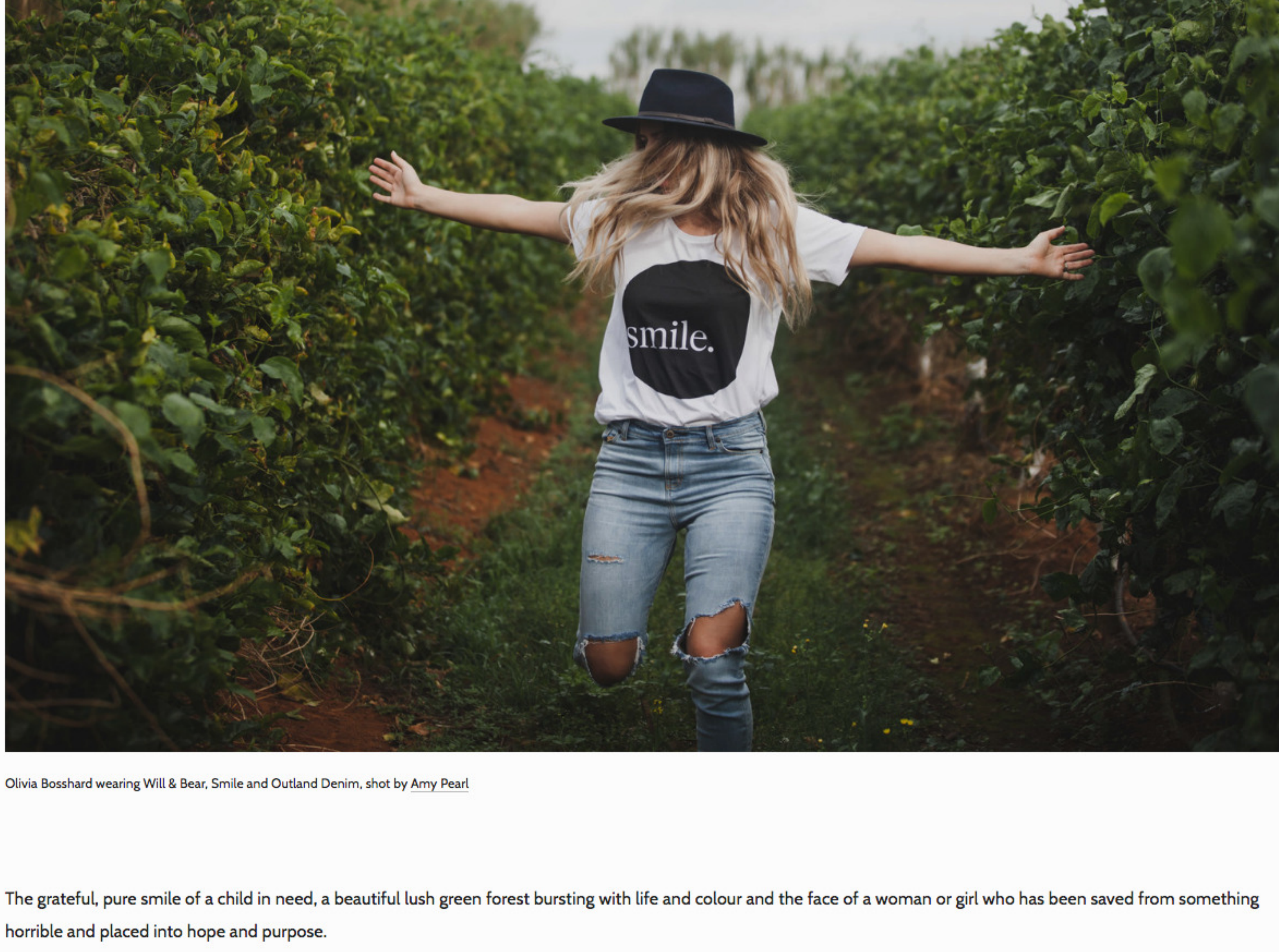


November 27, 2017 · Olivia Bosshard

Giving back in style.



The grateful, pure smile of a child in need, a beautiful lush green forest bursting with life and colour and the face of a woman or girl who has been saved from something horrible and placed into hope and purpose.

On the other side of all these heart-warming realities, are hard working, creative and passionate business men and women, dedicated to giving back to the earth or those in need. A smile, a planted tree and hope, are gifts of a truly beautiful form. Gifts are a language of love that extends from the heart and touches both parties.

What if I told you, that by purchasing a super stylish outfit, not only do you look amazing, but you can give back to the earth, help stop sex slave trafficking and provide clothes for less fortunate children. Have I got your attention yet?

We have teamed up with three incredible and creative brands that have brought their dreams to life, pursued their passions and linked them together with giving back in some way, shape or form. Meet the brands behind the story and look: Will & Bear, Smile and Outland Denim. We had the absolute pleasure to pick the minds of and delve a little deeper into the many facets of what makes up their inspiring businesses.

