

AICI GLOBAL

SUSTAINABILITY ISSUE

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SUCCESS

STYLE UP
WITH UPCYCLING

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STYLE UP WITH UPCYCLING

BY DONNA CAMERON

Renew, recycle, upcycle. Climate change, fast fashion, [Clothes to Die For](#). What are we talking about here, and what has it got to do with image consultants?

Every year about 90 million garments around the world become landfill. Contrary to popular belief, only a small fraction of our discarded clothes are recycled or worn by people after us – and when

this does occur it's generally to the benefit of for-profit companies, not charities – the rest goes to landfill. We can no longer content ourselves in the belief that we are “doing good” when we take our unwanted clothing to charity shops, as they receive far more than they can actually sell.

Alongside this, it's been estimated by [The Brooklyn Fashion and](#)

[Design Accelerator](#) in New York that the fashion industry is the second largest user of water in the world, and a polluter as well. These problems have been accelerated in recent times as retailers introduce new ranges far more frequently than ever before, tempting us to buy many more garments than we used to. But the background statistics are sobering.



Cindy Hanara with her own design, refashioned from a vintage garment. (Photo by Donna Cameron)



Designs by Cindy Hanara. (Photo by Farzana Abad)

The good news is that we, as image consultants, are ideally positioned to help alleviate this ever worsening issue. We understand the difference between enduring style and frantic fashion, and can teach our clients how to purchase only what will work for them, thereby reducing waste. Now that we can buy clothes at historically low prices, it's too easy in our consumer society to experiment then discard, instead of making well considered choices.

But if we care about the environment and we care about quality, there is a new way: upcycling. If you've not yet encountered this growing trend, you will. Unlike recycling that involves trashing stuff to create something entirely new, upcycling respects the integrity of a piece and changes it only slightly so it's still recognizable.

Upcycling is a growing industry embraced by designers who understand quality, true workmanship, longevity and personalized style and wish to preserve that for future generations. Upcycling practitioners take beautiful, quality pieces already in existence and remodel them so they're relevant for contemporary life. It serves the dual purpose of reducing waste and providing an alternative to poorly made "fast fashion".

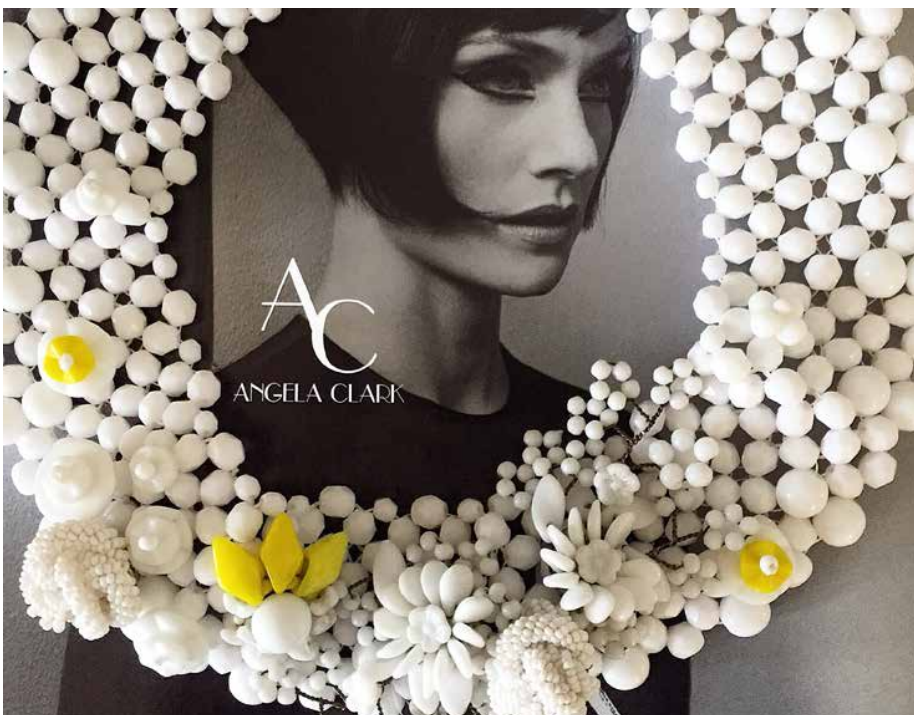
Cindy Hanara, a fashion designer with a playful passion for upcycled clothing, is based in Melbourne, Australia. Originally from New Zealand, Hanara has a BA in Fashion Technology and years of experience in the design and merchandising of women's clothing. But now the fast fashion industry disgusts her as it

"It's too easy to switch off from the damage our lust for new clothing is responsible for."

