

Cartier

WOMEN'S INITIATIVE AWARDS



2017 FINALIST FOR ASIA-PACIFIC

YUNYE SHIN

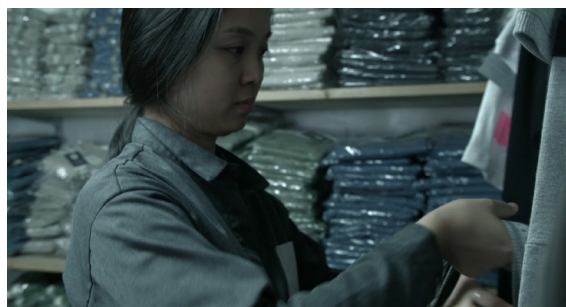
South Korea

Zero Space Inc

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Designs and manufactures zero waste design products

An artist by trade, 31-year old Yunye Shin quickly fell for the unfamiliar yet intimate charm of Changshin-dong, the centre of Korean fashion. The sounds of the sewing machines emanating from the small-sized sewing factories crowding the in-between alleys made her think of the similar work stations she'd experienced as a young artist. However, looking at the clothes being made and the waste coming out in the factories, Yunye was embarrassed she wasn't more aware of the manufacturing process and environment in which the garments she was wearing were produced.



According to Yunye, around 8,000 tons of fabric is discarded from small sewing factories in Changshin-dong every year, creating a huge environmental problem for the area. It was from seeing this waste and with a yearning to change it, that Yunyu was inspired to launch Zero Space Inc.

“ We don’t just want to sell products; we want to sell a sustainable lifestyle. The real challenge is to teach future generations to live in a way that doesn’t waste resources ”

Launched in 2013, the mission behind Zero Space and its Zero Waste Design Products was to reduce waste in the production process by manufacturing zero waste design products through collaboration with young designers and artists to make high value-added products as well as with small local sewing factories to help them earn more money. Part of the business focuses on designing to reduce leftover fabric waste from the design stage. For example, if an existing design produces between 20% and 30% of leftover fabric waste, the design using the zero waste method pattern, will reduce it to 5% or less. It also links existing small sewing artisans with young creators, increasing income for those sewing the products by 30%, bringing economic security. The focus is on high quality products that last a long time, rather than consumption of cheap products.

Other than its environmental impact, the business is having a significant social impact by fostering economic independence for a younger generation and boosting income for sewing artisans. The company is currently collaborating with 12 small sewing factories in Changshin to make zero waste products and is using leftover fabric to make cushions. So far the company has sold 800 of its upcycled cushions, accounting for around 1.6 tons of leftover fabric.

RISE OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Zero Space Inc is tapping into a growing interest in Korea of social enterprises which have meaningful stories and a fair production process, rather than cheap and trendy materials. The brand has a range of 10 products including clothing and lifestyle products. Zero shirts and aprons are currently being produced using the zero waste method, which eliminates any fabric being thrown away from the production stage. Unique design touches are added to the products, such as tape measures being used as apron straps. The Zero Apron 2 Ways can be used as an apron and can also be turned into a bag.

Products are sold online and are stocked together with products from other manufacturing-based social enterprises in the Hyundai Department Store and stores in Hong-dae and Yeonnam regions which sell ethical design products.

SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE

Part of the company’s profits are ploughed back into design education programmes to teach people about the zero design process and how it impacts both the environment

and the people involved. Introducing a zero waste business to South Korea, Zero Space is solving a range of environmental and social problems and educating consumers about the impact of their buying decisions. With a domestic economic recession hitting the country, there is an increasing need for mid-priced quality products that will last for longer, making the time ripe for the business and presenting enormous opportunities for future growth.

“ We focus on solving environment problems but also on customer values ”