Introduction

Today, we are more likely to read about the eco developments at Marks and Spencer and Gap in terms of production, manufacture, and customer services, than we are to hear about what the designers in the studio are doing. In these eco conscious times how are textile designers working differently? What can they do to design better textiles?

At TED we have for a number of years been inspired by the Design Council's research which showed that if designers make informed and appropriate design decisions at the beginning of the chain, then the environmental performance of any product can be improved by up to 90%. TED's position is unique in research terms. Whereas other research projects look to the manufacturer or producer to 'clean up their act', the TED Project wants to challenge the designer to design textiles that have a reduced impact on the environment at the outset. We have been developing seven design strategies that we believe will help designers with this challenge.

Ever & Again is a three year, AHRC funded group research project concerned with textiles recycling from the designer's perspective. It is about 'upcycling' – our products must improve upon the original textile in some way – as we recognise that there needs to be an economic incentive for textiles recycling to have a future in the UK. We have asked the participating designers to think about recycling in its broadest sense, in the most innovative and creative of ways, before focusing on creating an exhibit that explores an aspect of the project brief in more detail. We also invited five guest artists, designers and writers to develop exhibits, so that the themes could be explored in other contexts. In addition the exhibition also contains the work of eighteen of our textiles graduates from Chelsea. After being introduced to eco textile design through their course work, they have gone into the working world and put some of these ideas into practice.

Many of the **Ever & Again** designers in this exhibition are recycling for the first time. It is also their first time being involved with a group research project which demands that they share their thoughts and ideas in an open and challenging way. They feel that they have benefitted from the workshop format, and they value the opportunity to learn and debate in this way, especially when the demands of teaching and running courses are so great. This project is not just about the work of the individual designer, but it is also about building a research community, a shared vision. Since 2003 the TED Resource has been open by appointment for anyone who is interested in eco textiles. The resource contains samples of fabrics and clothing, press cuttings, academic papers, books, research projects, research from staff and past students at the college, and more, on the subject of environmental design for fashion and textiles.

We want you, the visitor, to tell us what you think of the work in the **Ever & Again** exhibition. We need your input, as there is a year to go on the project, and we would like to take your comments on board. The next idea is to go back into the workshops to redesign our recycled products, to work on ways to improve them. We are going to put into practice more and more of TED's eco textile design strategies, in an attempt to create better and better products. If you want to see the next outcomes, please come and join us at the **Ever & Again** conference in London in October 2008.

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Arts & Humanities Research Council

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TEXTILES ENVIRONMENT DESIGN

University of the Arts London
Chelsea