

# MAKE MEND



## MAKE MEND II: TOOLS OF THE TRADE A Wabi-Sabi Workshop

Friday, November 17, 2023  
Watt Hall South Lawn  
University of Southern California

### KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

This event is part of a series of hands-on workshops hosted by the USC Roski School of Art and Design:

- Friday, September 8, 2023: Unravel, Unwind
- Friday, November 17, 2023: Tools of the Trade
- Friday, February 23, 2024: WORK + Materials Barter Fair

No experience is necessary, and supplies and tools will be provided. Check event listings for information about materials that participants are invited to bring for each workshop.

## Wabi-Sabi

*Wabi-sabi is a worldview that centers on the idea of finding beauty in imperfection, viewing flaws as integral to beauty, and accepting transience to embrace the imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete aspects of our world. This concept can be observed in the appreciation of the aged or worn, the celebration of the broken as a part of an object's evolution, or simply in finding aesthetic value in what has naturally occurred.*

*Repurposing and recycling, as sustainable practices, involve taking existing objects and adapting them for a second life or another purpose. One of the simplest ways individuals can participate is by transforming discarded materials (waste) into new forms for practical use. For example, shredding cloth or paper, as seen in the art form known as Shifu, entails weaving paper threads into mats or cloth. By exploring diverse uses for materials and delving into the potential of repurposed resources, we engage in a creative exercise that fosters imagination and promotes reuse possibilities.*

*Sewing and weaving circles have a rich history in numerous cultures. Feminist scholars have examined the impacts and implications of these gatherings, while feminist artists and activists have reclaimed and reevaluated the art and craft involved in these interactions, adapting them into discussion circles and communal meeting spaces.*

*For centuries, women have convened in mending circles where they could engage in discussions on politics or charitable causes while sewing. Abolitionist sewing circles existed in the pre-Civil War United States, and "Stitch 'n' Bitch" groups emerged during World War II, experiencing a revival in the late 1990s and early 2000s.*

## THE PROBLEM OF FASHION WASTE—AND HOW MENDING CAN BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

"Every second, one garbage truck full of textiles is landfilled or incinerated," reported the UN Environment Programme in 2019. Indeed, textile waste is a major problem that impacts the health of people and the environment.

People in the United States and elsewhere discard massive amounts of used clothing every year. (People with higher incomes generate a lot more of this waste than people with lower incomes, reports the Boston University School of Public Health.) Though some used clothing is donated or recycled, a huge amount of clothing waste ends up in landfills, both in the U.S. and in the Global South.

Thrift stores receive tons of donated clothing they cannot sell—either because it is not in good condition or because there is too much of it. What thrift stores can't sell and local recycling operations can't process largely gets sold to commercial entities that export it. According to Greenpeace Germany, in 2020 the biggest exporters of used clothes were the United States, China, United Kingdom, Germany, and South Korea. The biggest importers were Ghana, Ukraine, Nigeria, Kenya, and Tanzania.

While donors may believe they are charitably passing on clothing to people in need, the truth is a lot of the donated clothes are not in good enough condition for anyone to wear. For example, in Ghana, about 40% of "donated" items of imported used clothing "are of such poor quality they are deemed worthless on arrival and end up dumped in a landfill," Greenpeace Germany reported. Donors' "good intentions" without responsible consideration result in mountains of decomposing textiles that pollute soil, air, and groundwater in the Global South. Aja Barber, the author of *Consumed: The Need for Collective Change: Colonialism, Climate Change, and Consumerism*, identifies this as a form of colonialism.

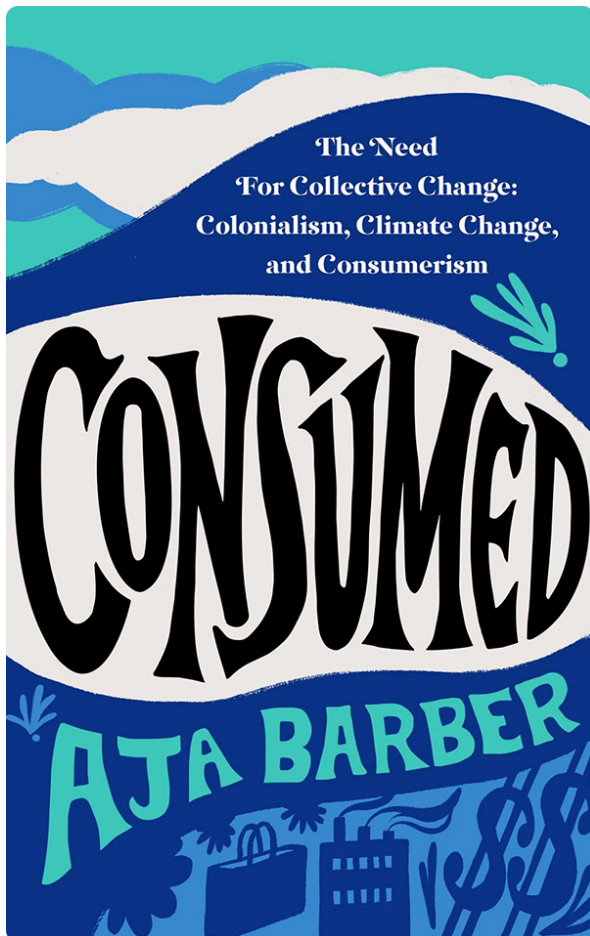
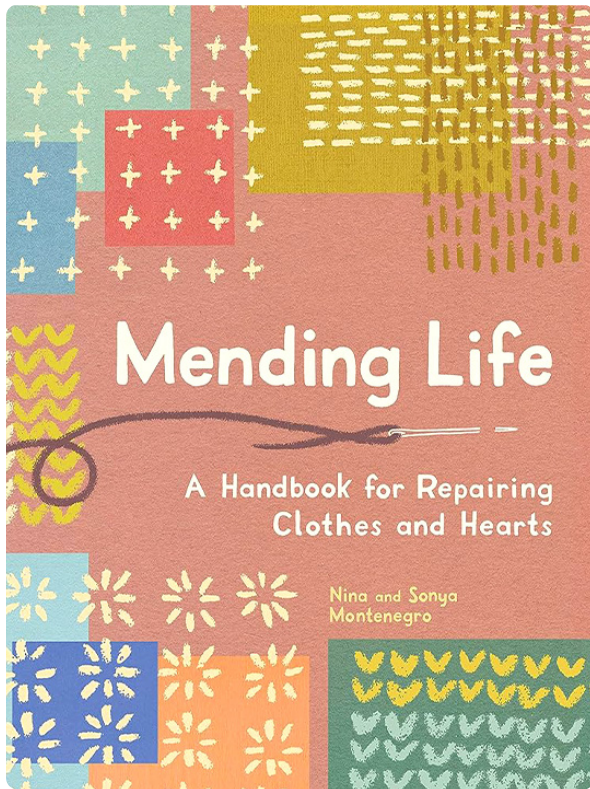
Beyond the waste of discarded clothing, fast fashion has other harmful impacts. Production of new clothing is responsible for 10 percent of carbon emissions and 20 percent of global wastewater, reports the UN. The fashion industry is also a notorious site of exploitation of workers.

