

natural selection



Sniffle Co. Woody RRP \$42



Sniffle Co. HB.F.F RRP \$32



www.naomimurrell.com



It's hard to come across a label that offers stylish design combined with an ethical approach and a commitment to natural production. But some Australian designers have responded to this need and offer consumers the opportunity to purchase goods sourced directly from Mother Nature.

Justin Snyder is the owner and managing director of Happy Cow, an Australian leather goods company that makes bags, belts and purses. The label came to life when Justin realised his love of leather as a material. "It's easy to work with yet remains so strong. Leather is one of few materials that gets better with age," he said. But as a committed vegetarian, Justin didn't feel comfortable working with leather unless it was done in an ethical manner. After getting in touch with a friend who worked in furniture manufacturing, Justin made use of all the left over leather cuttings to produce handmade bags and belts. He now secures contracts worldwide to purchase leather off cuts from furniture manufacturers. "Essentially our products are made from new leather that has a high quality. We're simply re-using what would become a waste product," he explained. Happy Cow's products are individually created, meaning that they don't succumb

to the harmful effects of mass-production. "As consumers, we dictate what is produced. We create the demand," he said. Consequently, each item is handmade with high quality recycled leather at an affordable price. "There seems to be this expectation that the consumer will pay extra for environmentally friendly products but this is not the case for us. Where else can you buy a leather bag or belt that is affordable? Most of our products cost under \$100."

For those seeking comfort in their garments, designer Joy French produces basic tees, pants, hoodies and singlets from the finest quality organic cotton. Combining a passion for art and design, the label offers a wide range of prints across the collection. "It means I can create stylish garments while making a conscious effort to contribute to the environment in a positive way," Joy said. Not only is the collection made from 100% certified organic cotton, it's also fully manufactured here in Australia. The label follows fair trade practices and strongly believes in playing an ethical role in the overall process of creating their garments – from the production of the cotton to paying fair wages to workers. "It's also about keeping jobs in Australia," Joy said. It seems the benefits of purchasing and wearing organic cotton are endless. It is more finely spun compared to generic cotton types, creating a higher quality, more durable fabric that will last for years. Eliminating the use of toxic, persistent pesticides and chemical fertilizers, organic cotton assists in creating a fabric that is extremely comfortable. "It's soft on the skin, drapes nicely and hugs the body. And no harsh chemicals mean that you sweat less in organic cotton because there is nothing to aggravate the skin," Joy explained.

If you're in search of some quirky jewellery that screams character Sniffle Co. carries a range of brooches, rings, necklaces and buttons all made from wood. Each piece is hand painted onto light weight wood and the designs connect with your retro-self. Opt for the matching tea cup and tea pot rings, the yellow knuckle duckling necklace or the teeny-tone electric guitar brooch.

Designer Naomi Murrell also offers beautifully crafted and delicate accessories made from rock maple and teak woods. Inspired by folk art and textile prints, the range appeals to those in search of something pretty and feminine.

Lane Palmer is a designer for Lane Palmer Green, a sophisticated apparel brand that makes accessories,

garments and bags with a touch of European style. Adopting a practical approach to the designs, the label lends itself to classic pieces that can be easily incorporated into the wardrobe. "We're about creating beautiful products that last years and years," Lane said. The label emerged with a strong environmental focus while aiming to fill a niche in the market. "In Australia, there's not a great deal of variety when it comes to sustainable fashion," she said. The brand uses a range of fabrics including hemp, organic cotton and non-bovine leathers in the production of their goods. Their leathers are sourced from kangaroo and parrotfish; animals that have minimal environmental impact in comparison to methane-producing cows. They also take a creative approach to colouring their garments and hand dye silk kaftans, tops and scarves using natural leaves, bark and flowers leaving the materials as pure as they can be. However, Lane admits that it's not always an easy choice to do things this way. "Logistically it can be tricky to coordinate these natural processes in Australia because some materials are quite hard to source," she said. But she sticks with it because of her strong commitment to conserving the environment. The use of organic cotton means that they can offer a fabric that is gentle on the skin and good for people who suffer allergies. "Cotton is one of the most sprayed plants with pesticides. Organic cotton doesn't have that and so allows the skin to breathe better," she said. Designing for quality and longevity, Lane Palmer Green keep waste down and aim for their items to last longer. "It's about buying less but buying better and enjoying the items more."

Find them online:
www.happycow.com.au
www.joyfrenchgallery.com
www.sniffleco.com
www.naomimurrell.com
www.lanepalmergreen.com

■ Sharon Green



Sniffle Co. Tea rings RRP \$28



Sniffle Co. cone RRP \$36