

RETAIL

Holt Renfrew explores future of sustainable fashion for fall 2023

October 24, 2023



The company's
H Project

has raised over \$2 million to date, entering its next chapter as Holt Renfrew highlights green designers of today in new content. Image credit: Holt Renfrew

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

Canadian department store chain Holt Renfrew is celebrating its wins as an important initiative turns 10.

Dedicated to uplifting purposeful luxury, the company's **H Project** has already raised over \$2 million to date. For fall 2023, Holt Renfrew is continuing this work by highlighting green designers of today, hosting in-person activations and making further commitments in an effort to bring forth the future of fashion.

"Shining a light on the products we buy and creating a platform to amplify those with beautiful stories became the heart of Holt Renfrew's H Project," said Alexandra Weston, deputy vice president of brand and creative strategy at **Holt Renfrew**, in a statement.

"Over the past 10 years, we've seen a shift to transform the industry into one that is more transparent, giving way to the people and brands forging a new way of thinking about materials and production practices," Ms. Weston said. "Inspiring change is happening, and it's exciting to be a part of it and what is to come."

"Wear" environment meets luxury

Led by Ms. Weston, Holt Renfrew established the H Project 10 years ago, supporting 26 brands by spotlighting their products in 2013.

Now, a decade later, more than 200 labels are benefitting from the heightened exposure, Holt Renfrew advertising conscious choices to its customers.

What began as an H Project-led program focused on store teams' engagement with communities has now blossomed into a formal corporate investment strategy.



The department store is shining a light on its past efforts, making an appeal to consumers looking for sustainable fashion. Image credit: Holt Renfrew

This is inclusive of a national charity partner program with non-governmental conservation organization World Wildlife Fund Canada. Holt Renfrew plans to donate \$1 million over four years to the charity's Regenerate Canada plan and its at-risk species recovery, habitat restoration and anti-climate change activities.

Aside from this focus, the department store is continuing to give to other organizations that are near and dear, additionally supporting local communities.

Holt Renfrew's philanthropic vertical often finds ways to involve craftspeople of the global south ([see story](#)) as well.

From working with international nonprofit United Way in India to collaboration with the United Nations Ethical Fashion Initiative, which operates across Africa ([see story](#)), the H Project takes an intersectional and equity-forward approach.

"It was a simple question asked more than a decade ago that incubated the idea of H Project," said Ms. Weston, in a statement.

On now until October 29 at Holt Renfrew Bloor Street! Discover moments of grounding, exploration and restoration at arcana's experiential pop-up exhibit. Click to learn more! ><https://t.co/EkxuDogpAF>
[pic.twitter.com/fpArneHvm](https://t.co/EkxuDogpAF)

Holt Renfrew (@HoltRenfrew) [September 27, 2023](#)

"If the fashion industry was so influential that it could cause such negative social and environmental impacts, then was it not possible to push that pendulum in the other direction and use that same influence to be a catalyst for good?" she said. "This was something we needed to try and do, no matter how small to start."

Looking to the future, Holt Renfrew is spending this autumn promoting a few leaders who are driving fashion toward a better tomorrow.

Mindful materials

Since 2013, the Holts Sustainable Edit has circulated luxury products that meet its green criteria.

Through the program, eco-conscious items are highlighted on the department store's site, accompanied by labels, or "Icons," as Holt Renfrew calls the system.

These markers indicate which releases offer additional ethical or environmental assurances. "Circular" or "Clean Beauty" labels signify the players providing transparent formulations, for instance. Other "Icons" meet the criteria for a "Charitable" or "Artisanal" tag.

Holt Renfrew explores the sustainable potential of knitwear with PH5

From apples to mushrooms, raw alternatives to animal byproducts such as skins and furs are showing up across the industry ([see story](#)).

Holt Renfrew is celebrating this spirit of innovation, placing lab-grown diamonds, three-dimensional printed home dcor, recycled nylon apparel ([see story](#)) and carbon-positive fibers, among other buys, under a new "Innovation" category, no doubt a result of this increasing shift in luxury's material sourcing.

For this occasion, the retailer is diving into the work of American fashion company Another Tomorrow, a brand that uses SeaCell, a fabric made from seaweed and cellulose.

The women-led company also uses scannable hangtags, allowing consumers to view a product's journey through the supply chain. This transparency tool also makes it easier to authenticate luxury products.

The Sustainable Closet with Holt Renfrew and Another Tomorrow

Since climate change is costing luxury fashion ([see story](#)), changes like this have the potential to become more integrated into the industry, transitioning from niche appeals to small consumer bases, to becoming the baseline in a world run by sustainably-minded customers.

"At the beginning, options that fit our style and the ethos we were aiming for were like finding real treasure few and far between," said Ms. Weston, in a statement.

"Over the last 10 years, we've experienced a real explosion in options, as more and more players have entered the space with incredible new innovations and material certifications."