



Foreword by Lucy Siegle

The redemptive and transformative possibilities showcased in the **Ever & Again** exhibition are extraordinary. As a long term eco living enthusiast and a fashion lover, **Ever & Again** admittedly plays to my interests but, it also showed me how limited my expectations were. This, I suspect, is attributable to the fact that I do a lot of work promoting domestic recycling and we tend to think we've scored a massive victory when aluminium cans are recycled into new cans. **Ever & Again** isn't about recycling, it's about upcycling, adding value through innovation and creativity. The potential seems boundless.

Naturally, this leads to some counter intuitive notions to get your head around: Lorna Bircham deals in 'precious junk' which sounds an oxymoron, where else would you hear a designer proclaim that 'discovering scrap coaxial cable has proved revelatory.' (Frances Geesin)? And how do you divine 'glamour gardening wear' from old clothing abandoned on the tube? (ask Becky Earley).

When you think about it, we are sinking in old clothing: the latest Defra figures point to two million tonnes of textiles in landfill every year. Many of the **Ever & Again** exhibitors have made a habit of rescuing and 'upcycling' the most 'dysfunctional' or most difficult to love. It's a point of honour. The importance of technology is notable – this is no whimsical knitting circle. If I had a pound for every occasion someone had regaled me with the way plastic water bottles can be turned into fleece, I'd have enough for an 'IT' bag. We must move beyond this; there are only so many fleeces the world needs. Fortunately **Ever & Again** does: Kate Goldsworthy notably pushing the material re-creation envelope.

A psychological assessment of how and why we come to throw away the things we love (Kathryn Round and Charlotte Mann) is underwritten with a good dose of pragmatism: For example rather than just moaning about plastic rubbish (as I am inclined to do), look at it as a resource. As Dr Emma Neuberg puts it pragmatically, 'it lasts over 200 years'.

The ideas here are not just theoretical. They are real and have potential to see off anti-environmental interlopers, such as fast fashion. Above all – and this is what I particularly appreciate – they are directed at putting the consumer in control. Gary Pages' dress changes colour, length, style, print and embellishment. When the consumer purchases it, she 'commissions' three designers and six transformations, over which she has full control.

It is, some might say, the polar opposite of the Zara-ification of the high street or of Primark's co-opting of the wardrobe. The ideas in **Ever & Again** fight against that point where, as agrarian essayist, Wendell Berry puts it, 'the histories of all products will be lost, when the degradation of products and places, producers and consumers is inevitable.' And for that reason everyone should see it.

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