

CLIMATE FUTURES AND RISING WATERS

For visual artist Noelle Hamlyn, the touch of cloth merges the past with the future. In 2019, she salvaged discarded life jackets from a beach. These life jackets became the start of the ROM installation *Noelle Hamlyn: Lifers*. Trained in craft, fine arts, theatre, and costume, Hamlyn carefully tailors thrifted garments over life jackets. The results are haunting yet stylish reminders of the larger role the fashion industry plays in the climate crisis.



WHAT'S IN YOUR CLOSET?

The story of your clothes begins with fibre and water and often ends in a landfill. What happens before and after your clothes enter your closet?

As part of *Noelle Hamlyn: Lifers*, the exhibition curatorial and production teams wanted to convey how the global textile and fast fashion industry plays a major role in climate change, social justice, water quality, and environmental degradation. Even more importantly, we wanted to share what societies are doing collectively to address each of these issues, as well as empowering actions that can be taken up by individuals who want to make a difference. Here's what we found*:



WARMING



- From manufacturing plants to air freight, textile production generates about 2.9 trillion kg of greenhouse gas emissions each year. It surpasses emissions from the aviation and shipping industries combined.
- Making a cotton t-shirt creates around 2.1 kg of carbon emissions. Making a polyester t-shirt creates 5.5 kg of carbon emissions because synthetic fibres are made from fossil fuels.



- The United Nations Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action aims to drastically reduce greenhouse gases from textile production. 110 fashion corporations have signed, but many have not.
- Extend the wear and lifetime of your clothes. It's the most important step you can take to reduce the environmental impact of your wardrobe.

WORKERS



- The collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Dhaka, Bangladesh killed over 1,134 garment workers in 2013. It is the largest fashion manufacturing disaster and spotlights the deadly abuse of garment workers.
- There is a person behind every stitch of your clothes. Over half of the world's garment workers are women in the Global South who face exploitative labour conditions.



- Bill S-211 is poised to come into effect in 2024. It mandates private companies selling goods in Canada to report forced and child labour in their supply chains.
- The Clean Clothes Campaign connects 235 garment worker organizations across 45 countries. Together, they create global campaigns for justice.

WATER



- It takes roughly 13,500 L of water to make a single cotton t-shirt and one pair of jeans. That's enough drinking water to last one person nearly 14 years.
- Textile production is responsible for a whopping 20% of global clean water pollution. This is because of dyeing and finishing processes such as bleaching.



- Check your tags! Fashion labels share where a garment was made and its materials. Certifications such as the Global Organic Textile Standard signal sustainability.
- When possible, choose clothes made of natural sustainable fibres such as linen or organic cotton. Organic cotton uses 91% less water than typical cotton.

WASTE



- Every year, 92 trillion kg of fashion waste is dumped in landfills due to overproduction and fast fashion. Most of these clothes will not biodegrade and will outlive us by hundreds of years.
- Canadians purchase about 70 new articles of clothing a year – but only wear half of what they own.



- The European Union's strategy for sustainable and circular textiles sets out design requirements for textiles to be biodegradable, repairable, and recyclable.
- Buy fewer clothes. While well-intentioned, donating used clothing to thrift shops or charity does not necessarily prevent it from entering a landfill.