



THE TEMPER CONCEPT

China through Fashion and Urban Culture

By Elsbeth van Paridon

What follows is merely a short pitch regarding a mostly overlooked topic that plays an increasingly bigger part in the daily life of, particularly, China's rising middle class as the country has evolved into a moderately prosperous society: fashion.

China with its 5,000-year-long history comes with a vast vault of soft power to delve into; and abundance of facets that remain as of yet largely unknown to the outside world. These hidden sides showcase an entirely different aspect of the nation and its past, present, and, more importantly, future. Fashion, from imperial nail art to today's 国朝 trend incorporating TCM and tech, and all that comes with this territory is one of them.

Escorted by the increasingly strong influence of a new thinking among China's younger regarding individuality and the expression thereof, the fashion scene in the Middle Kingdom is exploding. "Made In China": Redefined.

The term "Made in China" is undergoing the ultimate 21st Century makeover with a revolutionary twist and has in the past five to 10 years evolved into the "New Made in China" label. This rapidly changing landscape is a unique phenomenon that stretches well beyond the mere Summer/Winter collections on display during any given fashion week.

The rise of Shanghai Fashion Week. The rediscovery of China's longstanding national heritage woven into the seams of many a designer collection or street style ensembles. The incorporation of minority styles in the outfits of popular singing contest participants. New, youthful notions of self-reflection, and -empowerment. The intermingling of the country's booming digital innovation with stylish sustainability... The pioneering fashion scene in China is more than your mere cover shot; it's the visualization of a changing social landscape.

The future is looking fashionable. And promising.

For more intel, please go to www.chinatemper.com, a body of work founded by Elsbeth van Paridon (and currently counting eight contributors) telling tales of contemporary China through the lens of fashion and urban culture.



THE PROPOSAL: TEMPER MAGAZINE – well, e-zine

Ancient truth holds that turbulent times drive the biggest innovations. There's a lot to like about that. A new concern for the environment has launched entirely newfangled notions of fashion. China's fashion and lifestyle scenes included.

Sustainable fashion refers to the production of clothes, accessories, and make-up in an environment-friendly way. Its goal is to protect the ecosystem, considerably reduce pollution, encourage practices of recycling, repurposing and less consumption, and responsible use of natural resources. The produced items are softer to the touch but stronger and more durable; their high quality ensures that the items won't be treated as disposable. All these features are part of the slow(er) fashion model.

So, let's get specific here. What is, for example, fashion's carbon impact?

Here's the thing: it's hard to pinpoint the precise carbon impact of the fashion industry because fashion has a bit of a misinformation problem. But while exact numbers may waiver between sources, one thing we do know is that the industry has a major impact. Here are the latest, most reliable estimates, bearing in mind this is merely an introduction to a complex topic entrenched in the murky and misleading world of global supply chains.

According to [the 2020 McKinsey Fashion On Climate report](#), "research shows that the global fashion industry produced around 2.1 billion tons of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2018, equaling 4% of the global total. This is equivalent to the combined annual GHG emissions of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Around 70% of the fashion industry's emissions came from upstream activities such as materials production, preparation, and processing. The remaining 30% were associated with downstream retail operations, the use-phase, and end-of-use activities." On the upper end of the estimates, the UN places fashion's greenhouse gas emissions at 8-10% of the global total. But whether we're looking at 4% or 10%, there's no denying the massive scope of fashion's carbon impact.

We're not going to pretend that climate change can be solved if you buy a pair of carbon-neutral sneakers. But considering the clothing industry's significant carbon impact, the choices we make when we shop—coupled with how we look after our clothes—can make a real difference to the environment.

It isn't going to change the world overnight, but collectively, our habits change lives and change the planet for the better. When we recognize our power as both consumers and citizens, our choices can help us all in the fight for systemic change crucial for a healthier planet.

