share experiences and ultimately create a resource for queer folk discovering themselves on how to be sustainable through their transition. However specific this is to the community these practices can be applied to anyone wanting to live more sustainably.

“AT THE START OF MY TRANSITION...PEOPLE EXPECTED ME TO COMPLETELY CHANGE”- CHLOE LONDON

There are times in a Trans/NB/GNC persons life when they feel exterior pressure to be what the rest of society thinks they should be and how they should present. It's a natural progression to think of a new wardrobe to adhere to this pressure, as Chloe said "at the start of my transition...people expected me to completely change". This is a common experience with myself and also Oliver who said they felt pressure to change however they "didn't really have the money to buy a lot of new clothes". What makes Chloe, Oliver and Oscar great examples of sustainable fashion practices - whether they knew it or not, is that they all took it upon themselves to alter clothes, participate in clothes swaps, repair their clothes, and shop for purpose and connection.





Oscar is a trans
masc man, 24
and uses he/him
pronouns

It's no coincidence that these three queer people have inherently sustainable fashion practices. The clothes they acquire, whether that be a purchase from a store, online, second hand or a clothes swap, all have one thing in common; they affirm their identity in an emotional and performative sense. This might seem superficial, but is integral in how these people see themselves, as well as how others see them.

This emotional attachment is described by J Wieseke, A Geigenmüller and F Kraus in their article 'On the Role of Empathy in Customer-Employee Interactions' as consumer empathy. It's a tool that both the fashion industry and the consumer can employ in order to be more sustainable. In other words, if you have an attachment to a garment, you're more likely to keep it for a longer period of time before disposal. You're also more likely to mend, repair, and alter the garment rather than disposing of it. When disposing of a garment you have an emotional attachment to, you're more likely to donate or pass it on to someone else rather than committing it to landfill. This is how Oliver is an empathetic consumer "I'm always looking for things that resonate... I suppose emotionally, they're always things that i look at and make me feel happy. I buy a lot of high waisted pants because they make me feel more femme, I remember the feeling of them because they made me feel good the last time I wore them."

**"WE SHARE A LOT OF OUR
CLOTHES AND ALTER THINGS
TOGETHER" - OSCAR MCGREGOR**



Another trend in these three people was that they all talked about how they have adapted, mended or participated in a clothes swap. "I tried to pass things on to trans masc people" Chloe says about when she began to change her wardrobe "I would give them my things, we could just swap". This was often to do with the financial benefits of clothes swaps, however they are all major traits of sustainable consumers. In Kate Fletchers book *Craft of Use* she details how the consumer can be more sustainable, namely mending, altering and participating in clothes swaps. I believe the experience of altering clothes etc is common among the trans community, in 2015 a study in the US by The National Centre on Transgender Equality showed a high percentage of the trans/NB and GNC community falling below the poverty line. Even though it may be a necessity rather than an active choice, it has become a part of the culture surrounding that community to put your own spin on fashion, to quote Plato "necessity is the mother of all invention". Oscar mentioned that him and his fiancé "share a lot of our clothes and alter things together" and Oliver explained "I would turn shirts into crop tops, rip all of my jeans, wear my jackets in ways that made me feel more femme".

"ITS ALL ABOUT DEVELOPING THAT PERSONAL SENSE OF STYLE AND THAT PERSONAL ATTACHMENT TO A PIECE OF CLOTHING"-OLIVER LEVI-MALOUF

So with these experiences in mind, I challenge you, the reader, to try and think about how you could shop empathetically and find those special pieces that you will want to mend, want to pass on, and could even sell on at a second hand store or market. Find what works for you, "Its all about developing that personal sense of style and that personal attachment to a piece of clothing" as Oliver said. Chloe talks about what she looks for in clothes, things like "cuts, fabrics and colours, when they feel organically feminine, then thats when i'll want to buy them". These are the types of things that consumers must think about when purchasing. We have more power than we think, if we don't purchase things, they won't get made, if they don't get made they can't go to landfill.