First up we chatted to Alex & Loz behind Will & Bear:

What made you want to give back through a business?

Giving back was always going to be an integral part of operating a responsible and sustainable business for us. Will & Bear are Loz & Alex, a couple from Australia living/working in our van. Nature and our environment plays a massive part in the inspiration and connection to our lives and brand, this is why it was so important to give back to this cause.

Why hats?

It all started when we set out on a summer road trip around Tasmania, Aus. With the kombi van packed - there was only one thing to complete - find a good quality hat to shield the Australian sun. After looking in the obvious places we were left a little disheartened - sure there were hats out there but none that was reasonably priced, good quality and no brands that filled us with a sense of adventure or a thoughtfulness/give back ethos that was so important to us.

Why give back in the way of planting trees?

Forests are our air filters and water factories. They are our respite, our place of peace. They help keep the climate stable, support our waterways and offer their local communities prosperity. Today continued deforestation threatens habitat, air quality and livelihoods around the world. That's why we have partnered with trees.org to plant ten trees for every hat sold. These ongoing partnerships with an organisation that can affect positive outcomes on a global scale make us immensely proud.

What do you see for the future of Will & Bear, and ethical fashion?

We are looking to expand our range with more eco friendly products and will be teaming up with other like-minded brands to help promote these types of businesses in the hope to inspire more.

What a practical, creative and inspiring way to give back to the world around us! Will & Bear, have recently launched some fresh hat styles and have one of the most visually appealing websites out there. Don't have the time of resources to plant 10 trees? Think outside the box and perhaps under a new hat. [Will & Bear - Adventure](#) often.



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Next on the list, we chatted to the happiest brand name out; Smile:

What made you want to give back through a business?

We thought it to be a more sustainable way of consistently doing our Clothing Programs by giving our customers something tangible that directly assists with helping others.

Why clothes and the name Smile?

It was a little bit reverse engineered. We actually wanted to organise Uniform and Clothing Programs to kids in Indonesia, because during earlier years of travelling we had seen a lot of kids not have access to schools in remote areas due to lack of uniforms or clean clothes. The idea for the clothing company came after we knew we wanted to assist in whatever small way we could with our Clothing Programs. The name Smile was the first one that came to mind, primarily because we were so often welcomed through our travels with smiling people along the way. Also we thought it was a good one word message that is such an easy thing to do and pass around.

Can you tell us a bit about your slogan "give first wear second"?

Give First, Wear Second is just our byline to try and further tell our story to customers that what they are doing, however small, is helping people in need. I guess its just to let people know that as soon as they purchase a Smile item they have already effectively given a School Uniform or T-shirt to a child in need.

What do you see for the future of Smile clothing co. and ethical fashion?

I think things are generally moving in a better direction with regards to a lot of companies giving back or doing things responsibly in myriad ways, but at the same time we have many things just within our company that we feel we could do a lot better with and are still a long way off where we want to be. Also organisations like 1% For The Planet (which we are a member of) are great things that allow companies and individuals to give back to the environment through their platforms. As for the future of Smile, I hope we can continue giving Uniforms and garments to kids in need in more numbers, and more places, in a manner in which we can be proud, and keep refining how we do things along the way.

Smile recently opened up a brand new shop in Bali with all their goodies. Check out more of their story and what's happening over at Smile.



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And last but not least, Outland Denim:

Outland Denim, began its jean-making journey when founder James Bartle had an astonishing encounter with an anti-trafficking group. After which, he travelled to Asia where he saw and witnessed first hand how human traffickers prey on vulnerable young girls in order to service the sex industry.

After his eyes were opened to these startling truths, he went on to learn that once a girl has been rescued and rehabilitated, a sustainable career path is vital for securing her future. This is where James created the "Denim Project", which would enable those girls who demonstrated an interest in sewing to put their new skills to use.

What inspired you to want to give back? And why jeans?

The Liam Neeson film Taken was the catalyst for our thinking about human trafficking, but that was solidified after talking with an anti-trafficking NGO and then visiting Thailand and Cambodia to learn more and see the reality.

Jeans because they are a garment that most people have in their wardrobe - they are egalitarian and universal in nature. You might have your jeans for a decade or more, and they look even better with a bit of wear and tear if they're a quality pair. So despite jeans being really hard to make, we chose them for those reasons. Also the young women we were wanting to help had been learning sewing as a vocational skill, so joining Outland was a natural employment progression for them that would facilitate not only their earnings but also support them in other ways, such as life-skills learning.