#TrendtoTrash, it's time to get fashionably serious – for a change. Fashion is one dirty gal and, no, not in a good way. She is thirsty, making her a clear target in heavily polluted China's cleanup mission du decade, entitled "Beautiful China." The fashion industry stands at a China crossroads: Get on the merry-go-round or get out of the polluted amusement park. So when we discuss that new "Made in China" brand... How does this sexy label affect the nation's fashion industry?

Allow me to introduce: The quarterly Temper Magazine:

One year, four topics; green, clean, and e-zine.



- 1) Sustainable fashion is now a growing wave in China as more and more designers focus on ethical sourcing and durable practices to appease shifting consumer values. Out with fast fashion and in with long-lasting, eco-friendly, responsibly-produced clothing. But, as they say, one must lead by example, thus the question beckons... Who are among the **China(-based) pioneers, designers to brands**, seeking to create and design some newly desired sustainable sass? Some Chinese designers may have studied in London or New York, may have lived elsewhere in the world, but China is in every fiber of their life and work. They dig deep into their ancestral land's rich history, and they tie the traditional elements to the modern China they live in, bringing spectacular work to life. China's minorities' different decorations are only one styling aspect of what sets them apart from one another; their **artisanal ways of production** — from weaving to dyeing — showcase a respect for Mother Earth and bind them together into one powerful modern-day fashion inspiration.
- 2) Other brands and creators may sail the ocean of clothing design seeking to navigate **innovative, up-cycled and re-cycled sustainable materials**. Enter: Fabrics with ethics. Pineapple, no longer a mere fruit, but a slice of ambrosia to footwear fetishists with a taste for the ethical. Cork, the stuff quirk is made of. Hemp, a material no longer merely bestowed upon the hippie wardrobe, but now an integral part of the herbivore fashion galore. Last, but by no means least, we have mono material girls dancing to the tunes of tecno felt. Say what now?
- 3) **From the consumer POV, "vintage" and "second-hand"** are topics worth exploring. Perhaps surprisingly so, the second-hand industry in China over the past five years has experienced an upward movement. From China's first-tier cities, a consumer society most reluctant to enter the "used clothes" game with "used clothes" the nation's fashion equivalent of New York City's secondhand smoke, i.e. provoking gasps of "goodness gracious" disbelief everywhere. To China's first tier cities, a fashion society in which vintage is becoming somewhat smoking hot... The second-hand times of yore are changing, one vintage piece, store and platform at a time. Online and physical stores selling second-hand goods are now slowly beginning to grow both in quantity and popularity, boasting some awesome potential as the Chinese luxury clientele matures and more consumers opt to "trade up."
- 4) **Technology**, the fourth driver in the pursuit of a more sustainable wardrobe. Marketplaces, technological advances and business innovation, platforms to promote your brand, experts' advice, and even funding to scale your business. Today, we are witnesses of a sustainable tech revolution, making its way into the fashion industry as a must-be. And with that, we see an amazing wave of tech solutions supporting sustainable fashion. Take **artificial intelligence (AI)**, for example. Some textiles and material are simply just harder on the environment than others. AI helps by "looking" at a design, identifying the required materials to make that item and then finding similar textiles that manufacturers can use that are less onerous on the environment. Further to that, the use of 3D modeling has helped manufacturers streamline their greening



processes significantly. This AI-enhanced technology can be used to find alternatives to synthetic material, while still allowing the original vision of the item to be created. You're able to model how it will crease, how the fabric will fall and you can even work out how much 'give' the fabric has to determine sizing better. And let's get real here... Where else in the world is AI, for example, developing faster than in the Middle Kingdom -- Greater Bay Area, anyone?

Content providers—in addition to Team Temper-- are manifold:

Fashion and textile associations, think Mary Ma of the Textile Library or Redress (an environmental charity working to cut waste out of the fashion industry), designers, brands, tech companies like 360 Fashion, opinion makers and shakers such as Anina Net or Christina Dean or the key Chinese influencers and investors on a mission to promote sustainable fashion in China, such as Yu Holdings founders Wendy Yu and Veronica Chou, the founder & CEO of Everybody & Everyone. Or Chinese streetwear trendsetters living zero-waste, minimalist lifestyles. And so the list rolls on.

