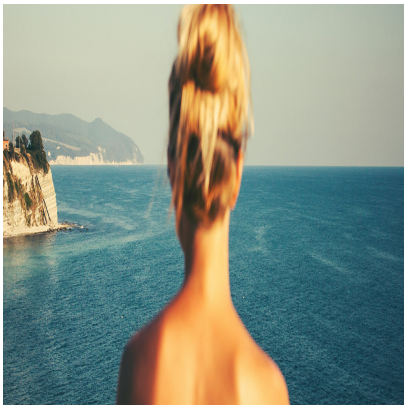

Taking a More Empathetic Approach to Your Wardrobe

Description

Photo by Ethereal Optics

Empathy is a concept that I am sure most of you are familiar with, but what about applying it to our relationship with our wardrobes?

When considering the production of â??*fashionâ?•* we often donâ??t think about the fact that our clothes have passed through many hands to make it into our wardrobes. Farmers, spinners, dyers, machinists, designers, buyers, and more, have played an important role. This is something that is often overlooked when going through the daily routine of getting dressed.

However, looking at our wardrobes with a little bit of empathy might just help bridge this gap.

Understanding empathetic dressing

If we were to look inside our wardrobes right now most of us would see garments that we have worn for particular occasions, garments that we havenâ??t worn for months, and pieces that we are simply keeping for sentimental reasons.

Every item of clothing has a story, yet we are only privy to part of that story. The larger narrative began well before the clothing came into our hands. Even when we look inside a garment, the clothing label yields only a small part of that garmentâ??s story â?? often only the final point of assembly.



Photo by Christina Deravedisian

In order to complete the narrative, we need to be more curious and considerate when delving into our wardrobes.

By exploring our wardrobes with empathy we can try to uncover the start of our garmentâ??s narrative before we add the middle and end. This will help us connect more meaningfully with the people who make our clothes and the processes involved, and enhance our appreciation of them.

The consideration for the social and environmental footprint of our clothing choices and practices can lead to more mindful consumption. We can support ethical production practices, embrace sustainable fabrics, and value thoughtful design. We can become more educated, learn to take better care of our wardrobes, and ultimately make choices that positively impact people and the planet.

My personal experience

About five years ago, I made an effort to adopt a more empathetic approach to my wardrobe, which significantly shifted my mindset. I became more curious about my existing wardrobe and deliberate in my purchases.

One exercise that deepened my appreciation involved analysing an item from my wardrobe. I wondered about the fabric: its composition, where it was sourced, and whether it was printed or dyed. I took into consideration the construction: its order of assembly and where it might have been sewn. I examined the stitching, seams, and component parts, like buttons and zippers. Even with a fair understanding of garment production, this analysis confirmed to me how many people and processes would have contributed to that single garment.

This improved awareness led me to prioritise quality over quantity, embrace second-hand clothing, research more, and regularly audit my wardrobe to avoid unnecessary purchases. It also extended to my approach to designing and making my own clothes. I took a slower approach implementing more

thoughtful design and purchasing habits that have longevity in mind, while also making the most of what I already have. I opted for sustainable fabrics and notions, and embraced DIY and upcycling practices where I could.

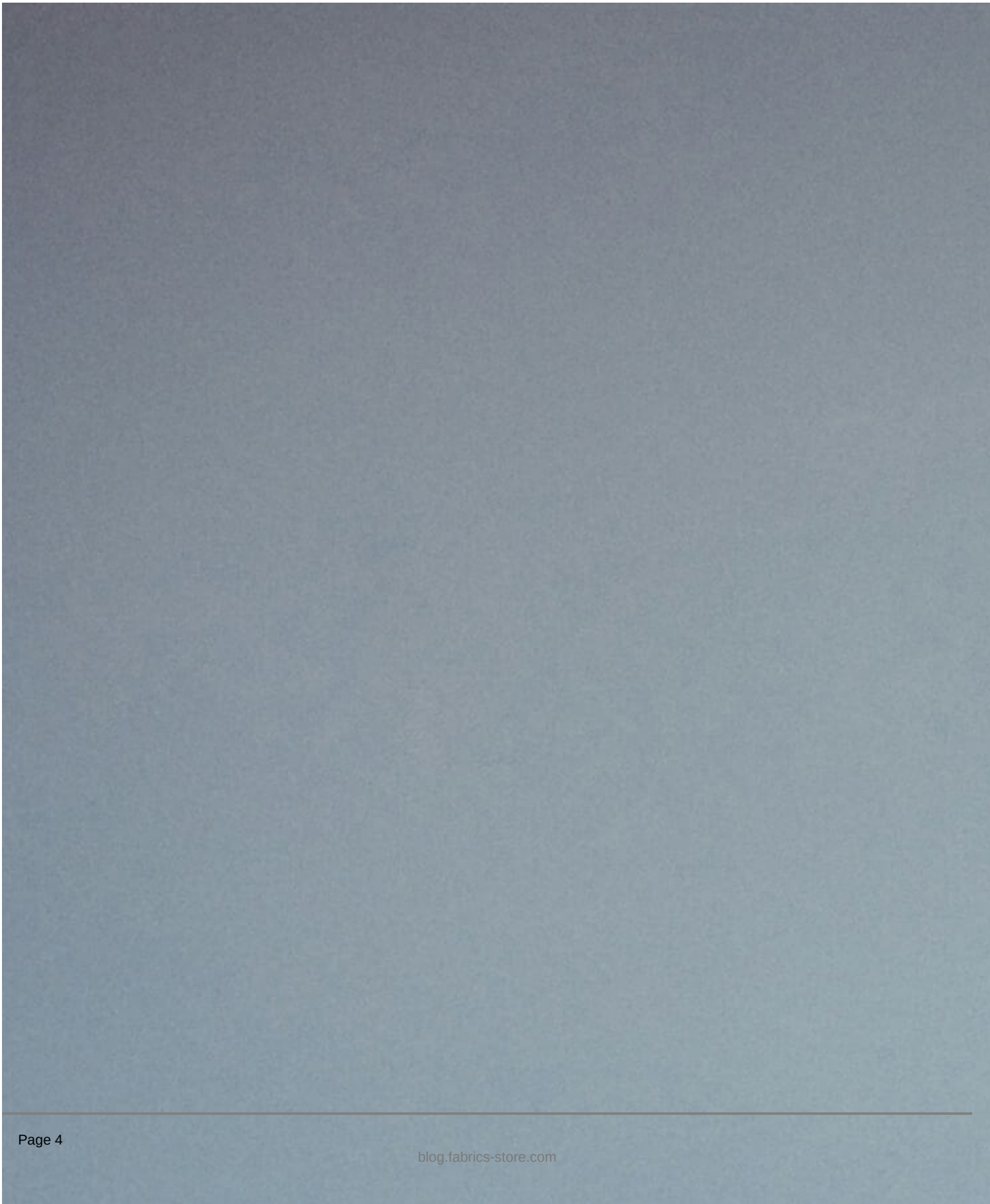

Photo by Ryunosuke Kikuno

Sewing and Empathy

Clothing should, and does take time to make. Sewing is a great way to appreciate this and engage with our wardrobes more meaningfully. Learning to sew provides firsthand insight into the craftsmanship and effort involved in clothing production. It also empowers us to repair and mend our clothes, extending their lifespan and reducing waste.

By embracing an empathetic approach when considering our clothing we can create wardrobes that reflect our values and have a positive impact on both people and the planet.

CATEGORY

1. MINDFUL DRESSING

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