



PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

how to make their product most efficiently. "I could show them a lot of techniques."

Breech says that clothing buyers have already expressed an interest in investing because of the long-term local economic security a garment house would provide. "I think the funding is there," he says, through a combination of private investors and potential loans from the city, like the urban renewal funds that helped Ninkasi Brewing get their entrepreneurial foot in the door. As Ninkasi has put Eugene on the map in the beer world, a local production house could put Eugene on the map in the fashion world. And because we're asking "Why not?" why not make it a production house that specializes in recycled and repurposed fabrics? Eugene could be the first fashion capital in the world that specializes in upcycling (converting used materials into new and/or better products) textiles.

Besides the potential for profitability, a local fashion production house would also create jobs locally. Good jobs, says Breech, like production sewers and machinists that are typically paid \$12 to \$25 an hour. It could also be a training facility, set up for apprenticeships and internships.

"We've taken in a lot of people who started learning sewing skills from us, got exposed to the world of design and started having ideas and being able to execute them, therefore moving on from the sewing, production level to the designer level. It's a good entry point. It's a money-making point," Chester says.

Yee says producing locally also eliminates headaches for designers and potentially expensive mistakes. "If you bring it back local, you have a lot more transparency," he says. "If there's a problem you can stop it. That's a pretty powerful thing. I've dealt with manufacturers in China, and if you make a mistake it can be pretty costly. You have to

deal with customs and all kinds of stuff that you don't have to deal with locally."

Perhaps most importantly, Eugeneans could purchase local clothing and accessories knowing that they were not made under sweatshop conditions, Laroux points out. On Nov. 26, a fire killed 112 workers at the Tazreen Fashions factory in Bangladesh, the same factory that produces clothing for Walmart. Located in a high-rise, many employees jumped to their deaths because of the lack of fire escapes, bringing the fatalities of Bangladesh factory workers making clothing for U.S. consumers in the past five years to over 700.

Eugene Fashion Week is back for its third showing this April, but instead of a bustling production house full of designers, sewers and apprentices rubbing shoulders, designers will be working alone in their basements and shops, or sending their work and dollars outside of the city.

It is time to bring manufacturing home. ■

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