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Nicola Woods and Beautiful Soul

By Katie Antoniou

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Nicola Woods left a life of insurance broking to follow her dream of becoming a fashion designer. But for Nicola's label [Beautiful Soul](#), fashion is about much more than style; leading designers into an eco-friendly, sustainable future is her priority. I recently had a chance to catch up with Nicola, and talk about vintage, eco-luxury fashion, and what's coming up next for Beautiful Soul...

Before creating Beautiful Soul you were working in a very different field; what inspired the change?

I remember writing to 'Jim'll fix it' to make me a fashion designer, but life has its twists and turns and I found myself caught up in the rat race. The lifestyle it provided seemed to outweigh my lack of passion for my work (Insurance Broking). Something was missing, but I didn't know how I would cope without the next pay rise. I was stuck in a rut and the security of payday seemed to mist the way. How could I possibly cope without my luxuries?

I had the opportunity to backpack around the world with my best friend and breaking away from the rat race for the first time in my adult life, gave me an insight in to living on a budget. I was starting to see life in a different light, with endless opportunities.

Whilst in Tokyo, something happened to me. I was surrounded by the most amazing boutiques. I was like a child in a sweet shop. Mesmerized. Excited. Totally Inspired. Something inside me quite literally came to life. (Hence my love of vintage kimonos).

I realised that I needed to make radical changes: I accepted that everything else would have to be put on hold. I needed the opportunity and guidance to follow my dreams of becoming a fashion designer. I had buried these dreams for too long, but I was determined to make this happen and I haven't looked back since. I graduated from the London College of Fashion in 2008, with a BA (Hons) in Fashion: Design and Technology (Creative Pattern Cutter). During my final year, I was involved in a project based around 'saving the earth'. I was hooked. Fashion with a TRUE meaning; for me, is the only way forward.



Beautiful Soul combines elements of Vintage and eco-luxury fashion, both scenes which are experiencing a huge surge in popularity at the moment, why do you think this is?

My love of secondhand vintage pieces came about when I returned to University. I was no longer bringing in a generous pay cheque every month, so I had to be inventive with my wardrobe. I started to investigate the world of vintage and secondhand clothes. What a wonderful opportunity to be creative! Teaming vintage finds with pieces that I had bought in my teens. Bricolage is wonderful!



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As my degree progressed, my pattern cutting and sewing skills allowed me to experiment and I made several pieces for myself, adding to my love of up-cycling. As a designer, I absolutely LOVE fabrics and delving below the surface and discovering new ways to incorporate sustainable and recycled materials, over modern, adds a real spirit of conversation. The thought of 'wearing a piece of history' is extremely exciting and the tides of time leave an imprint of the passing years on each and every piece designed by 'Beautiful Soul'. Indulgence does not have to be at the expense of our environment.

What can a customer expect from the Beautiful Soul experience

Individuality is a key factor in Beautiful Soul's design process. Women these days aren't taken in by throwaway fashion, and seek to buy and wear clothes that are unique and timeless. The use of vintage Japanese kimonos in Beautiful Soul's clothes offers exclusivity to the wearer. You can even come to Beautiful Soul's Studio and select your own vintage kimono personally; contributing to the journey of your piece. A strong emphasis is placed on product longevity. Garment adjustability is key to Beautiful Soul's design ethos, which offers a versatility that is determined by change in body contours.

I believe that this is important to a women, as her favourite piece can be cherished for a lifetime. Beautiful Soul's pieces are directional and elegant, but it is their multi-functionality that renders the garment timeless. The garments adjust and can be worn in a multitude of ways to suit different moods and seasons. After all a women loves to change her mind!



Who would you most like to dress?

Beautiful Soul pieces are unique and are designed with a compassionate outlook.

A 'Beautiful Soul Women' is confident, but not overstated. Age is insignificant; beauty radiates from within. Beautiful Soul would love to dress Gwyneth Paltrow, Erin O'connor, Angelina Jolie, Sophie Ellis-Bextor, Alison Goldfrapp, Florence Welch, and Gabby Young. Well, we've dressed her already, actually!

And what's in store for Beautiful Soul in the near future?

I have just relocated to London and my new studio is pretty amazing; shelves full of fabrics from floor to ceiling! We are now able to offer Beautiful Soul Bespoke: whereby clients are invited (by appointment only) to visit our new studio and select their own Japanese kimono personally from our vast collection; contributing to the journey of their Beautiful Soul garment. Beautiful Soul Bespoke offers a transeasonal collection.

We are also developing Beautiful Soul's ready to wear line for SS11 and a capsule range for the gentlemen! Next season is going to be exciting!

Beautiful Soul spring summer 2010 collection Miss Butterfly is currently stocked at the V&A

Nicola writes for the [Daisy Green](#) blog, and you can email nicola AT beautiful DASH soul DOT co DOT uk for an appointment at her studio.

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