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# Austin American-Statesman

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## Giving unwanted items a second chance

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### Fashion show, film screening all part of ReuseConex conference

Posted: 12:00 a.m. Friday, Oct. 17, 2014

By [Nancy Flores](#) - American-Statesman Staff

When Austinite Tina Sparkles set out to make a dress out of unwanted but transformable items, she turned to the once vibrant flowers in her yard. As she scooped up dead flowers, she noticed she was also gathering many dead bees on the ground and decided to incorporate them into her artistic garment.

For Sparkles, a designer, teacher and author, repurposing “is about thinking about materials in different ways, creating new stories,” she says. “I find it challenging and fun to see that something ugly or cast away can become something beautiful and wearable.”



FUZZY BEASTIE PHOTOGRAPHY

Sparkles' repurposed designs, which also feature other not-so-typical fashion fibers such as reclaimed wood, twigs and leaves, on Friday will come down the “ReFashion Show” runway, which

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The ReFashion Show at the ReuseConex Expo will feature many repurposed designs.

was created to highlight upcycled couture from local and national

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designers as well as curated vintage shop looks. It's among many reuse events that will be featured during the expo portion of ReuseConex, a three-day conference that starts Thursday and will bring together reuse thought leaders to share innovative ideas about sustainability in everything, including art and style.

Attendees can also cheer on Austin's strong creative community in the "Ultimate Upcycle Challenge," a competition where artists, makers and do-it-yourselfers create something unique out of reuse materials.

"It's like 'Iron Chef' for crafters," said Heather Gregory, special event producer and director of SCRAP Denton, in a statement. "Four teams are given a creative challenge and art materials that have been picked for them and then compete head-to-head in front of a lively audience to see which team reigns supreme."

Local teams competing include Austin Creative Reuse and Treasure City Thrift.

Teams can bring a secret item or try to sway the judges with sweet treats, says Sarah Somera, an upcycle challenge producer and Treasure City Thrift co-director.

"I hope people see that reuse can be fun," she says.

Treasure City Thrift, a collectively owned store on East Seventh Street that uses its profits to support other community organizations, has made reuse part of its mission. It hosts monthly 25 cent sales, then offers some of the unsold items to teachers. Unsold clothes eventually get converted into cleaning rags, Somera says.

In 2011, the Austin City Council approved a plan that includes having a zero-waste city by 2040, which means keeping at least 90 percent of discarded materials out of the landfill.

"For Austin, nurturing and growing our reuse sector is critical in meeting our Zero Waste goals," said Austin Resource Recovery Director Bob Gedert in a statement. "ReuseConex provides an excellent opportunity for industry leaders to come together and learn best practices and develop creative solutions. I welcome all those who want to innovate, transform and sustain."

In a city that encourages reclaimed material artists and zero-waste grocery stores, expo attendees will also get a chance to explore the

innovative activities already happening here in a self-guided tour of Austin's reuse community.

To learn more about ReuseConex activities, visit reuseconex.org.

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## IF YOU GO

ReuseConex at the Holiday Inn Austin Midtown is Thursday-Saturday. The expo, which is open to the general public (\$5 suggested donation) and conference attendees (free admission), will be Thursday and Friday. Proceeds benefit Reuse Alliance, a national nonprofit working to increase awareness of reuse.

Thursday: Ultimate Upcycle Challenge, 5:30 p.m.

Friday: ReFashion Show, 5:30 p.m.

"REUSE! Because You Can't Recycle The Planet" film screening and Q&A with the filmmaker Alex Eaves, 7-9 p.m.

Saturday: Self-Guided Reuse Tour, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

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