Empowered Fashion by Selyn

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A dazzling selection of shawls and clutches

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Building on 25 years of fair trade and social enterprise, ‘Sthri by Selyn’ was unveiled. It is more than fashion, a collection that is in fact a social movement.

Words Keshini de Silva and Nadeera Jayasinghe



Sandra Wanduragala, Founder, Selyn with her daughter Selyna Peiris, Director – Business Development

Vibrant shades, stylish clothing and radiant accessories, the flagship store of Selyn is engulfed in the powerful aura of the brand’s vivacious new collection, which has a daring ideology.

‘Sthri by Selyn’, the new collection, has given handloom fabric a modern twist. Influenced by global trends and women’s choices, the designs aim to outfit the woman tackling a demanding schedule with elegance and comfort, through both day and night. It is a bold fashion collective that sees Selyn collaborating with ethical fashion designers and social brands.

“We wanted to focus on the busy woman,” said Selyna Peiris, Director – Business Development, Selyn. “Many of us are housewives and career women, handling multiple roles and accomplishing a variety of tasks on a daily basis. Fashion needs

to complement us; we should not have to fit into fashion. That's my personal opinion."

On its path to empowering the women of Sri Lanka and in fostering fair trade, Selyn collaborates with Tuschimo by Arosha Rosenberger, an ethical fashion designer of Sri Lankan origin based in Germany. 'Emerge' and 'Salvage' are two jewellery lines that were launched. 'Salvage' is a collection made by HIV-affected communities and marginalised women. 'Emerge' accessories are created by minors who have been subjected to sexual abuse and are currently housed in protection centres without the ability to attend regular educational institutions.

The range by the fashion collective Sthri by Selyn includes comfortable yet chic everyday wear and sarees. There is also a selection of complementing fashion accessories, which include bags, sandals and jewellery. Completely handmade, the entire collection of Sthri is produced using fabric hand-woven by women at Selyn's production centres in areas within Kurunegala and in the Western and Eastern provinces.

Sthri by Selyn, a bold collection for the modern woman

"By purchasing something from the Selyn outlet, which is entirely fair trade, and particularly from the Sthri collection, you empower yourself as well as empower another woman in Sri Lanka," explained Selyna Peiris. "Fashion sustains the social movement, eliminating the need to seek externally for funding, which is not sustainable."

At the forefront of the handloom industry as an ethical fashion and lifestyle brand, Selyn, founded in 1991 by Sandra Wanduragala, is one of the largest social enterprises in the country. With the fundamental premise that a job and finances alone do not ensure empowerment, Selyn works to offset the challenges faced by its producers. Employees are thus offered flexible working hours, childcare facilities, work-from-home options, on-time payments as well as bicycles to use as transportation. The women are ensured regular work that can be accomplished while handling domestic responsibilities.

Selyn's commitment to becoming a zero-waste company has resulted in their upcycling initiative, which means all production 'off-cuts' or 'left-overs' are used by being reinvented into new products. Thereby, material left over from the toy making

process are used to make jewellery. The fabric used for the crafting of shoes and bags are in fact material that would normally have been discarded. At Selyn one does not simply make a fashionable purchase. Customers become a part of a social movement of empowered fashion, ‘by women, for women’.

Opening hours: 10am – 7pm (Mon to Sat) and 10am – 6pm (Sun)
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