

Style focus

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Shopping with a Conscience

In recent years, Southeast Asia has seen a nascent but growing sustainable fashion movement. Add an ethical edge to your shopping with these five regional brands, each an intriguing blend of sustainability, beauty and creativity. **By Xinyi Liang**



Belle & Dean ▲

From baby rompers to grownup tees, organic apparel brand Belle & Dean uses only certified organic cotton and eco-friendly ink for their prints. Detailed animal sketches feature prominently in their collection to inspire awareness and protection. Founder Issy explains, "If things are made well, they will last longer, and a longer lifespan means that ultimately that less natural resources like water and valuable soil nutrients are used."

www.belleanddean.com

Ock Pop Tok ▶

Meaning 'east meets west' in Lao, Luang Prabang-based Ock Pop Tok is the brainchild of English photographer Joanna Smith and local weaver Veomanee Duangdala. The pair run Ock Pop Tok as a textile production and retail initiative, providing livelihoods for more than 200 rural artisans and their families and keeping alive different weaving techniques.



www.ockpoptok.com



XSProject

Giving non-recyclable plastic a new lease of life is Jakarta-based XSProject, which converts discarded packaging into cheery totes and off-beat accessories. Initiated by American artist and environmentalist Ann Wizer, the project buys plastic waste from Jakarta's trash pickers and passes it on to community artisans to be fashioned into new products.

www.xsproject.com

Choo Yilin Artisan Jewellery ▶

Singaporean designer Choo Yilin commissions Karen silversmiths in northern Thailand to turn recycled metals and ethically sourced gemstones into exquisite earrings, bracelets and chokers, generating a livelihood for hill tribe communities while sustaining centuries-old cultural art-forms. "To me, sustainability is not just about adhering to responsible social ethos but also taking steps to lessen the environmental impacts throughout the entire supply chain", says Choo.



www.chooyilin.com

Nikaya Handcrafted ▲

Meaning 'community' in the ancient Pali language, Nikaya Handcrafted is an online boutique store established by social entrepreneurs Andrea and Brandon Ross to bring traditional Khmer crafts to a wider audience. Stocking handcrafted bags, karma scarves, pillowcases and brass jewellery, 10% of the brand's profits go toward Journeys Within Our Community, another philanthropic-focused initiative set up by this dynamic duo.

www.nikayahandcrafted.com