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KORRA

Founder & CEO: Shyam Sukhramani; Co-Founders: Mia Morikawa, Himanshu Shani & Rajesh Jaju
New Delhi

Text: Border&Fall

Photography: KORRA

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After a long and successful career at Levi Strauss & Co. and two e-commerce platforms, the time felt right for Shyam Sukhramani to approach denim in his own way. Focused on less being more and the what, why and how of consumption, **KORRA**

(<https://korra.in/>), emerged as the collective vision of four co-founders. With its considered approach to digital and sustainability, KORRA benefits from staying true to its founding principles:

Who:

Founder & CEO – Shyam Sukhramani

Co-Founder, Director of Creative Services & Communication – Mia Morikawa

Co-Founder, Design Director – Himanshu Shani

Co-Founder, Commercial Director – Rajesh Jaju

The beginning:

After 17 years at Levi's, Shyam moved on from his role as Global Director of Merchandising to join e-commerce retailer Sher Singh in New Delhi; and left when it became a part of the Myntra portfolio eight months later. Stirred by the realization that time runs out, he decided to, “spend efforts actively chasing dreams by working with good people to build a brand that could be loved the world over.”

Individual journeys converged: Mia and Himanshu were strengthening their label 11.11 / eleven eleven (<http://www.borderandfall.com/people-spaces/himanshu-shani/>) by delving into the origins of craft and giving it a global identity, and Rajesh was looking to start afresh after having distributed for major brands like Levi's, Elle, Ed Hardy and US Polo. Below is KORRA's story in Shyam's words:



Building a brand on a clean slate meant we had an opportunity to build it right the first time. The what, why and how in itself became the prevalent theme, that of making considered and conscious choices.

There is a proliferation of everything, everywhere and rarely does one pause to answer meaningfully, why should I buy? We want for KORRA to be clearly able to articulate the answer – to make people aware of the question in the first place. This simple truth guided us in translating our beliefs into an idea that we feel is the future of consumption – less is more.

KORRA is a response to the need for choices that are centered on conscious consumption, where products are of regular use and for a long time. The name

‘KORRA’ was albeit an overnight epiphany – clean, fresh, pure, unused – rooted in our daily lives as we refer to *kora kagaz* and *kora kapda*.



Building a platform:

The big decision lay in the choice of platform. Everyone recommended Magento given the ease of finding talent locally to develop our storefront. We chose Shopify, however, because it appeared clean, intuitive and really simple to work on. The beauty about Shopify is that there are plenty of themes customizable for an individual aesthetic.

Our resident artist and creative director Mia worked with Parveen Verma, an accomplished UI/UX designer and an artist himself, to design the user experience. We agreed on certain principles: to show product in a way that is true to itself and to keep the navigation really really simple. Himanshu then roped in Manish Lakhuba, an accomplished product photographer from Ahmedabad. We shot first, and with the images in front of us the site was designed.

We have quite a wide audience – from 55+ countries, 15-60 years, an almost equal number of men and women with backgrounds as diverse as technology, art, design, photography, business, travel, architecture and finance. The common thread is a love for the simplicity of navigation on our site and a resonance with the product. We feel that keeping it really simple works well for all.

‘Consider everything’, ‘stay local’, ‘work within the constraints’ and ‘less is more’ are guiding principles as we build our business. Choosing raw materials for their sustainability so as to reduce the burden on nature. Focusing on made-to-order as it reduces the need to keep inventory in the hope of a potential sale.



Designing packaging that maximizes fabric consumption by utilizing leftover waste. Developing three fits, keeping the offering to the most essential. Opting not to advertise and relying instead on our own social connectivity to share the story with family and friends.

The ‘sustainability’ buzz:

