

The Latest in Upcycling & Recycling

BY ASI EFROS

It is inspiring that an array of companies, mindful of social responsibility, are tackling these complex issues with creativity, artistic flair, and ingenuity.

DEADSTOCK - THE ART OF UPCYCLING

Based in New York, the sustainable slow-fashion loungewear brand **Mia & Co.** upcycles and handcrafts the deadstock textiles featured on the **Queen of Raw** website. The result? Heavenly soft, feel-good essentials. Mia, a designer behind the brand, projects her warmhearted nature onto her work, bringing to life design for leisurely lounging with a touch of whimsy.

Alexandra Di Nella, a designer behind **Aurore Lingerie**, conceptualizes her lingerie collections by carefully selecting limited edition embroideries, laces, and silks. All her intricate bustiers, bras, and panties are made of deadstock materials. Instead of producing in large quantities, this progressive designer unveils small capsule collections four times a year. Each piece is designed in London and crafted in Italy, ethically and consciously.

Araks, a hub of timeless and thoughtful lingerie and swimwear, strives to upcycle every single scrap of fabric while creating continuity in the color story. The color palette, inspired by the Pop art of Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol, informs the simplicity of the designs. "Pieces in the collection





QUEEN OF RAW

are meant to work interchangeably with items from the past or those yet to come," says Araks Yeramyán, a creative director at Araks. The brand, as of February 2020, uses only GOTS-certified organic cotton and manufactures its collections responsibly and eco-consciously in Spain.

UPCYCLING BRAS - WOMEN SUPPORTING WOMEN

Social Interpreneures - The Bra Recyclers

The Bra Recyclers is among the new generation of companies that can be proudly referred to as social enterprises. New ways of engaging with the community and eco-conscious initiatives are at the heart of what they do. Since its inception in 2008, **the Bra Recyclers** has donated over 4 million bras to 100 nonprofits around the world. "We believe that the more you give, the more you receive. Our success is not just driven by revenue, but by the impact we make on the environment and in the lives of families in our communities," explains Elaine Birks-Mitchell, CEO/CSO/Chief Sustainability Officer.

The Bra Recyclers buys the overstock from retail stores and brands, thus helping them reduce operational costs and increase profits. The company also accepts lightly worn bras through its collection program. The previously worn bras are distributed to many countries to aid women, facing foreseen and unforeseen challenges in their lives.



"Pre-loved and new bras are donated to non-profits around the world that support women and girls who are escaping domestic violence, and human trafficking, or girls who cannot attend school because they don't have a bra," says Elaine.

Sending your bras and other lingerie to **The Bra Recyclers** is as easy as packaging them, filling out an online form, printing the shipping label, and mailing the package. The Bra Recyclers accepts new and gently worn bras, including sports bras as well as panties.

A collaboration with the Phoenix-based non-profit Impact One Breast Cancer Foundation inspired the collection of post-surgery breast cancer supplies and accessories like mastectomy bras, prostheses, camisoles, and sleeves to provide these items to uninsured women who are battling breast cancer.

Free The Girls - Donate Your Bra

Free The Girls is an international non-profit, devoted to helping sex trafficking survivors recover from their traumatic experiences, gain economic freedom and social well-being, and receive an education. Currently operating in El Salvador, Mozambique, and Costa Rica, through their partners on-the-ground, this organization equips and encourages women and girls to earn a safe income by selling bras in the second-hand market. **Free The Girls** accepts donations of new and gently worn bras of all sizes and styles, including sports bras, nursing bras, and camisoles.

B.R.A. - Bra Recycling Agency - Turning Waste Into Profit

B.R.A. (Bra Recycling Agency), founded by Kathleen Kirkwood in 2010, excels in upcycling bras by converting them into carpet padding. After the used bras are pulverized and the metal parts removed, the mass is compressed into durable padding used in the carpet industry, thus keeping it out of landfills for 30 years. Kathleen has developed

easy-to-use collection programs for retailers, brands, and customers so that each can take part in saving perfectly reusable textiles from landfills.

Lingerie Brands Making A World of Difference

ThirdLove is a lingerie company that collects gently used bras and donates them to women in need through its partner organization, **I Support The Girls**. The latter has helped over 180,000 women in the past three years. A nonprofit, it sends donations to women and girls in homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, refugee settlement homes, foster care agencies, LGBTQ agencies, homes for pregnant teens, and more.

The lingerie brand **Harper Wilde** accepts used bras for recycling and covers the cost of shipping and recycling for customers who choose to place an order with the brand. Having already recycled 30,000 bras, Harper Wilde strives to increase that number to 50,000 in 2021.

ECONYL® RECYCLED FIBER THAT SAVES THE OCEANS

Many progressive lingerie and swimwear brands design their collections by utilizing materials, produced with recycled fibers.

Swimwear brand **Zulu & Zephyr** crafts its meant-to-last pieces in **ECONYL®** - regenerated nylon made from recycled fishing nets recovered from the ocean, as well as pre-and post-consumer waste. This process drastically reduces the need for natural resources, which have traditionally been used in nylon production. **ECONYL®** is known to be resistant to chlorine, sunscreens, oils, pilling, and abrasion. It also maintains its color longevity, thus ensuring the garment's vibrancy all summer long.

Every year **Zulu & Zephyr** donates 1% of the gross sale of its **Signature** collection to a global network of more than 2,000 businesses in 60 countries that combine their efforts to protect the planet's future.



Stidston Studio's ethos is in ethical manufacturing and using sustainable materials. Its making-a-splash swimwear and beach-to-city lounge collections are designed, cut, and sewn in the UK, utilizing recycled materials like **ECONYL®** and **TENCEL™**. To avoid fabric waste in the cutting process, the prints are not placed on the garments, thus making each garment unique.

"Fashion won't change the world, but if we choose clothes that are made from recycled materials and brands that use sustainable and environmentally focused manufacturing techniques, we are creating a consumer drive in an industry that has the potential to make a huge difference," says Claire Stidston, the designer behind the brand.

From turning recycled plastic bottles into swimwear to upcycling intimate apparel, these are encouraging signs of an industry on its way to becoming circular.