Oliver, self proclaimed "culture creator, visual vanguard" is 22, identifies as non-binary and uses they/them pronouns

**I ASK THAT YOU ASK
YOURSELF THE FOLLOWING
QUESTIONS THE NEXT TIME
YOU GET DRESSED IN
SOMETHING THAT MAKES
YOU FEEL GOOD.**

**WHY DOES THIS MAKE ME FEEL
GOOD?**

**WHAT ABOUT THIS GARMENT
OR OUTFIT MAKES ME FEEL
GOOD?**

**WHAT WOULD I CHANGE
ABOUT THIS GARMENT?**

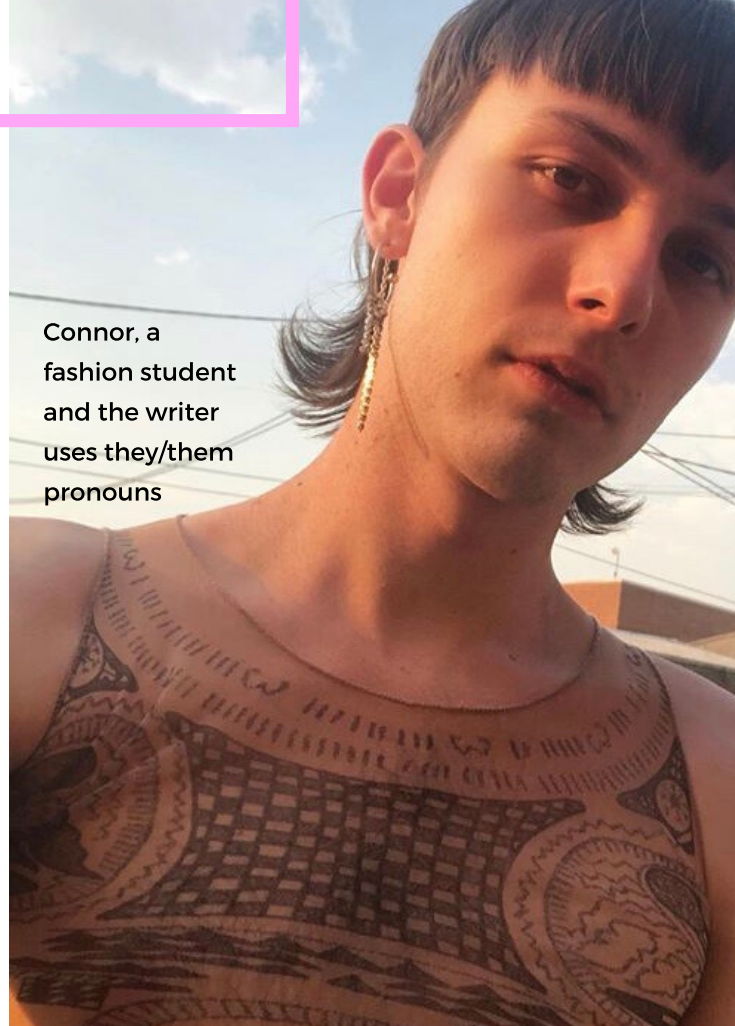
**I ASK AGAIN FOR YOU TO
QUESTION WHAT YOU COULD
DO WITH GARMENT BEFORE
DISPOSAL, ASK YOURSELF;**

**COULD I ALTER THIS GARMENT
MYSELF?**

**WOULD I REPAIR THIS
GARMENT?**

**WOULD I DONATE, SWAP OR
SELL THIS GARMENT ONCE I'VE
FINISHED USING IT?**

Connor, a
fashion student
and the writer
uses they/them
pronouns



When you're shopping, look for things that will make you feel good, look for things that you would alter or repair after a while of using it. Look for things that you could pass on or sell. Sustainability doesn't always have to mean buying organic fabrics from expensive brands, they are great, however not achievable or accessible to everyone. You can be sustainable through your own practices and usage of your garments. You might even end up liking them more because they actually mean something to you.