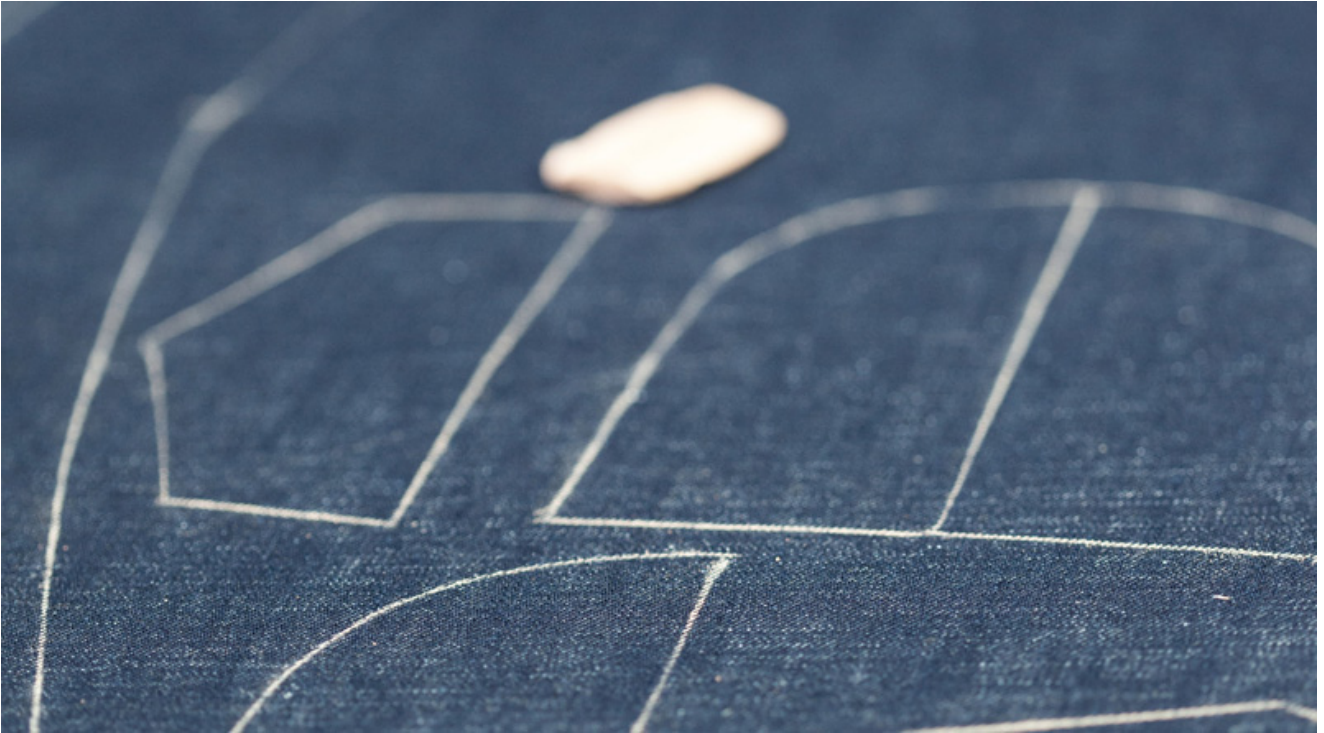
It is inherently built into our brand and not a hook to sell our product. The challenge for us is more on the lack of sustainable fabrics. We are open to learning. We want to make sure our business is healthy for all involved.

Design ideology:

We have a new line called the ‘Remade Line’ which is currently only available in-store. We collect the leftover materials and convert them into useful products. This is limited

in production and therefore not available online. We started two years ago and it has now become a full fledged category.

We also recently collaborated with Royal Enfield to make biker jackets and jeans which launched at Ridermania in Goa. We used a fabric called Cordura, made of fiber that has high resistance to abrasion and is four times stronger than cotton. In this collaboration we are working as a custom fitting platform because with biker jackets and jeans, the armour has to be in the right places which can be an issue in standardized sizing. We're going to make them custom fitted on order, and it's going to be single tailor sewn.



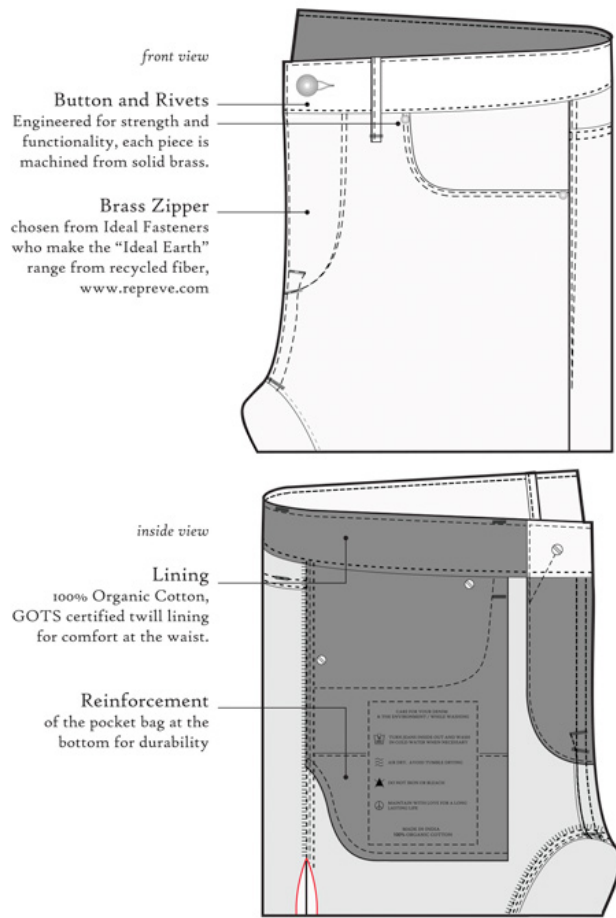
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#singletailorsewn:

