



## Knot My Shirts: Women's Wear Dress from Post-consumer Men's Wear

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The dress was part of a collection of garments developed for a upcycle guidebook. The guidebook consisted of this garment and four others all upcycled from men's dress shirts. The purpose of the guidebook was to develop upcycled garments with a consistent construction process so as to allow for production runs in a limited production setting. As many researchers have stated, fast and mass fashion have created an overwhelming amount of consumption and waste in our world today (Bianchi and Britwistle, 2011; Niinimä, 2012; Fletcher, 2008). One way to reduce the amount of textile waste is to take garments that would be thrown away and upcycle. "The fashion upcycling process (also termed refashioning or remanufacturing) has been defined by academics and practitioners as an upward reprocessing of waste, recovering intrinsic value through recycling, recutting, refashioning and closing the loop of the manufacturing system" (Han et al., 2017, p. 71). A challenge, however, with upcycling is that it is hard to produce duplicates on a mass scale (Farrer, 2011; Gwilt & Rissanen, 2011). However, men's dress shirts are construction in a fairly similar way regardless of the brand and price point making consistency when upcycling duplicates easier. It is important that the fashion industry and academia continue to develop innovative ways to upcycle efficiently. Scholars have also practiced upcycling techniques with men's dress shirts to create unique looks

This dress was developed for the upcycling guidebook. Otto von Busch authored what he called "cookbooks" for upcycling, essentially guidebooks to provide short recycling manuals with different garment types exploring the basics of fashion hacktivism (Busch, 2005; Busch, 2007). While these guidebooks are instructive, they are not extensive in directions and have an aesthetic that is not conducive for a larger market. In order to provide more detailed directions for women's contemporary market, this dress along with other garments were included in guidebook which focused on upcycling one kind of garment from men's dress shirts for production.

The upcycled dress is made out of two men's dress shirts; one size large and one size medium. Both shirts had vertical stripes of similar colors which allowed for a cohesive look within the dress, not jarring or contrasting. Matching similar patterns in this manner is one effective way to pair garments for upcycling. Sizing is one issue in the upcycling process and sizing with this dress can be easily varied. This dress could be made into several different sizes by changing the length of elastic used in the back bodice or by adding a third shirt. There is also minimal waste when producing this dress. The sleeves, almost all of the shirt body, and the collar stands are used. The twist in the bodice gives a sweet-heart neckline at the bust which creates a very pleasing shape on the body. Details from the men's shirt are clearly visible in the cuffs, collar stands, button-placket, and pocket but the garment has been re-fashioned in a way that creates a very playful and feminine look.

The process to produce this dress required seam ripping the collar stands from the shirt and collar to form the straps. Then the sleeves were cut from both shirts; one set formed the front bust and one the back. The back bust had three rows of elastic inserted into tunnels formed by stitching. Center back of both shirts was cut and then sewn to each other to form side seams making the new center front and back of the shirt the button-down placket. The skirt section was then gathered to the size of the bodice and both hand and machine stitched together.

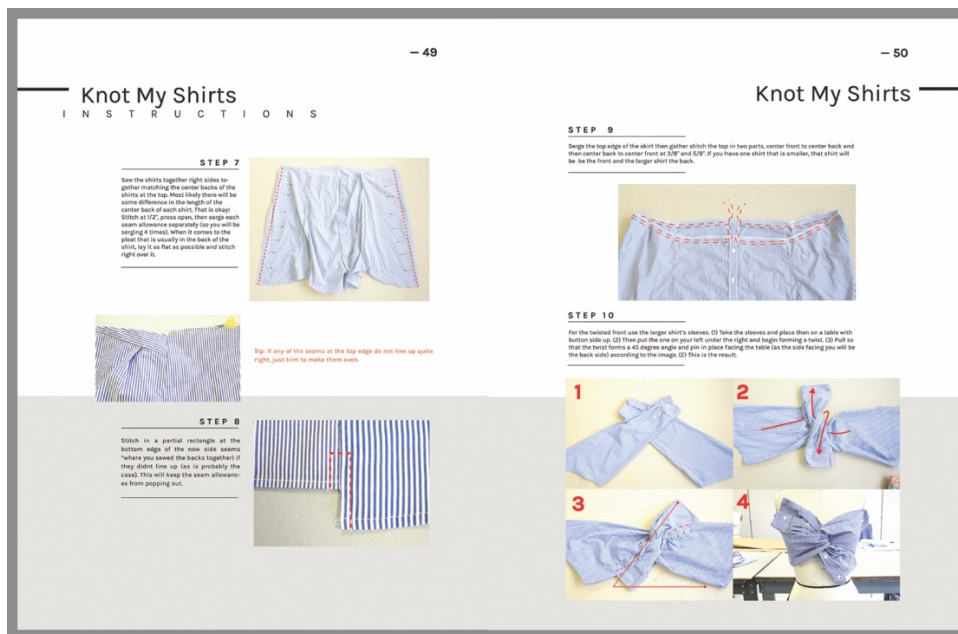


Figure 1. Two instruction pages from the upcycle guidebook for the dress, *Knot My Shirts*.

This design is a marketable piece for women's contemporary wear that can be duplicated by production teams or local makers. It is also wearable and stylish. While identical garments in both material and design may be impossible to create using the upcycle process, it is possible to duplicate very similar looking garments when the original source of material is similar in cut and design. Another option would be for production teams to make unique garments by using different patterns and textures but in terms of construction and fit the garments would be the same. Developing standardized process for upcycling with certain materials, like this dress and its guidebook, would contribute to upcycling's increase as a future mass market approach.

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