



Fashion Reloved

It all started with a simple idea—selling second-hand designer dresses to do something good for the planet, giving clothes a second life instead of making more. The deeper I went, the more I saw the fashion industry's dark side—how it manipulates us, especially women, through magazines, ads, social media ... making us feel like we need to buy *something* to be *someone*.

So the idea came: what if we turned these designer dresses into art? Into protest? Into stories? With the help of Di Milstein, we started meeting artists, and they each added something of themselves to a dress. No rules, just expression. At the time, I was early in my recovery from alcohol dependency trying to find myself again. This project became part of that healing. It gave me something to pour myself into—something beautiful and real.

Why do we give these big brands so much power? Why are we scared to change a dress just because it's "designer"? At the end of the day, a dress is just fabric, thread, a shape. So by altering them—making them ours—we took that power back.

The fashion industry is one of the biggest polluters in the world. And the truth is, we don't need more clothes. We need more honesty,

more heart. We're being tricked into thinking we have to follow trends, when really, we need to follow ourselves.

Some of the pieces in this show were completely intuitive—like my cat dress. I just started sewing and let it come through. It made me smile. It reminded me of joy. That's how sobriety has been too—one step at a time, no perfect plan, just staying open to the next thing.

I'm so grateful to all the women who worked on the dresses, and to everyone who helped make the show happen, especially my partner Rob.

These aren't just dresses. They carry stories. Someone made the thread, someone wove the fabric, someone stitched it all together. Now here we are, adding our own layer to it. It's all connected—us, the clothes, the Earth.

This was about being part of a different story. One that empowers. One that tells the truth. One that lets you wear your heart out loud.

That is the mission: to help people feel good in their clothes without it costing the Earth.

Violeta Jaffray

Sustainable Fashion

In 2022, I was approached by my friend Violeta Jaffray. She had acquired 500 designer dresses and was about to open a shop in Birmingham.

However, she became increasingly aware of negative aspects of the fashion industry and wanted to do more to raise awareness. Violeta suggested transforming some of the dresses into art pieces culminating in a fashion show. Some carried messages of protest, some were enhanced with embroidery or paint.

There was a great community spirit, all the artists gave their time for free.

In April 2023, we held a fashion show with a difference in Glastonbury Town Hall; models gliding in on a hoverboard, reading poems, playing the cello, performing a rap, and dancing with hoops.

On the following pages we feature a selection of these beloved dresses.

The project has had an effect: we are now making more sustainable choices and learning to mend and adapt our wardrobes rather than buying new.

Let's spread the word!

We can all play a part in making meaningful change.

Diana Milstein

Cat Dress

Violeta Jaffray

Original Designer: Joseph Ribcoff



Pressing Buttons

Diana Milstein

Dolce and Gabbana

I enhanced this dress by covering the black spots with buttons donated by my community. On the back of the dress I used discarded embroidered discs so that the wearer would be able to comfortably sit down! I performed the rap at the fashion show.

The Button Dress Rap

*The story of the button has been sorely underrated
Its humble reputation has got to be updated
Because it was invented 2000 years ago
It's really got a legacy I want you to know
Originally designed for decoration
It created quite a sensation
When in the Middle Ages it found its true role
Teaming up with the button hole!*

*These Buttons have been given from my community
Mothers and grandmothers generosity, yo!
All the women of my generation
Had a treasured button collection
Buttons of every shape and size
Bright ones shiny ones, a feast for the eyes
Loved, forgotten, tucked away
Coming out now to the light of day*

*The dress is complaining cos it's getting very heavy
The buttons are complaining, they don't have a voice
These buttons are pressing for a new solution
One that does not involve pollution
We're talking about a transformation
Gonna be a fashion revolution
Lets make it a priority, create sustainability
Honouring ecology in every single choice.*





The OTT Dress

Nan Jenkins. Burberry

My dress is a prayer of thanks for being taught as a young child a basic skill, that since the first human worked out how to fashion together animal skins, has been handed down by every generation for millennia... how to sew. A fundamentally crucial part of being human and of our creative spirit and soul.

It is a celebration of joy and beauty that was once everyone's. How vitally important this skill is in a world that has sadly turned its back on it, a world in which gorging ourselves on cheap mass produced clothes is the norm and the Designer Label is worshipped—no matter how cheap and mass-produced it is. Words embroidered on the dress — *If money be the food of love play on...and on... and on.*

1,134 Ribbons

Milly Ollis

Gucci

A plain cream Gucci shift dress was given to me to customise. It was ten years since the Rana Plaza disaster, a building in Bangladesh that had housed several garment factories used by the global fashion industry.

The owners had been warned that they could not add more floors as the building was unstable, but they did. On 24th April 2013 the building collapsed killing 1,134, mainly women and children as the building also contained a creche.

Over three months I sewed 1,134 ribbons on to the dress, each ribbon to remember a life lost. I used an ombre effect with cream at the top of the dress gradually changing to blood red at the bottom. I wore the dress at the fashion show and asked that no music played when I walked down the runway to respect all those lives lost and changed.



Greta's on it

Jan Ollis

Mary Katrantzou

I chose this dress or should I say it chose me because of the print. In my work as an artist and designer I often use words as observations on our world. This dress became my comment on fast fashion, textile practices including stealing designs and the amount of waste produced by the fashion industry.

Appliqueing the word 'Respect' to the front of the dress questions respecting designers' work but also respecting our planet. Far too many clothes go to landfill each year. I added images of activist Greta Thunberg, and Spanish billionaire Amancio Ortega Gaona, owner of Zara. Both represent opposing attitudes towards fashion.

More words were added on the back and sides of the dress: 'PEOPLE', 'PLANET' and 'PROFIT'; (the three 'Ps' of sustainability) and the word 'POWER' which is what we need to regain in our choice of clothing.