This idea stems from our desire to build consciousness in the purchase decision and post purchase wear. It's akin to the difference in how a person experiences food in a fast food restaurant and when spoken to by the chef during a sit down meal. The former is about convenience and immediate gratification whereas the latter is a memory that sticks: you relish the experience long after the event. We believe that this significant departure from mass manufacturing is necessary to bring the user closer to the maker, and keeps the maker close to his craft. Each product is marked with the tailor's signature and numbered ensuring traceability. The integrity within products made in such a way translates into a feeling that is understood immediately and beyond words.

The signature pocket selvedge is an example of a purposeful detail intrinsic to our design philosophy – that of less waste. Since we use selvedge fabrics, we like to utilize as much from the “lay” (when a fabric is spread on a cutting table and marked waiting to be cut) as possible.



The leftover selvedge when two front panels are marked is utilized in the back pocket reinforcement for men and the coin pocket for women, ensuring that 100% of the selvedge goes into the garment.



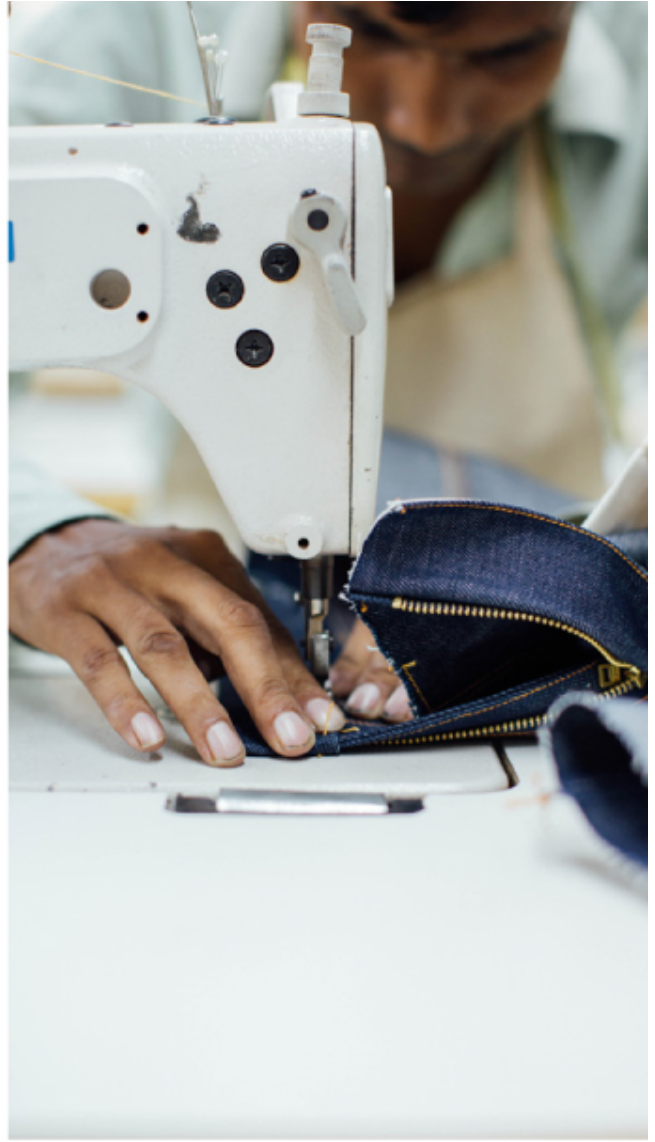
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Recognizing karigars:

People here work with a lot of pride. Working at KORRA, the karigar is directly involved with the customer. It's a positive feeling. The flip side is the limits on production. Tailors take responsibility beyond their part. Some tailors take care of operations, cutting, some have become skilled in pattern making and others participate in the retail space. There is constant growth. It is not only a skill development opportunity but also an opportunity for them to learn to work independently. We want them to become their own entrepreneur and set up shop on their own.

Plans for growth:

We just raised funding from an angel investor and are looking for more to expand operations. Finding the right match for the long term is difficult because it requires a backing of our strong guiding principles.



(<http://www.borderandfall.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/1-1.jpg>)