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# Costa Rica Summit Seeks Solutions in 'Unsustainable' Fashion Industry

Omina, which is organizing the summit, believes that simple moves, and sharing ideas, will help people live and work more sustainably.

By [Samantha Conti](#) on June 6, 2018



Andrea Somma and Carmen Busquets, co-founders of Omina, which is hosting a fashion and sustainability summit in Costa Rica in June 2018. Courtesy

**LONDON** — Fashion's got sustainability issues — a toxic truckload of them — and not all of them can, or will, be solved. That doesn't matter to organizers of the second Omina fashion and sustainability summit, which will take place in San José, Costa Rica from June 7-9 and focus on finding solutions to problems large and small, local and international.

Omina cofounders Andrea Somma and [Carmen Busquets](#) aren't looking to change the industry on a grand scale all at once. Instead, their aim instead is to empower people and businesses to live and work in a more sustainable way.



Narciso Rodríguez, Lais Ribeiro and Bottletop cofounder Cameron Saul.

The summit, which is taking place in one of South America's cleanest and most environmentally friendly countries, is less about lectures and more about mentoring, swapping advice and helping entrepreneurs, businesses, communities and brands learn from each other's mistakes. Speakers including the author Paul Hawken, investor Sharon Chang, [Donna Karan](#), [Gisele Bündchen](#) and Bottletop founder Cameron Saul.

“We are not going to talk about fashion and sustainability. Fashion is not sustainable. Forget about it. It’s not sustainable in the way it’s run or in the way it’s resold. After three months, clothing is already devalued,” said Busquets, a career investor and entrepreneur from Venezuela who, of late, has been putting her money behind companies with an eco-edge.

“We won’t be talking about the problems, but instead how so many people are finding positive solutions. What we can also do is teach designers to be sustainable on their own by using better materials, and by helping them understand that they need to be responsible for their cash flow. We’ll be talking about how to see the fashion and design cycle in 360 degrees,” she said during an interview at her London home.

Busquets co-founded Omina, a non-profit organization that wants to become a hub for sustainability-minded creatives, entrepreneurs, and individuals, with Andrea Somma, a Costa Rica-based social entrepreneur. They’ve partnered with Eco-Age, the sustainability consultancy founded by Livia Firth, for the summit.

“There is a community of sustainable people, and we want to connect them and create action. We want to ultimately preserve our land, preserve our forests, we want Latin Americans to want it, too,” Busquets said. It’s about awareness and creating a parallel world where we can find solutions.”

Over the three days, Hawken, author of “Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming,” will be in conversation with Bündchen, while Chang will be talking about reframing business models for a “well-being economy.”

Saul, of Bottletop, the sustainably sourced handbag and accessories company, will be in conversation with Amy Christiansen. She founded Sana Jardin, the perfume company that transforms organic waste product from production into orange blossom water and scented candle wax, creating year-round jobs and businesses for female flower harvesters.



Sana Jardin Courtesy

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Over the three days, there will also be mentoring sessions, talks aimed at educating consumers about shopping more responsibly and panels about the future of textiles and designing for sustainability. Speakers from the French sneaker brand Veja, which works with wild Brazilian rubber; the artisanal Peruvian knitwear label Ayni; Obra Gris, the zero-waste Costa Rican fashion brand; and Piñatex, which makes textiles from pineapple leaf fibers, will all be taking part.

“We want to empower local designers across Latin America and Europe,” said Busquets. “For example, we are bringing a Venezuelan designer and great couturier, Patricia Padrón, and putting her together with people in Costa Rica to show them how to make sustainable, quality items. Ben Demiri (a co-founder of the customizable sneaker company Swear) is going to come and talk about bespoke, and why it creates less stock.”

Busquets said the summit will also spotlight craftsmanship, longevity, and the story behind the product. “We’re going too fast, we don’t have time to value what we’re buying — and things that are made by hand should all have full prices,” she said.

Busquets added that she is aware of the myriad contradictions in the fashion business — she was an original backer of Net-a-porter and has investments in Farfetch, Moda Operandi and Tagwalk, among other fashion platforms — but that’s not going to stop her.

“The only way we have to sustain the economy is by continuing to spend money because without spending we would lose our jobs. The question is how do we make these changes without people losing their jobs. It’s about creating a good balance, because right now our planet is out of balance.”



carmen busquets Donna Karan Gisele

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