One way to help? Care for, mend, and repurpose your clothing so that what you have lasts longer, instead of discarding and buying more.

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- What associations do you have with the concepts of mending and repair? Did this workshop shift your perception of these terms or practices in any way?
- How can mending be creative?
- What is sustainable, or ethical, fashion? What are some ways you can participate in it?
- What is the value of seeing the beauty in imperfection, or the imperfection in beauty?
- To what else can you apply the concept of wabi-sabi?





## IF YOU LIKE THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- Also in this series  
2/23/24 [Make Mend II: WORK + Materials Barter Fair](#)
- Assignment: Earth—USC’s Sustainability Framework [sustainability.usc.edu](https://sustainability.usc.edu)
- [Weaving on a Little Loom: Techniques, Patterns, and Projects for Beginners](#) by Fiona Daly
- Repair Café | [repaircafe.org](https://repaircafe.org)
- Christina Kim of the eco-conscious design house Dosa [dosainc.com](https://dosainc.com)
- The Far Woods: designers, artists, and sisters Sonya and Nina Montenegro, who wrote a book called *Mending Life: A Handbook for Repairing Clothes and Hearts* [thefarwoods.com](https://thefarwoods.com)
- Matilda Flow Inclusion Foundation: a nonprofit in Greater Accra, Ghana, that addresses post-consumer fashion pollution by employing artisans to upcycle fabrics [mfifashionghana.org](https://mfifashionghana.org)
- Aja Barber: a writer and stylist who works at the intersections of fashion and sustainability [ajabarber.com](https://ajabarber.com)
- Artist Andrea Zittel [zittel.org](https://zittel.org)
- On social: #slowfashion, #sustainablefashion, #ethicalfashion, #mending
- Upcoming Visions and Voices Events  
1/13–28/24 [Sacrifice Zone: Los Angeles](#)  
3/1/24 [Searching for Home: An Evening with Contemporary Artists Humaira Abid and Phung Huynh](#)  
4/3/24 [Visualizing Asian American L.A.: A Workshop on Digitally Exhibiting Art and Archival Materials](#)  
4/3/24 [Another Beautiful Country: Chinese American Artists in Cross-Cultural Conversation](#)  
4/6/24 [The Great Wall of Los Angeles at 40: A Conversation with Judy Baca and Screening of Murs Murs](#)  
4/13/24 [The Great Wall of Los Angeles at 40: Guided Walking Tour](#)



Judy Baca



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## DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

**CHRISTINA SNIDER** of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this event. Electronic resources are accessible through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at [libraries.usc.edu](http://libraries.usc.edu) but may require the user to log in using their USC credentials.

### BOOKS

- Amy Cooper-Wright, *Made by Hand: Contemporary Makers, Traditional Practices* (London: Black Dog Publishing Limited, 2014).
- Caitlin DeSilvey, James R. Ryan, and Stephen Bond, “Everyday Kintsukuroi: Mending as Making,” in *Geographies of Making, Craft and Creativity* (New York: Routledge, 2018): 195–212.
- Garth Johnson, *1000 Ideas for Creative Reuse: Remake, Restyle, Recycle, Renew* (Laguna Hills: Quarto Publishing Group, 2009).
- Sharon Kallis, *Common Threads: Weaving Community through Collaborative Eco-Art* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2014).
- Hinda Mandell, ed., *Crafting Dissent: Handicraft as Protest from the American Revolution to the Pussyhats* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).
- Maryanne Moodie and Alexandra Grablewski, *On the Loom: A Modern Weaver's Guide* (New York: Abrams, 2016).
- Bryan Sentance and Polly Sentance, *Craft Traditions of the World: Locally Made, Globally Inspiring* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009).

### DATABASES

- [Art, Design & Architecture Collection](#)
- [Proquest Design and Applied Arts Index](#)

### JOURNALS

- [Craft Research](#)
- [Handmade Business](#)
- [The Crafts Report](#)
- [The Journal of Modern Craft](#)

### PODCASTS

- [Rags to Riches Textile Upcycling](#)
- [Threads of Sustainability](#)
- [The Indisposable](#)

### STREAMING MEDIA

- [Go Green, Sew Green](#) (Learning Zone Express, 2010).

