

# The EcoChic Design Award

## RECONSTRUCTION DESIGN TECHNIQUE



CLOTHING SAMPLES

DECONSTRUCTION

SECONDHAND CLOTHING



ORGANISED BY





*Mary Ma's reconstructed outfit on the catwalk at 'Redress on the Runway'.*

## WHAT IS IT?

Reconstruction is the process of making new clothes from previously worn garments or preformed finished products.

## WHY DO IT?

Today, we consume about 60 percent more clothes than we did 10 years ago. As fashion consumption rises, so does waste. Many of the clothes entering landfill are still in good quality and represent valuable materials. In the UK alone, an estimated £140 million worth of used clothes enter landfill every year.<sup>1</sup>

When textiles are wasted so too are the resources, both natural and human labour resources, which were invested and imbedded into the textiles. By reconstructing garments you can prolong the textile's lifecycle, slow down unnecessary textile production, reduce landfill pressure and reduce the demand for natural resources.

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<sup>1</sup> Valuing our clothes: the evidence base, WRAP, 2012



# 2 THEN SOURCE

Your choice of textiles will greatly impact the design you are able to make. Start by sourcing your materials, so look for clothing samples, finished clothing waste or secondhand clothing. To find your waste source, look in yours' and your friends' closets, secondhand stores, sample rooms or even online. Remember that one man's trash is another man's treasure.

## EXPERT'S TIP

— *Kate Jones, Creative Consultant, Miele* —

Look for good quality textiles and let quality be your guide here. Don't be afraid of the odd stain or hole as these can be washed away and repaired. Remember, no one wants to wear smelly and stained garments, even if they are reconstructed, so make sure you wash them well before you redesign them.



*Image credit Fake Natoo*

*Zhang Na of Fake Natoo sourced secondhand clothes from her friends and used colour blocking to create eye catching designs.*



*Jimmy Ku, The EcoChic Design Award Hong Kong 2012 Finalist, deconstructed a secondhand sweater, a denim shirt and skirt sourced from Friends of the Earth Hong Kong's used clothing bins to create this reconstructed outfit.*



# 4 FINALLY... MAKE!

Start deconstructing, shredding, quilting, patchworking and draping. Your imagination is the only limit. Importantly, make sure you have a good quality and tidy finish as no one wants their 'new' garment to look like a hand-me-down!

## EXPERT'S TIP

— *Claire Dawson, Retail Product Manager, TRAIID* —

Textiles can be quilted to make them stronger and more durable.



*Image credit Junky Styling*

*Junky Styling are pioneers in reconstruction and are known for deconstructing and re-cutting secondhand clothes to transform used clothes into new outfits.*

*Chen Qin Qzi, The EcoChic People's Award China 2012 Winner, shredded dresses and skirts, sourced from a secondhand market in Shanghai, to create this reconstructed dress.*

# GARY HARVEY

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## ON RECONSTRUCTION DESIGN

Designer and Fashion Director of 125 Magazine  
[www.garyharveycreative.com](http://www.garyharveycreative.com)



*Image credit Gary Harvey*

*“Reconstruction is about creating something new and desirable from something old and unwanted.”*

After 20 years working in the fashion industry, I’ve seen the amount of textiles and clothing waste first-hand and my sustainable fashion collections are a reaction to this. Mass consumerist culture and fast fashion have changed our relationship with clothing. Fashion has become a fast moving consumer good that is ‘in one season and out the next’ and as a result we consume 60 percent more clothes today than we did 10 years ago. Gone are the days of previous generations who learnt to cherish, respect, repair and recycle their clothing. Instead, vast amounts of good quality clothing are sent to landfill every day.

Reconstruction is the process where designers can reconstruct old and unwanted clothing to make something new and desirable. The environmental benefits of reconstruction are immense. When you consider the Earth’s limited supply of natural resources, we simply cannot sustain our current rates of consumption as at some point resources will run out. Therefore, at some point recycling and reconstruction will not be an elective choice - they will become a necessity.

I have worked as a creative director and fashion designer for the past 20 years. Six years ago I started my own collection, called ‘Eco Couture’, which recontextualises and transforms familiar everyday items into couture-inspired dresses.



*Image credit Gary Harvey*

*Gary Harvey's reconstructed gown made using various reconstructed vintage dresses, which was worn by sustainable fashion icon and celebrity Livia Firth at the Oscars.*

#### **MY TOP TIPS TO RECONSTRUCTION DESIGN**

- 1. Style and fashion should inform your decision making**
- 2. Select garments that work and hang well together**
- 3. Make sure your colours complement each other**
- 4. Use a good pattern or consider draping directly onto the body**
- 5. Use quality construction techniques to ensure a good finish**

My primary goal as a fashion designer is to amaze and inspire people with my collections by making each silhouette and design unique. The fundamental art of reconstruction is selecting interesting items and creating unique combinations that add value. My cutting and construction techniques are inspired by vintage couture and each component is hand selected. I carefully combine individual garments and vintage textiles, which I drape and re-sew together to create one harmonious piece from multiple different garments.

My secondary message as a fashion designer is about the politics of garment waste and recycling. Everything I use in my dresses is 100 percent recycled. The success of my collections has been overwhelming. I've been invited to show my collections at fashion weeks around the world, including London, New York, Los Angeles, Paris and Berlin. My dresses have been exhibited in some of the world's best museums, including The Victoria and Albert Museum and the Museum of Modern Art.

