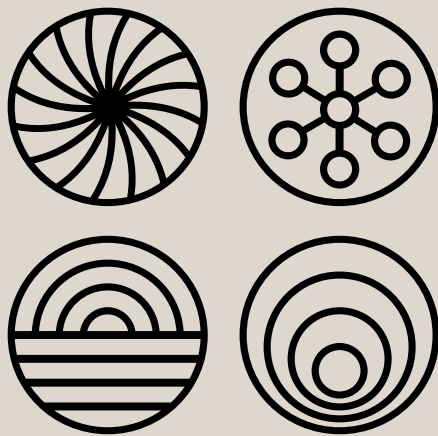


FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

CASE STUDY:
BETHANY WILLIAMS



Image: Phoebe English



BETHANY WILLIAMS LONDON

Founder/Owner	Bethany Williams
Type	Design for social purpose / Fashion as a tool for social change
Sector	Womenswear / Menswear
Established	2017
Location	London
Size	Micro
Website	bethany-williams.com

"There was nowhere I could work which merged fashion design with the social element, and also environmentally."

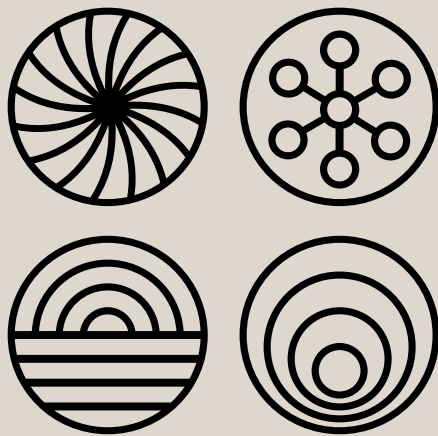
"The social manufacturing projects that we work on, that's where I spend most of my time - it's in that space, not really in the fashion space. That's where I enjoy my time."

"It's using fashion as a tool. It's using fashion as a tool to create social change. I've had to get more involved in the fashion side but I feel kind of removed from it."

"I think it [Bethany Williams London] creates a space where I can do everything I want to do. Which is to design textiles, taking on more textiles recycling, finding ways to re-use, but also working with social projects and trying to promote these really amazing organisations that are doing great things. And also working alongside them and our partners to try and support them."

BETHANY WILLIAMS





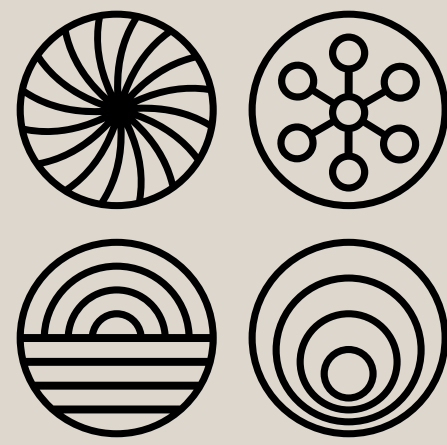
CASE STUDY: BETHANY WILLIAMS LONDON

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Setting own rules for fashion, based on equity, social justice and care for the environment.
- Collaborations with charities that support women, children, and people facing complex intersectional challenges.
- Place-based and context-based learning, through participatory practice.
- Artistic commissions and site-specific projects for public audiences.
- Consultancy work, collaboration with global brands and speaker commissions with a range of audiences.
- Social value needs to be recognised in fashion and this is something that needs to be addressed.



Image: Bethany Williams London



CASE STUDY: BETHANY WILLIAMS LONDON

OVERVIEW



An artist and designer by education, Bethany Williams connects the worlds of fashion and social justice. The contributors and beneficiaries of her business are individuals and social groups that are seldom recognised in fashion. Breaking from convention, she starts with the people, skills and resources with whom she interacts on an everyday basis. She wants fashion to offer fulfilling work and contribute to the well-being and dignity of those involved. Bethany's work is representative of a diversity of perspectives, places and circumstances.

While balancing multiple projects and roles, Bethany's design methodology involves research and development from a range of sources to ensure an informed approach that is appropriate to its context. She is guided by an ethos of fashion as a tool for social change. This informs her decision-making processes and her design ethic, resulting in outcomes that are both visually distinctive and infused with integrity.

However, working in this way is challenging, as it goes against the


grain of the current system. More time, patience and understanding of complexity are needed compared to conventional practices. Bethany Williams' personal work ethic means that she has worked very long hours for a number of years, in order to establish and continue her business. This highlights the need for a shift in perception of fashion by investors, buyers and customers, who expect conformity, constant re-production and delivery dates that do not factor in fair time, and alternative manufacturing methods.

Bethany Williams is still able to thrive, being driven by the intrinsic values that motivate and inspire her. The relevance of her work is increasingly recognised, however there is also a concern that a significant proportion of this recognition is tokenistic and does not truly value the underlying principles of her design work and business. Her ability to sustain and continue her work is also based on her skill in maintaining a portfolio of roles that are complementary, allowing mutual synergies and enabling resilience in action.

Bethany Williams' values are also reflected in her participatory practice that has enabled a network of collaborators with a range of skills and resources. This means that mutual exchange takes place across multiple levels: from a large jeans manufacturer who offer her all of their unsold pieces for re-use in her designs, to a charity with whom she works to de-construct the garments, and stores and customers who are delighted by the beauty and integrity of her designs.

Bethany Williams responds powerfully to concerns relating to climate and social justice. She sources materials that do not add to resource depletion, but rather extend the value of what already exists. She responds to intersectional challenges by working with organisations that have a deep understanding of social needs relating to the safety and dignity of women, the vulnerability of children, homelessness, and rehabilitation. Her work also considers justice between generations through raising awareness and providing an inspiration and tangible examples of action to others.

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The Fostering Sustainable
Practices project investigates
creative practices in design-
led fashion micro and small
enterprises (MSEs) as an evidence
base for change towards a more
sustainable fashion industry.
Project findings are underpinned
by two-and-a half years of work
with more than forty fashion
MSEs, who demonstrate sustainable
prosperity in and through Fashion.

This collaborative research is
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