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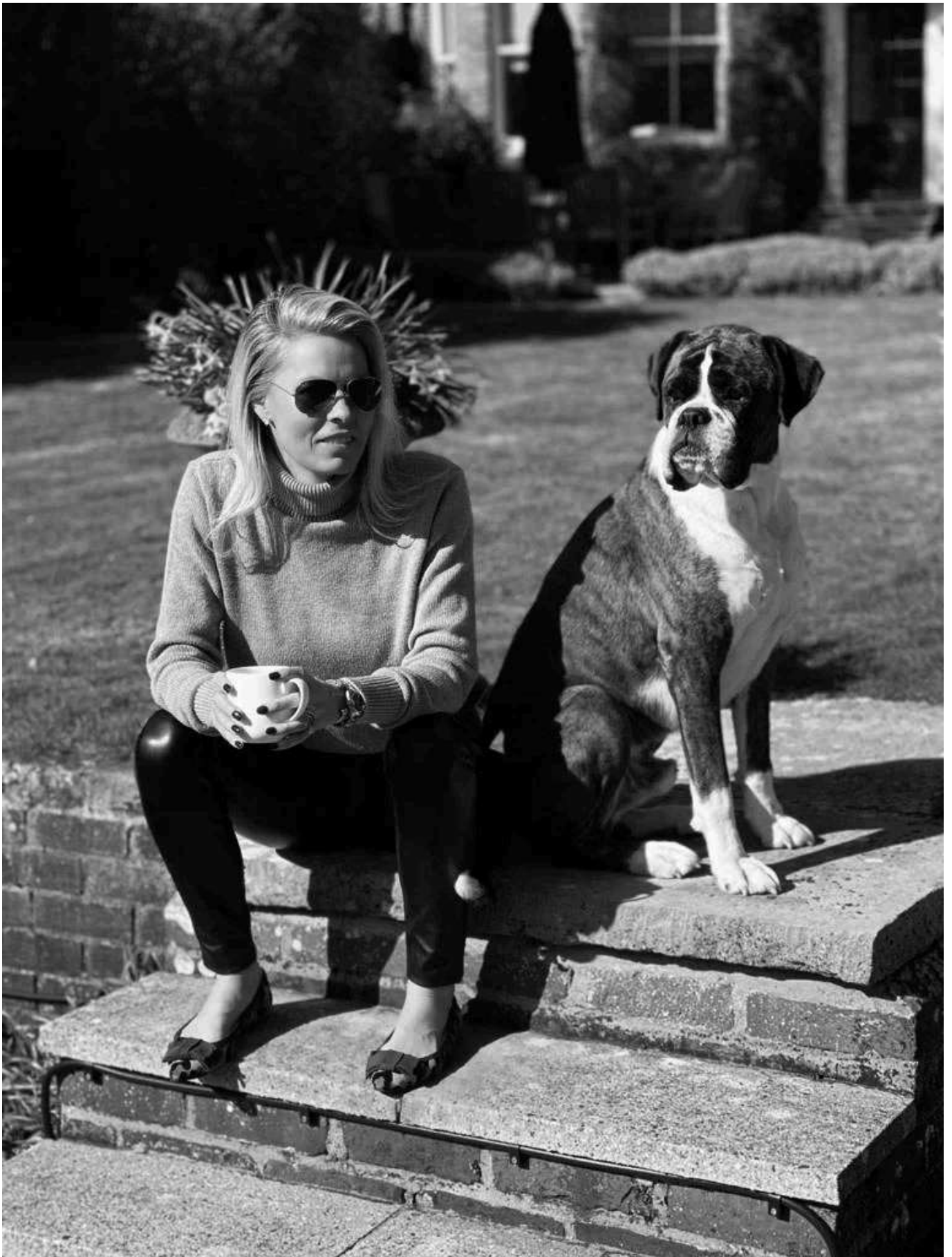
The Miami Shoe – Willa Phoenix

Meet Abby, the woman behind [Willa Phoenix](https://thewonderingwanderingvegan.com/a-journey-of-passion-and-innovation-the-willa-phoenix-story/), a luxury brand that's on a mission to redefine the world of vegan fashion. With a fierce passion but no

formal background in the fashion industry, Abby's journey to creating an eco-conscious luxury vegan brand is nothing short of inspiring.

In a world where fashion often comes at the expense of animals and the environment, Abby Barroll Brown has found exactly where she needs to be. She has carved a niche for herself by offering luxurious alternatives to traditional leather products. Her collections include gorgeous heels that fit in at the most high-profile events, yet are versatile enough to dress down with a pair of jeans. Within her collections, you'll also find matching clutch bags to complete the look.

In an exclusive interview, Abby shares her inspiring journey of building a vegan fashion brand that strongly promotes ethical and eco-friendly practices while still bringing plenty of glitz and glamour to the scene.



Abby Barroll Brown – Founder of Willa Phoenix

Beginning with a Purpose – The Birth of Willa Phoenix

After becoming vegetarian and more conscious of the foods she consumed, Abby soon realised that these small but positive choices could be extended beyond what she ate. This led her to make little changes in other parts of her day-to-day life. This included the milk she added to her coffee, the salons she chose to visit and, of course, the clothing she bought.

On this journey, she came to discover that, although there were some fantastic animal-free shoe brands out there, she couldn't find one that felt right for her. She was searching for a small, female-owned vegan shoe brand that resonated with her style. And this is where the idea of Willa Phoenix was born.

Getting Started – Luxury without Compromise

It wasn't the most positive time for many reasons but for Abby's new venture, lockdown gave her the time she needed to make it happen.

However, as they say, nothing worth having comes easy. So, without prior experience in drawing, one of Abby's first hurdles was learning to design and get her ideas down on paper. This challenge didn't slow her down though, she just got to work.