# LEARN MORE

## WATCH THIS...

**The EcoChic Design Award 2013 Reconstruction Tutorial**

**YouTube** <http://youtu.be/YDkO52LG-U8>

**Youku** [http://v.youku.com/v\\_show/id\\_XNTQ3MzlwMzg0.html](http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNTQ3MzlwMzg0.html)

**The EcoChic Design Award China 2012 Reconstruction Tutorial with Zhang Na**

**YouTube** <http://youtu.be/K-Mkf7IJFuc>

**Youku** [http://v.youku.com/v\\_show/id\\_XMzk3MzE5ODcy.html](http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMzk3MzE5ODcy.html)

## READ THIS...

**Design Is The Problem: The Future Of Design Must Be Sustainable** by Nathan Shedroff

**Eco-Chic: The Fashion Paradox** by Sandy Black

**Eco Fashion** by Sass Brown and Geoffrey B. Small

**Fashion & Sustainability: Design for Change** by Kate Fletcher and Lynda Grose

**How Can Fashion Designers Make Clothes Less Disposable?**

[www.ecouterre.com/how-can-fashion-designers-make-clothes-less-disposable](http://www.ecouterre.com/how-can-fashion-designers-make-clothes-less-disposable)

**Remake It: Clothes: The Essential Guide to Resourceful Fashion: With over 500 tricks, tips and inspirational designs** by Henrietta Thompson

**Shaping Sustainable Fashion: Changing The Way We Make And Use Clothes** by Alison Gwilt and Timo Rissanen

**Sustainable Fashion And Textiles: Design Journeys** by Kate Fletcher

**The Sustainable Fashion Handbook** by Sandy Black

## BE INSPIRED BY...

**Brandnu** [www.brandnuproject.com](http://www.brandnuproject.com)

**Comme des Garcons** [www.comme-des-garcons.com](http://www.comme-des-garcons.com)

**Dr.noki** [www.drnoki.com](http://www.drnoki.com)

**Elena Garcia** [www.elenagarciastudio.com](http://www.elenagarciastudio.com)

**Elvis & Kresse** [www.elvisandkresse.com](http://www.elvisandkresse.com)

**Gary Harvey** [www.garyharveycreative.com](http://www.garyharveycreative.com)

**Geneva Vanderzeil** [www.apairandasparediy.com](http://www.apairandasparediy.com)

**Julia Crew** [www.juliacrew.com](http://www.juliacrew.com)

**Junky Styling** [www.junkystyling.co.uk](http://www.junkystyling.co.uk)

**Milch** <http://milch.mur.at/>

**Robert Cary-Williams** [www.vogue.co.uk/brand/robert-cary-williams](http://www.vogue.co.uk/brand/robert-cary-williams)

**Schmidt Takahashi** [www.schmidttakahashi.de](http://www.schmidttakahashi.de)

**Stamo** [www.stamo.co.uk](http://www.stamo.co.uk)

**Walter Raes** [www.walterworks.co.uk](http://www.walterworks.co.uk)

**Zhang Na** [www.natoo.org.cn](http://www.natoo.org.cn)

## LEARN THE LANGUAGE...

**Closed loop design** is when a product is designed to have another function after its use thereby eliminating all waste. In this way, a used product's output becomes the input for a new product or function.

**Clothing banks** are garment recycling stations put up in a community, often by a charitable organisation, where consumers are able to recycle their used clothing.

**Clothing samples** are samples from the design and production of clothing.

**Cradle to cradle** refers to a closed loop design process, which is free of waste. When a product is no longer useful, it becomes material for another product.

**Cut-and-sew waste** is excess textile from the cutting and sewing phase of garment manufacturing. It is often considered waste and is discarded due to its uneven and small formats.

**Down-cycling** is to recycle a material into something of lower quality.

**Finished clothing waste** is unsold finished clothing waste that has not yet been worn.

**Life cycle** is the resource extraction, manufacture, distribution, use, disposal and recycling of a product.

**Post-consumer waste** is waste collected after the consumer has disposed of it.

**Pre-consumer waste** is manufacturing waste that has not reach the consumer.

**Reconstruction** is the process of making new clothes from previously worn garments or preformed products.

**Recyclable** is a material that can be reused at a similar level of quality.

**Recycled** is when a waste material or product has been reused and turned into a new usable material or product.

**Reduce, reuse, recycle** are the so called 3R's that classify waste management, according to their order of importance. Reduce your consumption and usage, reuse items again and recycle materials.

**Secondhand** is a product that is acquired after it has been used by someone else and is not new.

**Secondhand clothing** is clothing or fashion accessories that have been used and discarded by consumers.

**Secondhand textiles** are any textiles that have been used and discarded by consumers, which are not clothing or fashion accessories.

**Supply chain** is the resources and steps involved in moving a product from raw material to consumer.

**Sustainability** is a lasting system, process, that meets the current needs while preserving for the future.

**Sustainable fashion** is clothing that is produced with respect to the environment and social impacts throughout its lifespan.

**Sustainable textile** is a textile that is produced with minimal environmental impact.

**Textile recycling** is reusing or reprocessing used clothing, fibrous material and/or textile scraps from the manufacturing process.

**Textile waste** is a material that is deemed unusable for its original purpose by the owner.