

Reconstruction: creating fashion want from waste

As the world increasingly lusts for new clothes – 80 billion garments are made from virgin resources every year¹ - so too are we witnessing increased clothing and textile waste flow from factories and clog up landfills. In 2012, an average of 293 tonnes of textiles were chucked into Hong Kong's landfills every day². Further afield, US landfills have seen a 38 percent increase in textile waste over a recent 11 year period, during which time the overall landfill waste decreased by one percent³. Herein lies the double-edged environmental problem; textile waste creates problems in landfill and textile production results in vast negative environmental impacts that damage the planet and people.

Cue the unlikely environmental (and creative) crusader, the fashion designer!

Fashion designers are increasingly turning clothing and textile waste into 'new' through the sustainable design techniques of reconstruction (making new clothes by utilising clothing waste) or up-cycling (making new clothes using unformed textile waste). This process unleashes designers' creativity and puts fashion design on the frontline of sustainable innovation.

So, in May, our [Instagram](#) platform turned into a textile waste runway to celebrate sustainable designers from all corners of the earth who are getting their hands onto the very problem of waste. Joining us were [Sir Plus](#) and [Liora Lasalle](#) from UK, [The YesterdaySkin](#) and [Last But Not Least](#) from Hong Kong, [Piece X Piece](#) and [Mimi New York](#) from US and [Pondhopper Studio](#) from Canada. Through them, we saw an array of 'waste', including last seasons' cast offs, old wedding gowns, antique fabrics, and wardrobe's forgotten treasures, which were transformed into desirable garments and profiled on our Instagram platform. .

Starting May's challenge was Henry Hales from Sir Plus, the brand that creates high-quality British clothing using factory leftovers. The brand has become quite the pro at sourcing waste. Henry tells us *'We're connected with many of the major factories and fabric dealers across England and further afield, which gives us access to the finest quality fabrics in an extensive variety of prints and styles.'*

Last But Not Least's Toby Lam notches up a multi-faceted fashion career that includes being a fashion editor, designer and product development manager. Through this, she has learnt how polluting the fashion industry is and as a result she started her own brand, which provides custom-made up-cycling fashion design. She lives by the 'Buy less, choose well' concept.

¹ <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/09/11/living/high-cost-of-fashion>

² Hong Kong SAR, Hong Kong Environmental Protection Department (2013) Monitoring of Solid Waste in Hong Kong - Waste Statistics for 2012, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Environmental Protection Department. Available at: <https://www.wastereduction.gov.hk/en/materials/info/msw2012.pdf>

³ Municipal Solid Waste in the United States. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2011 Facts and Figure



On day 121, Henry from Sir Plus dons this waistcoat made from clothes sourced from Italy. The pocket square is up-cycled using surplus dress fabric from a factory in Kent.



On day 135, Toby from Last But Not Least showed us this custom-made up-cycling fashion outfit, which she hopes will encourage others to 'go green but still live fashionably'.



On day 130, Liora showed us this piece from her new collection. To create this, she ripped unwanted jeans into strips and then sewed them together again to create large pieces of denim fabric for her own patterns. She then used the leftover denim to form the denim shagpile, which covers the skirt.



On day 147, Eileen from The Yesterdayskin shared her reconstructed skirt, which was created from a long A-line skirt. 'I adjusted the length and added the white color blocking panel and it's now my best skirt for summer.' Eileen hand-gilded a gold leaf pattern onto the clutch, which was previously doomed to be unwanted stock.

Elizabeth Bruner from Piece x Piece combines her design talents with her passion for sustainability to reduce waste whilst creating unique garments. Elizabeth says, 'We offer our garments in limited production editions because for us sourcing and manufacturing is an extremely involved and consuming process. As a result of the time taken for each piece, all garments are season-less in nature and time-less in their design.'

Lorraine Dezman from Pondhopper Studio said, 'My designs are inspired by my addiction to rescuing otherwise forgotten and discarded items. I love the surprises and uniqueness that come from materials that have a story, a past life, a soul of their own.'



On day 140, Lorraine from Pondhopper Studio showed us this dress, which was created by piecing together randomly cut shapes from different discarded T-shirts and by attaching them to a piece of embroidered net, which was salvaged from a tablecloth, to form the front bodice. A thin cord from a curtain tie back wraps around her waist in Grecian style.



On day 139, Piece x Piece's Elizabeth created this versatile wrap skirt by mixing various discarded high-end fabric swatches together.



On day 148, Mimi wore this asymmetrical draped panel dress, which Mimi reconstructed using vintage and antique materials. The lace fabric in Mimi's creations date back to the 18th to early 20th century.

Collectively in May, our participating fashion designers demonstrated their design talents that are giving a new look to 'waste'. Encouraging more designers to follow-suit, May also coincided with the launch of our fifth cycle of [The EcoChic Design Award](#) sustainable design competition. In this, we are challenging emerging designers from Hong Kong, Mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, UK, France, Germany, Denmark and Sweden to cut waste out of fashion and so soon we will welcome new talented designers onto the sustainable design arena.

Next up... [DIY](#)

In June, we will highlight your own inner DIY creativity that can revitalise unworn and unloved pieces into something 'new' and fresh using a few DIY tweaks here and DIY cuts there. Join the challenge by #GetRedressed on [Instagram](#).