Summing up:

It's High Temper Time to look at China's pursuit of sustainability and a greener lifestyle through the lens of... Fashion and Urban Culture.



THE TEMPER VISIBILITY

The e-zine itself. What's in store, you ask? Here's the prototype!

Disclaimer: "The R-Rated Revolutionary Issue" comprises some 80+ pages; double that of what I'd envision for the quarterly e-zine. Just FYI. Also included is the prototype teaser for potential advertisers. Just to lend it a more "business-minded" edge.

"The R-Rated Revolutionary Issue." The ultimate palpable seduction of controversial China art, urban underground players, socially R-rated and sustainably revolutionary fashion trends, the newest tidbits from the nation's New Youth, bridge-burning brands to watch, and many mooore — *#qmusic*.

Eager to cut the chords with their native country's OG rules and regulations, yet not disposing of their upbringing and heritage, those featured in this issue all have taken their creativity for a censor-sensitive spin. Outlawed by some, lapped up by Temper. **R u Ready?**

REGARDING MORE ONLINE VISIBILITY/ PRESENCE

The Website: www.chinatemper.com ;

Supporting Media Channels (e.g., via China International Communications Group) ;

Social Media: affiliated official Instagram, WeChat and Weibo accounts. Additionally, we create short videos/ interviews to post on Douyin/ TikTok and IG lives. Ideally, Temper would have one person overseeing the Western side of social media and one person overlooking Chinese platforms;

Shorter and longer videos exploring a greener China through fashion and urban culture created and headed by Elsbeth van Paridon and Team Temper, with the occasional "guest star."

Partnerships with key influencers and trendsetters across China should be further examined to bring more influencers on board to be part of the endeavor.

Two "physically visible" additions to the Temper concept

(potential future extensions)

- 1) **The Temper Tasties:** a monthly flyer-like booklet starring five (green) brands/ designers/ two trends and fun facts regarding China's latest fashion data.
- 2) **The Temper Pop-Up:** a first such physical undertaking took place already in December 2018, in Antwerp City. (flyer attached). At its very core, the small/ simple/ sleek pop-up could run for one week every three months – accompanying/ boosting the quarterly e-zine. It would gather a handful of Chinese designers and artists affiliated with the e-zine at hand's main theme.

And that's not a wrap; it's a start.

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ABOUT ELSBETH VAN PARIDON

Sinologist Elsbeth van Paridon (University of Leiden, The Netherlands) is a run-of-the-mill China fashion slash underground culture aficionada.

Moving from Beijing (2010-2016), where she worked for the state media as well as in the field of fashion, to crawling and clawing her way through the throes and woes of the dragon that is the study of Journalism (2016-2018), and a short stint in New York (2018-2019) where she promoted several Chinese fashion brands and designers, Van Paridon as of 2020 once again saunters through the *hutongs* of Beijing. Back to the source, she came.

Van Paridon reports on trends in the field of China Fashion and Urban Culture via her own passion project called [The China Temper](#), and holds a particular interest in the topics of androgyny, the exploration of a new urban individuality, and the power that is the New Youth in contemporary China.

In a bid to learn a thing or two from the hard hitters in the game and hone her own China Fashion and Urban Culture niche skills, Van Paridon has written for the likes of What's On Weibo, SIX Magazine, Global Times, The Beijinger and UK YAHOO! Style and the South China Morning Post. Additionally, she is a regular contributor to a variety of China-oriented platforms, including RADII China, SupChina, MediaMonks Shanghai and WeAR Magazine. Her quest for more China Fashion and Urban Culture intel never ends.

As of 2021, Van Paridon is active full-time at *Beijing Review* (BR), the only English newsweekly courtesy of China International Communications Group, as an editorial consultant — editing, writing, the works. Most recently, she has also started filming with BR, covering topics in the realm of Chinese urban culture.

We've only just begun.