

Global cooling: fashioning new apparel from landfill

Where the clothing industry sees trash, the Raeburn brothers find inspiration for innovation

Coats crafted from transit blankets.

T-shirts made of military parachutes. Totes derived from safety jackets. For fashion label Raeburn, trash is treasure.

Ten years after its debut at London Fashion Week – when Christopher Raeburn wowed critics with an eight-piece outerwear collection crafted entirely from a single parachute purchased from eBay – the brand continues to advocate a circular economy via its “Raemade, Raeduced, Raecycled” ethos: reworking surplus fabrics into functional yet fashion-forward pieces; producing ecofriendly, carbon-neutral apparel; and creating new materials from waste streams.

“The fashion industry has a very opaque supply chain, and it is also one of the biggest polluters,” says Graeme Raeburn, Christopher’s brother and the brand’s performance director. According to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, a bin-lorry of clothes – about 2,625kg – is incinerated or sent to landfill every second. It’s estimated that synthetic fabrics like nylon and polyester take up to 200 years to break down.

Raeburn is diverting some of this waste from landfill. In the brand’s studio, in Hackney, east London – formerly

Burberry’s archive – the brothers devise ways of repurposing surplus garments and “deadstock”. Typhoon wetsuits are deconstructed and reconstructed using a patchwork technique to create parkas and trousers, while silk escape maps – designed for RAF crews

Below: Raeburn’s creative director Christopher (in cap) and performance director Graeme in the studio. On the right is design intern Ashwini Deshpande

The brothers boycotted Black Friday in a bid to encourage people to ‘start buying less, but better’



to evade capture – are given a new lease of life as dresses and accessories. And in a move towards zero waste, all fabric offcuts are shredded and recycled into insulation padding for puffer jackets.

The spring/summer 2020 collection, New Horizons, imagines a future on Mars, with apparel and accessories fashioned from Nasa solar blankets. A second collection with Timberland, where Christopher is also creative director, reinterprets iconic silhouettes, such as the Weatherbreaker jacket, using old parachutes. And Raeburn launched a furniture line, in collaboration with industrial design agency Layer, at the London Design Festival.

The label is determined to promote its ethos, even if it comes at a commercial cost. In 2019 it boycotted Black Friday –

and all the rampant consumerism that comes with it – by shutting its website and pop-up store in a bid to encourage people to “start buying less, but better”.

“There needs to be more curiosity about the provenance and value of apparel, as well as what to do with it

at the end of the day – whether that is extending the life of a piece or returning it to a closed-loop system,” says Graeme. “This awareness can also really change how people make purchasing decisions in the first place.”

Delle Chan raeburndesign.co.uk

WIRED	TIRED	EXPIRED
Flygskam	Lagom	Hygge
Inspired	Expired	Tired
Hybrid burgers	Veggie burgers	Beef burgers
Permanent record	Guinness World record	For the record
Face paint	V masks	Balaclavas

PHOTOGRAPHY: SAMI CHICK



OLD FABRICS, NEW LIFE

1.2 GERMAN SAFETY JACKETS

Reworked into parkas and bomber jackets

3 IMMERSION SHARK BAG

Constructed from old Typhoon wetsuits

4.5 1950s RAF SILK MAPS

Fashioned into dresses and accessories

6 RAF AIR BRAKE PARACHUTE

Overlaid on an organic cotton base to create shirts, anoraks and trousers

7.8 FABRIC OFFCUTS

Shredded and recycled into insulation padding for puffer jackets

9 PANDA PLUSHY

Made during the brand’s #offcutanimals workshops

10 TOTE BAGS

Crafted from a range of materials, including old military blankets and parachutes