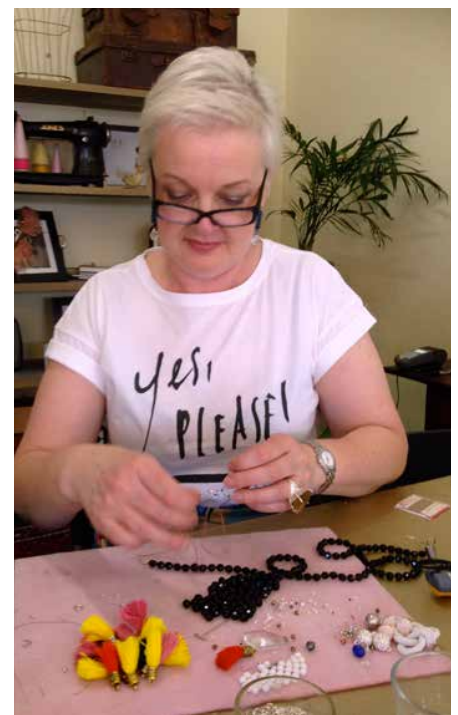
—CINDY HANARA

"sucks the life out of fashion fun." "It's too easy to switch off from the damage our lust for new clothing is responsible for," she says. Her upcycling projects allow her the autonomy and freedom to have fun with fashion design again.

Hanara explains that upcycling is more than simple alterations - it may involve cutting up a dress so it becomes a more versatile top and skirt outfit. It's about breathing



Statement necklace by Angela Clark, upcycled from vintage materials.
(Photo by Donna Cameron)



Designer Angela Clark at work.
(Photo by Donna Cameron)

new life into a garment, making it more desirable for the wearer, thereby decreasing the cost per wear and making it more relevant to contemporary living.

Jewelry designer and upcycler, [Angela Clark](#), agrees with this concept. She keeps a sharp eye out for old, beautifully made objects that are no longer relevant to what we wear today so she can remodel them into a special piece. Her one-of-a-kind handcrafted costume jewelry has been featured on models and musicians both in Australia and internationally.

Clark is attracted to upcycling because pieces in the early-mid-twentieth century were made so well, made to last. “The colours and the metals and the weight of

the pieces are so different from what we see manufactured today,” she says.

[Bruna Capodanno](#) is attracted to upcycling because she believes it’s important to preserve examples of traditional practices that we’re losing today. Capodanno studied fashion design at RMIT before living in Paris for 27 years, where she worked in haute couture embroidery and production lines and distribution for Chloe, Mark Jacobs, Fendi and Christian Lacroix.

She uses this experience today in her upcycling work. She likes the idea of sustaining the beautiful materials we now seldom see – colours that can’t be impregnated into many of our current cheaper fabrics, soft laces with drape unlike

“It is a strategy for re-envisioning materiality.”

—TAMARA LEACOCK

the stiff versions we’re offered today, and proper linen that is now rare because of the difficulty of growing flax.

Tamara Leacock, who is currently pursuing a Masters in Individualized Studies focusing on “Trashion and Recycled Fashion as a Vehicle for Social Revolution” at New York University, believes upcycling “requires that highest and purest level of creativity – the humble acknowledgement of what has existed before and the courage to



Lace from vintage garments refashioned into bridesmaid dresses (retro, shabby chic wedding for Abbey and Luc, November 2015). *(Photo courtesy Bruna Capodanno)*



Bruna Capodanno created this bold print, rayon stretch skirt she upcycled from a 1960s housecoat. She also created a mini dress out of the same housecoat. *(Photo by Donna Cameron)*

change it. It is a strategy for re-envisioning materiality.”

From New York but currently in Melbourne, Leacock has two strands to her work: wearable art and styling projects, [ReciclaGEM](#), and design projects, [REMUSE Designs](#). She works with recycled materials and artisan techniques and creates style portraits featuring local artisan designers and diverse/underrepresented narratives and bodies with Afro-futurist aesthetics. *(Editor’s note: Leacock is also modeling one of her own designs on this issue’s amazing cover.)*

As you can see, there are numerous approaches to upcycling and as many different styles resulting from the practice as there are in the fast

fashion industry. By embracing upcycling, as an image consultant you can introduce your clients to an exciting new world of well designed, quality, personalized pieces that can be made exclusively for them or that simply appeal. Simultaneously, you will be an active part of the solution, not contributing to the problem.

***DONNA CAMERON** is the co-founder of [Body Map wellbeing + style strategies](#), along with her sister, Dr. Nadine Cameron. Current president of the AICI Melbourne Chapter in Australia, she also serves as associate editor for AICI GLOBAL.*



Tamara Leacock modeling her own design. *(Photo by [Katherine Soutar](#) for [ReciclaGEM](#))*



Designs by Tamara Leacock. Hair by Sarah Courtney, Makeup by Cole Williams, Modeled by Elizabeth Sotiria, Amber Sawyers, Lisa Anderson, Cleo DeFleur, and Aesha Sylla. *(Photo by [Interlaced Media](#) for RAW Brisbane (Australia))*