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VegNews

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recycled copper and sussing out alternatives to plastic.

McGraw says that being cruelty-free is more sustainable than using animal products in fashion. "Our research shows that it takes 10 times more energy to produce leather or fur than it does to produce synthetic equivalents," even when the equivalents are petroleum based. McGraw goes on to note that the chemicals used to prepare and preserve leather and fur are highly toxic and polluting.

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) is also inspiring emerging designers to consider issues of animal cruelty. Through their partnership with the Art Institutes (a network of schools across the country), they launched their Cool vs. Cruel campaign, a contest for fashion students that, according to HSUS, "challenges fashion students to create animal-friendly reinterpretations of designer garments."

As prominent schools begin to turn out more and more eco-savvy graduates, the future of fashion is looking bright and green. But who will inherit the green-brick road paved by today's education efforts? Looking to the future is part of what sustainable design is all about. With a new crop of compassionate designers putting their values to work, the up-and-coming standouts are those who combine cutting-edge style with eco-friendly ethics. **VN**

Amy O'Neill Houck is a chef and knitwear designer who loves when her yarn is made from her favorite foods like soybeans and seaweed. Amy blogs at hookandi.blogspot.com.

Annie Mohaupt Designer with Sole(s)

Shoe designer Annie Mohaupt was discouraged when her job as an architect "didn't live up to my picture of the Mike Brady career." She says she wanted to be more hands-on and creative. When a friend invited her to be part of a craft fair, she hoped to contribute something that would stand out. In a flash of inspiration, she decided to sell shoes, and spent the summer of 2005 learning how to create them. "I didn't know anything about making shoes," she says, but the lack of preconceived ideas allowed her to envision a completely new design. "We were renovating our house, so there were lots of power tools in the basement," she says of her summer of experimentation. The shoes sold so well at the fair that she quit her job to make them full-time, and began Mohop, her design company.

Mohaupt's unique footwear is designed more like a skateboard or furniture than a shoe, made from thin pieces of birch that are pressed together and cut into stylish shapes. Using no leather or other animal products—only recycled rubber and sustainably harvested wood (even her glues are eco-friendly and water-based)—she creates a shoe that breaks the mold. Mohaupt wanted a shoe that could be worn a lot, so she developed a system of loops at the foot bed where ribbons are laced. The resulting shoe gives the wearer endless design freedom in how to tie and wear it. "And they're comfortable," Mohaupt says. "I walked 100 miles in one pair to test them out."

Mohaupt's mom was a big inspiration to her, showing her by example that "girls can use power tools." She says, "In our house, Mom was the one to get out the saw or drill press." Her ethics also came from her upbringing. "My parents made environmental consciousness part of our lifestyle."

The shoes are all made by hand in the Mohop studio, and, until recently, Mohaupt was doing it without any employees—just the help of a couple of interns. Now that she's hired helpers, she's hoping to expand her distribution because the shoes are selling faster than she can make them.

When asked if she likes being part of the cruelty-free fashion trend, Mohaupt says she loves that "we're not in it because it's cool. We'd be making things this way no matter what we were creating."

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