



Tishman Environment  
and Design Center



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# Connecting Generations Through Textiles and Stories: Community Engagement Textile

# Workshops with Donna Maione



This eight-session workshop spans over four months and explores the possibilities of using textile waste from within the NYC area. This project engages Parsons students and alumni with a community in Brooklyn at [Bailey's Cafe](#), a local organization dedicated to providing creative and collaborative environments to communities across New York City. The zero-waste collective group began their series of workshops by exploring and experiencing first-hand a textile waste sorting facility. Together, we visited [Fabscrap](#), a pre-consumer textile waste sorting facility located

in the Brooklyn Army terminal. For most in the group, this was the first time reading labels for material content and handling the mixed fabrics of high quality. Experiencing the labor intensity and the volume of the material that needs sorting was eye-opening. After an afternoon of sorting fabric scraps, we were able to collect materials to bring back for our future sewing workshops. Before we began using our reclaimed materials from Fabscrap, we inspected post-consumer garments which were donated by [Eileen Fisher Renew](#), a garment take-back and reuse program, as part of their circular design process. Again, we experienced the sorting process and the time needed to examine and determine the appropriateness for reuse or upcycling to create new items and uses. Hands-on interaction with the materials and discussions around the avoidance of waste from a design perspective are central to this community-based project. From this first-hand experience, the local community can see the hidden impacts of textile waste. In our third session, we sorted post-consumer textiles. Kazi Akter (below left) examines used clothing to determine the next possible use. The challenge with the used clothing is deciding how to deconstruct and utilize the materials for the next generation of design. The zero-waste

collective group has plans for quilts,  
accessories, and upcycled clothing  
made from the damaged or stained  
blouses, dresses, or pants.







The project will continue to explore the mending and reuse of textile waste through creative and collaborative community activities. It explores how an individual's awareness may shift around textile waste and how with continued interaction with waste materials, their mindset may change toward one to include empathy toward the problem of textiles in our landfills. Together, Parsons graduate students and the local community, Bailey's Cafe, will continue to engage in co-designed activities and collaborate in the making of new uses from the used materials found. With the remaining four sessions, the creating has just begun. There are plans to showcase the work of the O-waste collective group at the end of the



semester. Stay tuned for more details. *Donna Maione is a part-time faculty member at Parsons, who teaches a first-year course Sustainable Systems. Through a Faculty Support Grant from the Tishman Environment and Design Center, she is leading a zero-waste textile workshop as part of an interdisciplinary and collaborative research project.*



*Kevin Wen (left) experiences his first-time at a sewing machine. Here, he stitches his first seam as he makes a floor pillow, to be used at Bailey's Cafe community center. The rest of*

*the group (not shown) cheers him on,  
with much applause and celebration.*



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