Abby explains that finding, what she knew to be, the perfect small factory in Italy was exactly what she needed to take the leap. Italy's reputation for

quality and a factory that specialises in bio-leather, it couldn't have been better!

Despite the distance and lockdown constraints, they worked together on the shoes that Abby knew she wanted to create.

For her first collection, she thought about what she'd like to see in her own wardrobe. She wanted her shoes to be a blend of two of her biggest passions in life, luxurious fashion and animals. So, for her first designs, she went with a faux crocodile style, a faux ostrich style and a vegan animal print style. Abby also wanted a sparkly option because who doesn't need a gorgeous pair of sparkly heels? So, they were the four she went with.

The time, effort and money that goes into creating a pair of quality shoes really is something! And because of the restrictions during that time, so much of the work had been done over phone calls, Zoom meetings and images sent back and forth.

So, when the first prototypes arrived, it was a moment of truth for Abby.

They were exactly what she had envisioned – impeccable in quality and design. The successful use of vegan materials proved that Willa Phoenix could offer luxury shoes without compromising.



The Manhattan Shoes – Willa Phoenix

Material Choices and Innovation for Willa Phoenix

Abby is excited by the innovation of natural materials. She feels that things are moving in the right direction for eco-friendly vegan fashion. Her Hollywood shoe is made using Piñatex which is an incredible plant-based leather made from pineapple leaves. This gorgeous shoe has even been seen on the Oscars red carpet. What a wonderful achievement for Willa Phoenix and vegan fashion as a whole!

The choice of materials, like Piñatex in the Hollywood shoe, is a great example of her forward-thinking approach. She's thrilled about the

advancements in bio-leather and is looking forward to using materials like Tencel, mushroom leather, apple leather and coffee fabric.

Ethical and Eco-friendly Practices

Abby has already explained that Willa Phoenix is all about avoiding animal products and introducing natural and eco-friendly materials. But what about how the shoes are produced?

She firmly believes that luxury must be synonymous with quality and ethical responsibility. Luxury fashion should be handmade by great people at a very high standard. This is why she works with a small specialised factory in Italy.

Together they only produce items in small batches. By doing this it not only ensures less waste but also allows for a handmade touch that defines luxury.

The focus on high quality and small quantities sets Willa Phoenix apart from the fast fashion industry. They only create timeless pieces that last.



The Kensington Shoes – Willa Phoenix

Challenges of Vegan Fashion in a Non-Vegan World

Abby acknowledges the stigma sometimes associated with 'vegan' in the fashion world. Having had people doubt the standard of her shoes because of what they are made of, or rather what they aren't made of.

Willa Phoenix is working towards breaking those stereotypes. Despite initial doubts, customers are consistently surprised by the comfort and quality of Willa Phoenix products.

Abby also likes to take a more inclusive approach, understanding that terms 'plant-based' encourage positive steps without judgment. This allows

people to move away from the all-or-nothing approach to change.

As an expert in the luxury vegan fashion sector, Abby views the industry as being on a steady upward trajectory. She is starting to see a world where young consumers care more, following philosophies such as 'Buy Less, Buy Better'. They're more inclined to shop in vintage and second-hand stores, looking for well-made items that don't cost the earth.

Future Aspirations for Willa Phoenix

Looking ahead, Abby dreams of expanding Willa Phoenix to include a full vegan equestrian range. She has always loved horses and has been a rider for some time, so it feels like a perfect fit.

For now, she's focused on growing her brand with its current collections, while seizing incredible opportunities along the way, like magazine covers and red-carpet events. She acknowledges the challenges that come with establishing a young fashion brand but remains focused, confident, and open to whatever comes her way.



The Las Vegas Shoes – Willa Phoenix

Advice for Budding Entrepreneurs

Abby still feels she's at the beginning of her journey, but when asked, her advice for aspiring entrepreneurs was simple yet powerful: "Just step over the line and do it."


She acknowledges the feeling of self-doubt and anxiety but believes that failures are often stepping stones to success. And success is often followed by multiple failures, so give it everything you've got and be proud.

She's all about listening to your gut instincts, recounting how, for the first time, she decided to trust her intuition fully when starting Willa Phoenix. At

times, she needs to dig deep for self-belief but is grateful for the many wonderful people she has met on her journey so far.

Message to Customers

Abby shares a quote that deeply resonates with her, borrowed from Brendon Burchard, it's on the concept of gradual transformation.



"First, it is an intention. Then a behaviour. Then a habit. Then a practice. Then a second nature. Then it is simply who you are."

Brendon Burchard

She encourages taking one step at a time towards a more conscious lifestyle.

Abby shares that going vegetarian has enriched her life in countless ways. The one that has made the biggest impact on her life is that it allowed her to discover her creativity.

She initially expressed it by finding ways to cook delicious vegetarian food for her family and friends. Then it spilt through to her fashion choices which eventually led to the creation of Willa Phoenix. Her journey is a testament to the power of passion leading to the ability to create change. One step at a time.

The story of Willa Phoenix is more than a business venture. It's a project fueled by a love for animals, a commitment to a better planet, and a belief in the power of change.

In the world of luxury fashion, Abby and Willa Phoenix are shining examples of what can be achieved when passion and purpose unite.

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Meet the Author



Meet Sinead O'Carroll: Vegan explorer, sustainability advocate and the founder of [The Wondering Wandering Vegan](#). Embracing veganism since 2018 and vegetarianism since 2005, Sinead is armed with a Vegan Health, Nutrition and Lifestyle qualification, and is on a mission to share her passion for cruelty-free living.

With a taste for adventure and a heart for eco-conscious choices, she's here to prove that vegans never miss out on flavour, fun or style. Join her in enjoying the delights of a vegan-friendly world! 🌱 ✈️ 🌍

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