

EILEEN
FISHER

DESIGNWORK



CREATIVE FREEDOM by Lidewij Edelkoort

The elegant and soft-spoken woman is a dynamo disguised in a slim and modernist body. With straight white hair, black masculine glasses and minimalist clothes, she has no age, just grace. Eileen Fisher founded and manages an all American company that dresses civilized women of all ages and sizes, in easy-to-wear voluminous basics that slit from the shoulder and layer effortlessly. Fisher understands that clothes needed to be sustainable; including using organic cottons and partly manufacturing in America as well. Her company sets higher sustainability goals each year.

Eileen Fisher's faithful fashions have generated a steady stream of income that has been invested in her company to give back to society with an initiative called Renew. Now she pushes her ideas a step further with the recycling of her own goods. Clients can give back their old Eileen's, get five dollars to spend on something new, and are generating a rather amazing return of merchandise to their factory in Irvington, north of New York. The DesignWork pieces are cleaned and checked for flaws or stains and all perfect items are put back on the market as vintage pieces. Clothes that are damaged beyond mending are carefully selected by fiber and color, ready to be reused and reinvented, re-colored at times. The garments that are created from scratch and scraps look amazingly young and design-driven. Combining different textiles in one style, they look like fashion student experiments; a far step from the regular collection, somehow showing that the business of recycling can set companies free from their own commercial rules, leaving space for innovation and creation. Ultimately these new garments might become such a success that they will influence the permanent collection, making the arrow of recycling go back on its own track, recharging creativity from within, also providing women of different backgrounds generous grants with the financial results.

Creativity becomes even more palpable when old cashmere sweaters are carefully selected by color harmonies, felted into new blankets and carpets, sometimes even coats. These unique artistic pieces are close to art – Rothko comes to mind – but they are an intimate art to cuddle and care for the collector. Thus a lifestyle brand is found in the debris of overconsumption, establishing DesignWork as a high-end endeavor, giving further proof of the effects of recycling as a philosophy and as a practice. When waste becomes wealth and culture, the circle has come around twice, empowering new ventures, gifting the world with amazing beauty.