

EILEEN
FISHER

DESIGNWORK



INTRODUCTION by Eileen Fisher

Textiles and apparel have a huge environmental impact — and our industry's current model is unsustainable. We're using up natural resources faster than they can be renewed. We're making more and more stuff. And after each season, we toss out the old and move onto what's next. Where does this mountain of used and unsold clothes go? Roughly 85% becomes waste in a landfill — including many of the items donated to charity.

At EILEEN FISHER, we want to do more than just reduce our environmental footprint. We want to create an industry that actually helps restore the planet. And for us, it all starts with taking responsibility for what we make — and where it ends up.

We believe the future is circular. In 2009, we designed a take-back program that gives our apparel new life. So when you're done with your sweater, we take it back, in any condition, to be resold or renewed through techniques like overdyeing and mending. But our biggest challenge remained — what to do with the pieces that are damaged beyond repair? We didn't give up on them, and now, we're thrilled to introduce DesignWork, a new concept that preserves the value of these materials.

This project was born in 2015, when we created the Makerspace with longtime collaborator and artist Sigi Ahl. She, along with Carolina Bedoya, explored ways to turn piles of old clothes and scraps into new textiles. First, they created a system to clean, sort and inventory the bags of clothes and leftover material sitting in our warehouse — a truly daunting task. Then came the fun part: experimenting with different fabrics, mixing them together and felting them to create one-of-a-kind designs like the extraordinary WallWorks you see here.

Though the process of felting is age-old, what is new is how we're scaling our systems to create a truly sustainable business model that's circular by design. We hope this exhibition inspires you to see the beauty — and possibility — in your old clothes.