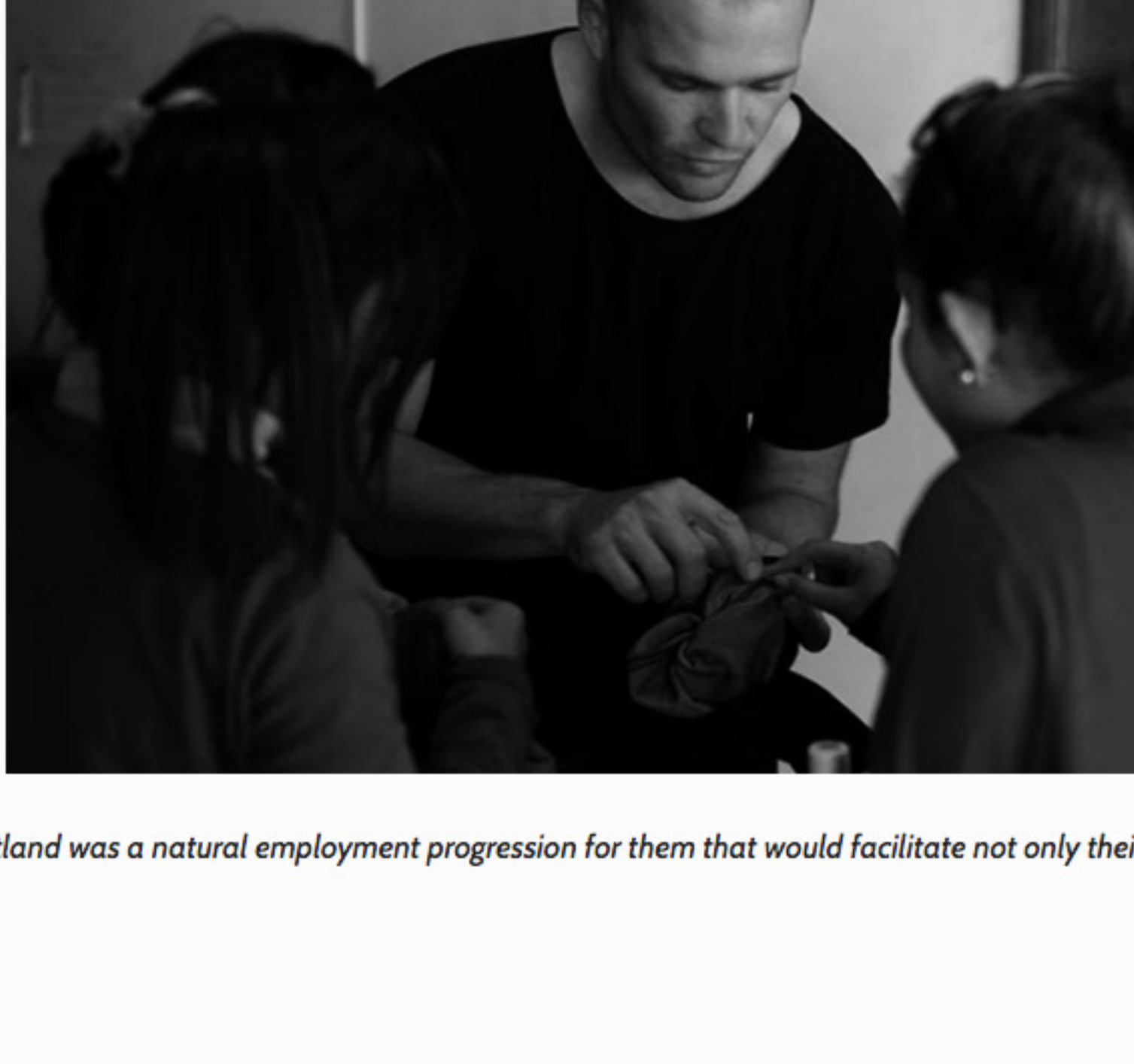
Can you tell us a little bit about the organisation you support?

We work alongside NGOs to provide vocational pathways for the vulnerable people who go through their rescue and after-care programs.

What do you see for the future of Outland Denim? And ethical fashion?

It's a really exciting time to be working in the ethical fashion arena, as the consciousness around doing fashion the right way - in a way that treats its workers fairly and minimises the impact on the environment - grows. Outland is part of this movement, and we've been encouraged to find retailers and media who really get behind our vision to go above and beyond. To value workers and put them ahead of the bottom line, and use business to create positive social change.

And that is Outland Denim.



“To value workers and put them ahead of the bottom line, and use business to create positive social change.”

Three incredible businesses making a difference through creative ventures. Each starting with the adventure and an inspired idea along the journey. Such brands and people can't help but stand out amongst a sea of business hopefuls, set apart by the passion and vision behind their brands.

For us here at Open Ended, we love to see Success, masterfully blended with adventure and the wellbeing of others and the world in which we live. When was the last time you went on an adventure? Maybe somewhere outside of your comfort zone? What are you waiting for? Get outside and explore the paths and roads before you. You never know where they may lead, or what you may be inspired, uplifted and encouraged by.

Words by Olivia Bosshard

Photography by Amy Pearl

