

Revive and reuse: Repair Shop encourages creative sustainability in Shanghai



Courtesy of Simon Collins



Repair doesn't simply mean putting a big patch on your knee but making something better out of the old

Simon Collins

Fashion educator and chief creative at DIIS

Yang Di

Imagine living in a world where you could repair and repurpose items, from a pair of jeans to a vintage electrical piece. Join this circular economy through The Repair Shop, a three-day event hosted at the Design Innovation Institute Shanghai from January 19 to 21.

"The beauty of reformation can be applied to all different things that are part of our daily lives, be it our phones, computers, transportation or clothing," said Simon Collins, an influential fashion educator and the chief creative at DIIS who started the event. "Everything that we interact with on a daily basis has the potential to be upcycled or regenerated."

Following a career that led him from being creative director for some of the world's leading brands to the former dean of the School of Fashion at Parsons in New York, Collins is now based in Shanghai, leading the creative team at DIIS. Located in the North Bund central business area of Hongkou District, the DIIS was founded in 2020 in cooperation with the Shanghai Commission of Economy and Informatization, Shanghai Education Commission, Hongkou District Government and Hillhouse Investment.

Since the beginning of 2023, the heritage building of the Henry Lester Institute of Technical Education has been home to the DIIS, a non-profit advanced research institution dedicated to creating world-leading design innovation with real-world impact.

In addition to his role at the DIIS, Collins also runs his own consultancy company, The House of Collins. Additionally,



JALAB is an innovative organization focusing on research and design for jewelry.

he is a distinguished visiting professor at both Tsinghua and Donghua universities.

The concept of circularity is far from novel, Collins said.

"I live in a lane house here which reminds me of where I grew up in England in an equivalent house. My mother and my family, along with those grandmothers who live in the lanes of Shanghai, don't throw things away — they fix things, and they are used to that. I want to remind people about that culture."

The motivation for organizing The Repair Shop was "to celebrate the positive outcomes that arise from repairing."

"Repair doesn't simply mean putting a big patch on your knee but making something better out of the old," he said.

One participating brand at The Repair Shop is Times Remake. They take vintage Levi's jeans or American workwear and embellish them with print, embroidery, paint, or patchwork to make them look much cooler and more desirable.

"They are not repairing or upcycling; they are reviving

and recreating in a way that enhances desirability," Collins explained.

HOTO, a Shanghai based tool company that repairs, recycles and revives items will supply tools for the event. Other participating brands include Moovi (a manufacture of foldable bikes, scooters and skateboards); TRASHAUS (creating 3D printing artwork from recycled materials); JALAB (an organization focusing on research and design of jewelry using plant-based materials); PADDYPOST (a fashion company utilizing recycled fabrics to make postcards); Da Nao Bu (creating through recycled materials); Xin Chen Jian (the first hackerspace in China and an active non-profit maker community); and Xin Yu (reviving patchwork art from the Chinese Loess Plateau).

Brands from many fields will showcase their products and demonstrate how they can be customized, repaired and upcycled. Through fixing, painting, styling, tailoring, embellishing, and more, on-site artisans will show how items can be improved and kept in circulation,