



Trashmagination Podcast #13 – Trash Fashion

Welcome to Trashmagination, a podcast about reimagining trash. I'm Carla Brown.

Today I'll introduce you to trash fashion or clothing made from trash or recyclable materials. It's distinct from:

- eco-fashion - fashion designed from sustainable materials – it can involve using scraps from the typical clothing production process which would be trash otherwise
- slow fashion - a movement of designing, creating, and buying garments for quality and longevity. It emphasizes paying fair wages and creating zero waste.
- upcycling - remaking clothing into something you might wear every day.
- wearable art - fashion that is super artistic but not necessarily made from trash materials

Trash fashion is typically done as a fun event. Usually the outfits are not items you would wear anywhere because they are not really practical or comfortable. Other terms people use are “trashion” which combines the words trash and fashion, curbside or junk couture and recycle runway.

My Experience at a Trash Fashion Show

I designed dresses for a show by Trashion Fashion [<https://www.trashionfashion.org>] which holds shows in Hartford, Connecticut, New York and Washington DC. Most designers were elementary school students. Our dresses were woven from plastic bag strips. It took four months. They were held on with buttons from plastic caps. You can see photos of our dresses and at the event in the show notes - <http://trashmagination.com/trashion-fashion-dc-2015/>.

When we arrived, there were students from a hair styling and make-up school who were volunteering. Musicians and dancers performed. We walked like fashion models up and down the hallways. It was an unusual experience for me and my daughter since we had no background in fashion or modelling before.

I made a few other clothing items from trash, including vests from juice pouches which I wear to Trashmagination tabling events. I also sewed a fedora hat from lemonade packages.

I have since learned that plastic bags are a very common material in trash fashion. Now I'm fascinated by designs from more unexpected materials. To illustrate that, I'll link to the winners of the Junk Couture show in Ireland [<http://boijunkkouture.com/category/2016-prize-winners/>]- the 2016 winners made outfits from:

- panty hose and tights that had runs in them crocheted into a dress and cape
- cow tags and milking supplies
- pistachio nut shells
- a years' worth of a diabetics life support supplies
- keyboard keys from a computer

Organizing Your Own Trash Fashion Show

It's great for Earth Day or summer camps. You don't have to know how to sew. A lot of trash fashion designers sew, but others use tape. They teach how to draft a design and experiment with materials that don't cost a lot for the school.

Typically trash fashion shows set constraints about what is accepted.

- What percentage of materials must be from recycled items? Often it is 75% recycled materials.
- Can pre-existing clothing be used? Usually not, even if it is from a thrift store.
- Do your shoes need to be made from trash? This varies from show to show.
- Should you design to a theme? Example themes: fairy tales, robots or ocean creatures or a color
- Can you use items from nature or not? Sometimes there is a special category for those designs.

Trash fashion shows take place all over the world, and some get really involved.

- The City of Orlando has Trash 2 Trends which raised \$22,000 this February to help with recycling programs.
- A school in Bend, Oregon raised \$20,000 at their event, Rubbish Renewed, in January. At that event, there was a live auction where people could bid on some of the designs and take them home.
- In New Zealand, there was a popular Trash to Fashion Awards for 20 years and just stopped due to funding cuts. I loved the designs inspired by Maori culture and made from items in nature.
- In Ireland, a program called Junk Couture offers hefty scholarships. The entries in that show definitely used the most unusual materials I have ever seen, probably because using unusual materials is one criteria in the scoring.
- Aveda sponsors trash fashion shows called Catwalks for Water [<https://avedainstitutessouth.edu/2015-catwalk-water/>] through Aveda salons around the world, and the trash fashion designers can win scholarships.

Another trend has been when people make special-event dresses from recycled materials:

- Prom dresses from candy wrappers [<http://www.bitrebels.com/design/colorful-prom-dress-made-from-candy-wrappers/>]
- Wedding dress from bread tags [<http://www.mnn.com/lifestyle/natural-beauty-fashion/stories/bride-wears-wedding-dress-made-from-10000-bread-tags>]

In the Show Notes

3 lists to help if you are interested in organizing a trash fashion event:

- Ideas for materials you can use in your trash fashion designs
- Recurring annual trash fashion shows
- Trash fashion designers who have inspiring designs

Please email trashmagination@gmail.com if you have ideas for other materials, other events or other designers.

Finally – I have curated a huge Pinterest board of trash fashion designs with more than 100 pins – so check that out for inspiration - <https://www.pinterest.com/Trashmagination/trash-fashion/>.

So for today's Trashmagination checklist, here are some activities for you based on today's podcast:

1. **Look for a Trash Fashion Show near you** – These are especially popular around Earth Day.
2. **Organize a Trash Fashion Show** – This is a great way to engage your kids, your students and your community.
3. **Go beyond the obvious answer** – I mentioned how most trash fashion outfits tend to use similar materials, but some people really expand the boundaries by finding new materials. I hope that inspires you to seek a solution that outside the obvious in some area of your life.

So until next time – May you see your trash as just another source of fashion in your life.