

## **We are “Comrades” of promoting Recycling.**

～ The 3Rs in Clothing have to be stylish and fun !～

**It started as a casual information-exchange meeting, but now it has become an NPO Corporation aimed at positively contributing to society.**

Prior to entering into the era of high economic growth in Japan, clothing in average households were either reused within the household(“reuse”) or sold to rag dealers and reused to be recycled into secondhand clothes, industrial wiping rags or shoddy. The most popular example of “household reuse” is the *yukata* (a light cotton *kimono*). It would have started its life as a dress for a special occasion such as a summer festival and then it would have been downgraded to daily wear. Later it would be remade into a children’s *yukata* after any damaged parts were cut out, and later still into baby’s nappies and floorcloths. Finally it ended its lifecycle as fuel in the kitchen range. It was a time when you would pass down any clothes you’d outgrown or buy and sell them as secondhand. However, high economic growth from the early 1960’s and the introduction of western style clothing coupled with the introduction of the ready-made industry has turned us into the typical mass-production/mass-consumption/mass-waste society. As a result, the majority of unwanted clothing are thrown away as combustible waste, collected by local council then incinerated and then ending up in reclamation sites.

In 2000, following my proposal, “the Fiber Recycling Study Group” was formed. It was the year Japan resolved to switch itself into a Recycling-Based Society, and when we saw a number of environmental regulations come into effect. For that reason, the year 2000 was and is called as “the beginning of the Recycle Era”. It started as a casual study group with no membership fees and no rules, just exchanging information through emails. Then as we became ready to take on actual projects, the core members of the group applied for NPO Corporation status. The aims of this group were and are as follows: ① To promote environmental awareness, with particular focus on fibre recycle. ② Having acquired a juridical person status, we should be able to form closer relationship with other corporations, organizations, self-governing bodies and academies. ③ Each and all members to be practical, active, and all play leading parts, ④ Actively searching for innovative new technology, and promoting it widely, and ⑤ To always have our motto “ecological activities in fashion-products have to be stylish and fun!” in mind.

**Through enlightening the designers with the concept of “Recouture”. as a group, we will have the power to promote a sustainable society.**

To produce something fashionable and eco-friendly at the same time is a rather difficult task, therefore the 3Rs in the clothing industry are not progressing. However, to be

environmentally-conscious is an urgent matter within a fashion business world which is using fabric (fiber) as its staple material too. So, we focused a spotlight on fashion/creation, and decided to promote creation under a new concept called "Recouture". This may be a rather unfamiliar term for you. It signifies that in order to be environmentally friendly, the creators & designers create something of high quality out of off-cuts, left-overs, used cloths and recycled materials. If a designer is eco-minded, he/she would choose these materials and produce something that contribute to the 3Rs, especially "reduce". And it won't be a mass-production but will be unique. This way, traditional skills such as remake, reform and repair, which have been kept by the independent small repair shops, will be greatly utilized. Also, by purchasing and wearing the Recouture garment, you are contributing to the sustainable society.

The "Recouture Committee" was inaugurated with support from people of experience or academic standing, the educational world and the industrial world. With a subsidy from the Japan Fund for Global Environment, the committee launched "the Recouture School". People who are promoting an environmental activity in various fields are giving lectures at this school. With each designer, as an individual, having only limited influence in society, we are planning to set up a Recouture Designer Association with those who has already finished the school. As a group, we shall have ecologically a powerful influence on society.

Japan Association for Promoting Fiber Recycling

Chairman Yutaka Kida



↑ “Recouture” piece created from a couple of old *aloha-shirts*. They were first made into a top & bottom set-up and then given with a quilted finish. (By Masato Yamaguchi)