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Good Company: Carol Chugani's Sustainable and Multi-Functional Cashmere

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By

[14]Fang Block

Updated Oct. 3, 2019 5:34 pm ET

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[15]Designer Carol Chugani

Designer Carol Chugani

Courtesy of Carol Chugani

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Taiwanese designer[16] Carol Chugani started her eponymous cashmere brand in 2016, when she became a so-called "empty nester." Her son is now a junior at New York University, while her daughter works and lives in Seattle, Wash.

"My children inspired me. Their generation genuinely care about the earth and sustainability," says Chugani, 50, explaining why she decided to focus on slow fashion.

Slow fashion, coined by Kate Fletcher of the Centre for Sustainable Fashion, considers the processes and resources required to make clothing, with a focus on sustainability.

Although she's not a designer by trade, Chugani developed her personal taste by closely following fashion trends, and collaborating for years with her family tailor in Hong Kong to make unique pieces.

[17]Carol Chugani launched the new fall/winter collection in New York in September.

Carol Chugani launched the new fall/winter collection in New York in September.

Zhaoyin Wang

Born in Taiwan, Chugani went to college in Canada, got married, and moved to Hong Kong with her Indian-born husband, where she lives most

of the time these days. She frequently travels to Shanghai, Paris, New York, New Delhi, and elsewhere.

These globetrotting experiences helped her develop a fondness for cashmere. “Cashmere outfits are easy to pack, and can be worn for all occasions,” she says.

Chugani works with source partners in Mongolia who maintain high quality as well as the ethical production methods. Her designs focus on classic looks and multi-functionality for year-round wear.

Within the last three years, [18]Carol Chugani has grown a solid customer base, including many celebrities in Taiwan and Hong Kong. The brand launched its new fall/winter collection during New York Fashion Week last month, marking its first step toward expansion into the U.S. market.

THE ITEM

[19]Carol Chugani offers womenswear, including dresses, cardigans, coats, skirts, trousers, jumpers, and accessories. Most pieces are multi-functional with detachable elements.

The designs combine 100% pure cashmere yarn with authentic creativity. “The cashmere pieces flow with your body shape softly and seamlessly,” Chugani says. “And they will stand the test of time: the more you wear it, the softer it gets.”

PRICE

Prices for Carol Chugani cashmere range from US\$300 for a cardigan to US\$600 for a long dress. “International luxury cashmere brands such as Loro Piana and Brunello Cucinelli can cost thousands of dollars,” Chugani says. “I want my products to be high quality, versatile, and affordable at the same time.”

Accessories, including hats, headbands, scarfs, and handbags are priced between US\$80 and US\$200.

[20]Strap by Carol Chugani embroidered in India

Strap by Carol Chugani embroidered in India

Courtesy of Carol Chugani

WHAT’S THE GOOD?

To give back to the communities she and her husband grew up in, Chugani set up the company’s headquarters in Taiwan, and created a workshop in India, where she employs 11 women with skills in beading, sequins, and embroidery to make embellishments for her designs.

“They have the flexibility to work from home at times when they don’t have to take care of their families,” Chugani says. “The employment also makes them feel empowered.”

All materials used are environmentally friendly and ethically produced by Mongolian partners, whom she visits annually to review their work environment and sustainability practices.

WHAT’S NEXT

As a slow fashion brand, Chugani says she will continue to focus on timeless designs with small-scale productions. She’s working on phasing out animal furs used in some of her products.

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Taiwanese designer Carol Chugani started her eponymous cashmere brand in 2016, when she became a so-called "empty nester."

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