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LIFESTYLE

Arts

Women And Money

Gadgets

Home

Fashion

Parenting

Beauty

Mental Health

Books

Shopping



HOME / LIFESTYLE

## Suzy Amis Cameron on new venture Inside Out and sustainability

Former actress, model, advocate and founder of the One Meal A Day movement, explains why her world is governed by people she hasn't even met yet

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By: Karishma Nandkeolyar

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Two-hundred-thousand gallons of water. Or, the carbon equivalent of driving from Los Angeles to New York. That's how much you'll save by swapping your protein-peppered meal with a plant-based one, explains Suzy Amis Cameron, former actress, model, advocate, and founder of the One Meal A Day movement.

She's in Rome for the launch of a branch of Inside Out (IO), a collective that's working towards finding innovative solutions to some of earth's most pressing concerns. The Roman chapter is focused on IO's Fashion, Textiles and Home vertical, and hopes to clear the mould of the industry and replace it with a cleaner, more climate-friendly perspective, to make Rome a beacon of sustainable fashion.

For 63-year-old Suzy, mum of five and wife of *Avatar* filmmaker James Cameron, it's almost like her entire life has been lived in preparation for this moment.

Her childhood was spent on a farm in Oklahoma, US, riding horses and connecting with nature. "Everything from being outdoors in nature to being in ballet classes when I was five years old, and then doing gymnastics and getting very, very involved in horseback riding," she says, gave her the body awareness she needed to walk runways and be on screen. Which led her to becoming a global icon with an international platform. "It's a journey of looking at the signs, paying attention to them, and learning from them."

Especially when one is in the spotlight. "I'm fully aware of the fact that I've been handed a very charmed life, and I've had many, many opportunities... I do have a platform, and I'm really, really grateful... what wakes me up in the middle of the night is, 'what more can I do to make the world a better place for all of our children, and their children, and the generations that we will never meet?'"





She recalls many aha moments over the years, times when she recognised the need for change in the world. One of those episodes came when she was pregnant with her first child, Jasper, with ex-husband actor Sam Robards. "My sister-in-law at the time (30 years ago) took me to a health food store and started talking to me about organic produce," she recalls. And with that conversation, other niggling concerns arose, about what lotions and potions one should use, what's safe for a baby to wear, what shampoo and soap is good for you — and which ones are pernicious. That was the first tectonic shift that pushed her to explore healthier options.

Another came in 2012, when she saw the documentary *Forks Over Knives*, which posits that food is medicine — it can be healing if you eat right. The film, by Lee Fulkerson, had such an impact on the Camerons that the whole family embraced a plant-based lifestyle overnight.

By 2018, she had written a book called *OMD: The Simple, Plant-Based Program to Save Your Health, Save Your Waistline, and Save the Planet*, decimating the most common argument against eating plant-based meals: how to make them as nutritionally dense and delicious as 'normal' food. She had sparked a movement she called OMD (one meal a day). And, by 2020, she had convinced American talk show host Oprah Winfrey to subscribe to the plan. "If you've been thinking about going vegetarian or vegan, I think this is a good way to lean into it where you don't have to give up everything you've been eating your whole life in one day," Winfrey told *Oprah Magazine* at the time.



## Benefits of a new menu

"Every meal is a chance to nourish our bodies, show care for our communities, and make a positive impact on the planet. OMD is about starting where you are, and embracing small, meaningful steps," says Amis Cameron.

She works on creating ripples in the status quo, lobbying small, well-informed tweaks that bring about lasting change. "You can't make a change until you see and understand what the problem is, and the only way to find out what the problem is or the challenge is, is to have information and be educated."

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When she began to educate others, she also started to learn more about the waste we generate — between 2.1 billion and 2.3 billion tonnes of municipal solid waste a year, according to United Nations Environment Programme — the damage it does, and the work that humanity must put in to secure the world.

And so she learned about the toxins that spike our food and drink, and our clothes. The result was the 2024 documentary Let Them Be Naked, which was directed by designer Jeff Garner. It investigates the contamination of clothes and the resulting illnesses. While Garner has been spearheading the move towards sustainable fashion since 2002, he only started investigating the repercussions of synthetic toxins in daily wear in 2019 after his mum, Peggy Lynn Garner, passed away from cancer.



For Suzy, the research made one thing clear: "It's not enough [for brands] to swap fabrics or chase certifications. Real change begins with transparency — knowing your supply chain, protecting your workers, and doing the hard, human work of rethinking the system inside out. We'd love to see fashion companies lead with compassion — ensuring safe conditions, fair wages, and access to basic human rights like healthcare. From there, we can meaningfully tackle emissions, toxins, and waste."

"In terms of household name designers that we know, we're currently consulting and working with many of them now," she says.

She has made inroads in championing low-impact fashion on the red carpets of celebrity-studded awards too. In 2009, she launched the red carpet green dress initiative, which calls for responsibility and sustainability solutions. At the time, some were reticent about partnering up. "It's really in the zeitgeist right now," she adds.



## **Current projects**

Her recent project, IO, takes on more than fashion; it works across six verticals: IO Science, Research, and Technology; IO Fashion, Textiles, and Home (IO FTH); IO Global Food Production (IO GFP); IO Education; IO Media; and IO Wellness. "The one thing that really, really excites me about IO across all of the verticals is the partnerships that we've created with the leading universities [such as] MIT, Texas Tech, and Georgia Tech. We actually have solutions for remediating polyester and also remediating PFAs [perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances] out of soil, out of water," she says over Zoom.

The basis of the initiative, she explains, is: "What you put in your body, how it affects your health, and how it affects the health of the planet. Which, in turn, affects not only the population of the human race but also every animal, every tree, every flower."

Of course, a good cause doesn't excuse poor brand performance. "We have a fiduciary responsibility to our investors. We have three ROIs: return on investment, on impact, integrity," she says.

The former actress, whose reel credits include *The Usual Suspects* and *Titanic*, lives by her own rules, pointing out on the call that she's got organic raw vegetables waiting for her in her Roman hotel room. "I live in New Zealand now and am very, very strategic about when I travel and where I go and the amount of things that I fit into whatever that trip is," she adds. Other things she suggests people do are to buy less, revisit old outfits more, and common sense moves, such as taking public transport or carpooling.

## **Actions speak loud**

If it weren't absolutely clear that Suzy is committed to her cause, you'd just need to follow the paper trail for proof. She has invested \$65 million (Dh238 million) of her own money into IO and plans to raise another \$300 million. "For me, this mission is deeply personal — shaped by my own lived experience and a conviction that meaningful global change is not only possible, but necessary. The turning point came when I realised how much untapped potential exists at the intersection of sustainability, technology, an culture," she explains.

Change, while inevitable, is not an easy process — and when it comes to bettering the world, there must be a multi-pronged approach, says Suzy. “Any sort of systemic change needs to be multi-pronged, so you’re working with governments, policy makers, directly with the consumer, and the manufacturers.” And you must work with end-users; until demand changes, supply will not either.

So, we must demand sustainable solutions. But what does that really mean? “The word has been stretched so thin that it’s often misunderstood. Many people believe they’re making responsible choices, when, in fact, they may be unknowingly contributing to harm. That disconnect can be discouraging — but what keeps me hopeful is perspective. When I look back at where we started and how far we’ve come, the shift is undeniable. We still have a long journey ahead — one where we can’t simply sustain the status quo — but I truly believe systemic change is within reach in our lifetime.”

Just begin by swapping meat for vegetables and taking on the OMD challenge — there, you are already making the world a better place.