

ETHICAL FASHION SOCIALS 2010

January

Culture & Creativity: Making Fair Trade Cutting Edge: Are you working with Fair Trade groups or interested in doing so? Got ideas about how to move Fair Trade fashion into the mainstream?

Saf Restaurant, 152-154 Curtain Road, Shoreditch, London EC2A 3AT
28th January 2010

EFF will be hosting a London Ethical Fashion Social on the Thursday 28th January! All are welcome to join us at Saf Restaurant at 8 pm. Whether you are looking to network, discuss ethical fashion or just relax and make new friends, we guarantee you will have a good time!

Saf's innovative bar menu is created by celebrated Sommelier & Mixologist, Joe McCanta. It is a perfect post-Christmas as Saf is renowned for it's organic and biodynamic wines, revitalising juices, fresh cocktails and organic teas. Please come, bring your friends and join the EFF team. We look forward to seeing you all there!

What happened:

The spirit of EFF's new year was to re-evaluate all our endeavours; 2010 is the year for opening doors to market that will change lives and the first part of our focus has centred around our socials. EFF want to increase our impact by structuring every part of our business to increase involvement with our members. Our January social was the first revamped EFF event where we introduced a theme for discussion. This proved very successful; igniting interesting debate amongst our attendees and enticing more people to join us.

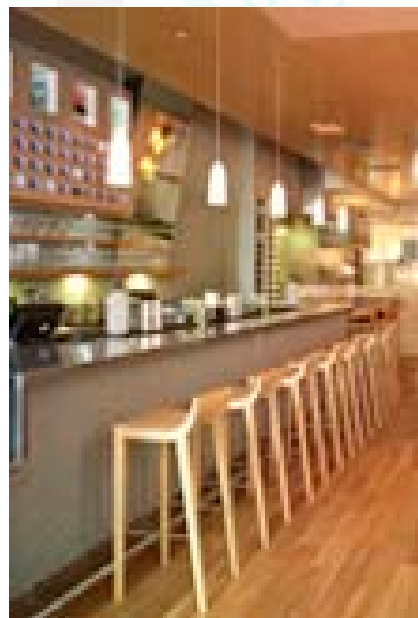
Our London January social took place at the lovely Saf Restaurant, Shoreditch. Saf provided a events room enabling us to really connect. The wine and cocktails were excellent. Jo and I were astounded and pleased by the high attendance – the best yet!

If you held your own social please do the same. How successful was the introduction of a theme? What did you learn from each other? Did you take photos?

It was attended by a Corporate Responsibility Manager of a top high street fashion brand, a DEFRA Policy Adviser, a Senior Research Fellow from a top fashion university, ethical and sustainable fashion designers working in Colombia, Ecuador, Pakistan, and England, an ethical jeweller, a supplier of Natural Colour Cotton, students, and of course members from the EFF Team.

Interested in the Ethical Fashion Social? See website for more information on how to become a Social Host.

www.ethicalfashionforum.com/connect/socials



Images: Top: Saf Restaurant
Bottom: Fair trade pioneer
Pants to Poverty

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The group shared their issues of working with fair trade groups:

- Stigma of Fair Trade – highlighted as a problem that can negatively affect your business.
- New businesses – problems in evaluating supply & demand, the UK ethical fashion market and pricing
- Difficulties in maintaining business efficiency and order deadlines whilst remaining ethical.
- Large disparities between indigenous pace of life, cultural contexts and expectations and the fast paced fashion industry. Difficult to expand/maintain quality.
- Suggestions of contracts and clear expectations were put forward as examples of good practice.
- Ethnic designs can be difficult to sell – depending on the market – the right designer is crucial to commerciality of the product. Challenging to preserve cultural techniques whilst creating marketable products.
- The need for support and training – 'hand holding' is required that hinders the business and its commerciality
- Confusion into optimal ethical practice for example local, low carbon sourcing v.s. supporting global networks, indigenous communities and cultures.
- Highlighted the importance of discussion into the inherently complex concept of ethical fashion.
- Trust – by working away from your community trust in your team is essential
- Quality of sustainable materials and also ensuring that they are actually sustainably produced.
- Standardisation – criteria of ethical production and materials. - Ensuring traceability and transparency of the supply chain
- Government involvement – can be very trying in the developing world and subject to changing taxes, supply, payments and politics.

All attendees were interested in fair-trade development and by sharing problems they were able to discuss methods to remedy their concerns. Claudia Suarez of Artisan Life had particularly good experience with her artisan groups in her native Colombia to share and advise the group. By identifying the key problems discussions naturally flowed on how these can be countered.



Images: Top: Fair trade pioneers Artisan Life supporting culture and creativity in South America
Bottom: Social guest Side Effects supporting traditional block printing craft in Pakistan.

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