

USER'S CRAFT

CREATIVITY IS NOT USUALLY A TERM APPLIED TO THE WAY IN WHICH WE TREAT OUR CLOTHING; MANY CREATIVE ACTS GO COMPLETELY UNNOTICED. BUT THE CREATIVE INTERACTION WE HAVE WITH OUR CLOTHES CAN BE A STEP TOWARDS PERSONALLY HELPING TO TACKLE A NUMBER OF GLOBAL ISSUES

Local Wisdom is a fashion project exploring the 'craft' of using and tending to our clothes in both satisfying and resourceful ways. Gathering tales from members of the public of social practices and innovative use, and behaviours associated with garments, Local Wisdom records and celebrates the skill and ingenuity of using clothes and then looks for opportunities to amplify these good practices. Through an international network of design projects, these practices are reproduced in a variety of ways and locations.

FOURTEEN DIVERSE AND SEPARATE CATEGORIES HAVE BEEN DRAWN UP which the garments are placed in for the Local Wisdom photoshoots. The categories are based loosely on some of the key developments and ideas that have been made in sustainability and fashion over the last two decades. One such area is laundering, which has been shown to account for around 80% of the lifecycle energy consumption of frequently washed garments.

Another is the multifaceted area of garment durability, and the complex emotional and psychological issues associated with making a garment last, rather than just making a long-lasting garment, and which have the potential to affect profoundly patterns of consumption and disposal.

Founded and created in 2009 by Dr Kate Fletcher, Reader in Sustainable Fashion at the London College of Fashion, 'the project's premise is that sustainability can emerge from a wealth of simple interactions, and in fashion it has the potential to flow not only from a garment's design and production supply chain, but also from the choices we make as users on a daily basis: how we select, wear, care for and connect with our garments'.

Local Wisdom advertises to communities by means of local newspapers, libraries and sports centres. The project networks through Stitch and Bitch clubs, regional textiles festivals, the climate-change campaigning group Cape Farewell and the Transition Towns movement, constantly asking people from varied backgrounds to come and share their unique personal stories of sustainability. People from a community are invited to come along and bring a garment, which fits into one of the 14 established categories, to a local event. So far these events have been held in the UK, Berlin and San Francisco. There's a photoshoot, and the opportunity for guests to share their own individual accounts.

localwisdom.info

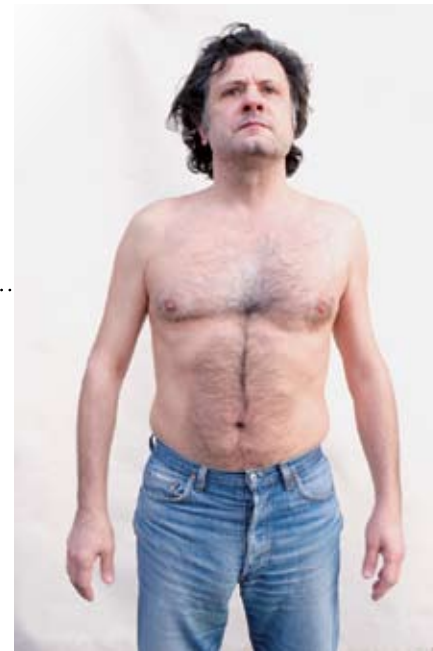


IMAGE: SEAN MICHAEL

MY JEANS

I have had these jeans in my wardrobe since 1983 – more than 25 years. They're Levis, with a red label that the connoisseur knows were made in the USA before production was cut. They're 501s. They're blue jeans that have signs [of wear around the crotch] on it, what in French we call a jeans 'moustache'. Today you can buy your jeans stonewashed, already with a 'moustache'. Mine were perfectly blue to start with.



IMAGE: FOUR RALEY

THREE-STAGE JACKET

I call this my three-stage jacket. It began about 40 years ago as a very slim waistcoat that was given to me. I knitted a panel and put it into the back, just to be able to fasten it together at the front. Then about 15 years ago I added sleeves and a collar and some trimmings. Only about five years ago, I became a bit too big to button it up so I added latches across to the front so that I can fasten it.



IMAGE: SEAN MICHAEL

THE CAT T-SHIRT

My cat t-shirt is a symbol of how important it is to stand up for a self-determined life. This t-shirt is 25 years old. I was 12 years old in the summer when I got it. Up until that time, my foster-mother had always chosen my clothes, and she had completely different taste to me. I was often ashamed of the clothing I had to wear, and got changed secretly in the school toilets. But that summer, I went on holiday with my foster-parents and, while shopping with my foster-mother, fell in love with this t-shirt and convinced her to buy it for me. It all happened without quarrel or argument. I believe this was because one of the few things my mother and I have in common is a love of cats. The t-shirt was a victory, and it was worthwhile because I was directly rewarded for risking a conflict with her, for once. Usually I avoided conflict. Whenever I wore this t-shirt, other people smiled at me more than usual. I don't wear it very often any more, but every time I pick it up, when I'm looking for something in my wardrobe, it moves me.

THE DRESS

MOTHER: The people who lived next door gave me this dress. It's from Antibes, and they had worn it there over many seasons, and they said I could have it for our holiday. It was a great success. I can't think how many more years I wore it.

DAUGHTER 1: I am one of three sisters, and we were very keen to wear the dress and have shared it since we were old enough to have a grown-up figure.

DAUGHTER 2: This dress has been going a long time! It's a sundress. It's worn on special or joyous occasions, and we have photographs of one or other of us wearing it. For example, my middle sister wore it at my mother's 70th birthday party.

DAUGHTER 1: There's a certain amount of jealousy between me and my middle sister, and she's always asking if she can 'have a go' of the dress for our summer holidays. We often go away together in the summer, and the dress always comes with us. Now, almost every holiday I've been on to a warm place, the dress has come out and been worn.

MOTHER: We say, 'Who's got the dress this year?' when they want it. In the beginning, I had sole possession of it.

DAUGHTER 2: Well yeah, because we were too young to wear it.

MOTHER: Yes, but the time soon came ...

DAUGHTER 2: And now there's another generation coming up, our children, who have got their eye on that dress.



IMAGES: SEAN MICHAEL

