



Ms. Frances Carrington
Owner & Designer, Himalaya Tailoring Centre
(Eternal Creation), Dharamshala, HP

The woman behind Eternal Creation, Dharamshala, situated in the laps of HP hills, is Australian designer Frances Carrington. Capturing the imagination of thousands of women around the world, she's forged a remarkable path. After a volunteer placement working with Tibetan refugees, she fell in love with India and started her own company to support the Tibetan and local Indian communities. She was born in Western Australia, but grew up on a farm on the south coast of New South Wales. After graduating from the East Sydney Fashion Design Institute 1994, Frances registered with Australian Volunteers Abroad, hoping to use her skills in a community in Africa. Instead she was sent to India. She was put in charge of the fledgling tailoring department of the Norbulingka Institute in Dharamshala, home of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan

Government in exile. Her job was to teach newly arrived Tibetan refugees the finer points of tailoring and design. She oversaw the growth of the department from 2 to 15 fulltime staff by the end of her stay.

Falling in love with Indian and Tibetan culture, not to mention the fantastic landscape of the Himalayas, she determined that at the end of her tenure she'd find a way to use her skills to continue to benefit the local community in some way. Frances started with only 3 tailors, in association with the Gu-Chu-Sum movement of Tibet, an ex- political prisoners' organisation. The small tailoring unit grew slowly, employing several ex-prisoners and battling with fierce monsoons, water shortages and frequent blackouts, often simultaneously! One of the biggest challenges was training people who had previously led a pastoral or nomadic existence, to understand the concept of delivery deadlines and international quality standards. Smiling excitedly, she says- "The children's clothes are very colourful and I love making them! Kids look good in all colours, and the bolder the prints the better. I also love adding extra details, especially on the girls clothes- some pretty lace, a few sequins, a hot pink ribbon...endless fun! With the women's clothes, I tend to design styles that I like to wear myself. I use a lot of red- my favourite colour- and the designs are often quite classical and well fitted, but not tight. I like well made clothes that flatter the figure, and can be worn season after season."

How does she ensure Fair Trade at Eternal? "We have our own tailoring centre and I oversee the sampling and most of the manufacturing processes. I wouldn't expect anybody to work under conditions that I wouldn't like. Our tailoring centre is registered with the Fair Trade Forum of India. They have a very strict annual monitoring process, involving an audit, checking the safety of our premises and meeting privately with staff and tailors." says Frances.

According to her, Fashion is a huge industry that effects everyone- so many people, and so many of them terribly underpaid and unacknowledged. She loves making clothes, but she could never make them and knowingly take advantage of someone in the process. So she makes sure her production process is good for everyone- otherwise I wouldn't sleep at night! From a design point of view, she loves the crazy use of colour in this country! "You see extraordinary combinations every day. People paint it on their walls or wear it because they like it, not because "this colour should go with that!" It's vibrant, fun, and usually surprising! I also love the openness of the people in India. They're very friendly and generally have a very positive outlook on life, often against all odds. They're also extremely imaginative; once I caught a taxi and the accelerator cable broke, so the driver climbed out, tied a piece of rope to it and fed it in through the window. He drove on with a smile on his face, pulling on the rope and steering with the other hand. Who would have dreamt of such a thing?"

