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## Selfridges proves values equal value in sustainability campaign

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Promotional image for Selfridges' Bright New Things 2016

By JEN KING

British retailer Selfridges is fashioning a brighter future by championing sustainable designers for its seminal talent platform, Bright Young Things.

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Now in its fifth year, Bright Young Things, branded as Bright New Things for 2016, is investing in the future of fashion by highlighting United Kingdom-based talents and working with the Center for Sustainable Fashion to explore the apparel and accessories industry's "new standard." Increasingly, brands and retailers are being more transparent about the raw materials used, construction process and the overall impact products have on the environment.

"We chose the designers because we think that the work they do is really interesting," said Linda Hewson, creative director at **Selfridges**, London. "Indeed, this year's edition of our annual campaign Bright Young Things was devised to spotlight the topic of sustainable fashion but there never were a doubt that the priority was to select talented fashion designers with a great potential.

"We also have a wider interest in engaging a dialogue about sustainability as we are in the process of making our business a more sustainable one," she said. "It's important to us and we know it's important to our customers and to the brands we work with.

"We've been thinking about what we can do differently and better, and how we can engage the conversation and explore the opportunities around ideas of sustainable, ethical retail. Our Bright New Things campaign is the first outstanding expression of this business-wide direction."

### Upstanding upcycle

Selfridges' Bright New Things campaign is centered on up-and-coming names in sustainable fashion. Given the intricacies of upcycling and having sustainable business and production processes, Selfridges is not only underscoring the finished products, but the inspiring ways in which these designers work.

To introduce its concept, Selfridges turned to social media showcasing the window displays on Oxford Street developed for Bright New Things, which are estimated to be seen by 110,000 daily passersby. The six windows shared show off the designer's personality and creative approach with links to a Web page hub for Bright New Things.

On the Web page, consumers can learn about the nine designers featured for Bright New Things. Their expertise ranges from hats and leather goods to denim, swimwear and knit wear.

A click-through directs to biography pages of each designer. Designers include Faustine Steinmetz, Salvage T's by EMG Initiative, Martina Spetlova, Hiut Denim Co., Auria, Unmade, Clothsurgeon, Katie Jones and Mich Dulce. Touchpoints include a brief overview of the designer and their products and a Q&A section.

"Sourcing materials ethically and engaging with environmentally-friendly processes is what we mostly associate with producing sustainably," Ms. Hewson said. "However, working with individuals, brands and communities in a way that is fundamentally respectful is also important and this is one of the criteria we have used in our Bright New Things's selection process.

"Retailers have an opportunity to have a real, lasting impact on people's lives and that's something we want to do with pride and imagination," she said.



### *Designers for Bright New Things*

Back on the hub's homepage, consumers can shop 51 designs from the nine featured designers on Selfridges' ecommerce site. The curated edit gives consumers a chance to explore the designs on a platform that is trusted, based on Selfridges' judgment of quality.

The retailer will also select one of the Bright New Things designers to win a bursary to support further development of their brand and sustainable credentials. The progress will be followed by Selfridges and will then be shared in fall/winter 2016.

Selfridges' has also developed a campaign video with fashion filmmaker Marie Schuller, who created a surreal reimagining of the Bright New Things sustainable labels.

In the video, an acapella trio perform on a stage of a dark dive bar where a cast of interesting characters interact with those around them and to the music. The characters in the film all wear pieces created by the Bright New Things designers.

Selfridges Hot Air presents: The Bright New Things Working Designers Club

"The project that began as Bright Young Things in 2011 has given us so much insight into the future of fashion," Ms. Hewson said in a statement. "In this, its fifth incarnation, our Bright New Things take us far beyond brilliant design by sharing a powerful message of positivity and invention in retail. Here to stay, made to last, our Bright New Things prove that the best fashion sustains."

Selfridges also took Bright New Things as an opportunity to share its own sustainability practices and promises. The added level of transparency will help to ensure consumers that Selfridges did not just select sustainability because it's "on-trend," but rather because it is a cause the retailer stands behind.

The retailer's motto of "buying better, inspiring change" is reflected in a Web page accessible through the Bright New Things designer showcase. The consumer is first welcomed by a filmed message from Selfridges' deputy chairman, Alannah Weston, who stresses the importance of the retailer's sustainable practices and the ideology of values equaling value.

Selfridges highlights this notion further in brief testimonials from employees, partners and overviews of its business and environmental partnerships, namely its longstanding relationship with the Zoological Society of London and the Marine Reserves Coalition ([see story](#)).

### *Selfridges' Doing the Right Thing*

Retailer-backed efforts such as this may work to place sustainable fashion alongside mainstream brands.

"I think it's two fold, the Selfridges buying team will add value to the brands by helping them with the commercial aspect of their business and getting them to be retail ready, whilst Daniella Vega - head of sustainability - and the Centre of Sustainability's mentoring will contribute to give them further tools and understanding as to what a brand needs, in terms of sustainability, to be relevant and successful now and in the future," said Diana Verde Nieto, co-founder of [Positive Luxury](#), London.

### Brightness

Selfridges' Bright Young Things initiative allots the retailer with a platform to explore designers that may be overlooked by consumers. This strategy is on par with the all-inclusive practices, regardless of age, gender or sexual orientation, many brands have begun to incorporate.

Last year for instance, Selfridges' Bright Old Things celebrated a new age range of designers in those who might not be typically considered as up-and-coming. The participating artists reach ages in their mid-eighties and represent those with mid-to-late-life career changes as well as the more mature consumer of the department store looking for age-relevant campaigns and collections.

Participants ranged from late-forties to mid-eighties, a switch from Selfridges' Bright Young Things campaign of the past that saw much younger contestants ([see story](#)).

Also, in 2014, department store chain Barneys New York aligned itself with the fight for transgender equality with an ad campaign and outreach.

Barneys' "Brothers, Sisters, Sons and Daughters" campaign featured 17 transgender individuals with diverse backgrounds and stories that were told through a series of short films. With this campaign, Barneys showed a more personal, human side to its brand that allowed it to connect on a deeper level with consumers ([see story](#)).

For Selfridges, its effort is reflective of where the market is going in terms of conscious consumption.

"Retail plays a key role and a large responsibility in bringing products and services to consumers that are beautiful and well crafted, with social good and environmental responsibility as part of their corporate strategy," Ms. Verde Nieto said.

"Selfridges is leading the way on this, by curating the best in class of young talent coming through and going on to highlight established brands that are environment and community friendly," she said. "In fact, they are already doing so by adopting the Positive Luxury seal of approval for Kiehl's, guaranteeing to their consumer that they are a brand to trust."

### Final Take

*Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York*