



Innovation in Upcycled Fashion Design

5 Key Tips for Sourcing Garments From Thrift Stores

Thrift stores can be overwhelming yet there are treasures to be had. Here are 5 techniques that I use when sourcing materials for my own wardrobe and raw materials to create upcycled garments.

Upcycle (Up-si-kel) adding value to existing goods (like clothing) through the use of labor, materials and creativity

1) Focus on Color

One of the quickest ways to scan quickly through the racks is to focus on particular colors, and pull just those items for review.

P.S. Do you know which colors look best on you? Just because you *like* a particular color doesn't mean it is the best match for your skin tone. A great color match will enhance your general appearance while a poor match will make you look sickly. Your eye color is always a safe bet.

2) Focus on Fabric Quality

Unfortunately much of the women's clothing you will find is of poor quality material and/or construction. Good quality fabric tends to be an indicator of good construction and often better designs. The hand of the fabric - what it feels like in the hand - can tell you a lot about quality.

Good quality fabric feels nicer and drapes better. As you scan for colors, touch the fabric and skip anything that doesn't feel good. I go for natural fibers/blends whenever possible. Is it cashmere or acrylic? Check the label. Check for care instructions. I wash almost everything when I get them home, even if it says dry clean only. If it survives I keep it.

If an item has pilling (little fabric balls) that is often an indicator of poor quality. The exception is wool, where a sweater comb can be used to remove the pills.

3) Ignore the Store's Size-Sorting & Garment Size Tag

Often sizes are quite mixed up so look through the whole section of sizes. This is particularly true if you are looking for garments for upcycling. I've found beautiful fabric on garments in sizes I don't wear and have harvested parts of the garments for upcycling.

Also, sometimes clothes are in the thrift store *because* the actual size does not match the label size. There is no standard sizing in the clothing industry, so eyeball the garment to determine sizing. Try on anything that looks close.

4) Screen for Style of the Garment

There are styles that are trendy and then there are classics. Classics tend to be higher quality and use classic/timeless fabric patterns like solids, checks, dots, stripes, paisley, and plaids. Non-classic prints are likely to look out-of-date quickly.

There are also styles that flatter particular body types: pear, square, inverted triangle, hourglass. If you know what styles flatter your shape then you can quickly screen out those items that do not.

The Paganoonoo "Peggy" blouse



5) Look for Quick Fixes

Once you have selected a garment worthy of closer inspection, check to see if there are any quick fixes that will make the garment work. Those mid calf 90's dresses often look great once the hemline is raised. Sometimes a button can be replaced, or a whole set of buttons. Garments can be reshaped, and tears can be repaired. These little correctable flaws may be the very things that caused the garment to end up in the thrift store.

We are dedicated to making upcycle sewing simple! Try our illustrated step-by-step upcycle sewing instructions and create your own special garment!

www.paganoonoo.com has links to all of our social media accounts.

You are invited to join the Paganoonoo Upcycle Sewing Group on Facebook!