

# MEANINGFUL DECONSTRUCTION

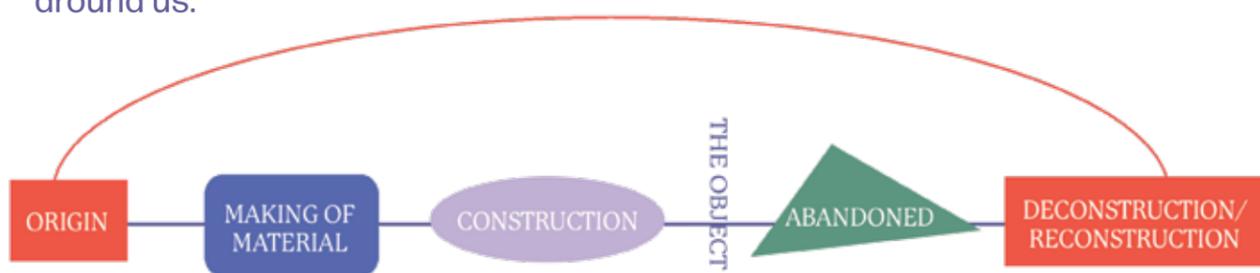
On rethinking the way we upcycle objects;  
shifting from the object to the material.

By Anabel Poh

How many objects have you had in your life? Hundreds? Thousands? Millions? As we live in an age where “throwaway culture” is normalised, we have progressed to rethink the way we use, reuse and upcycle the objects around us. These new recycled or upcycled objects often fall at the ends of the spectrum: too disconnected from its former purpose or too similar to its previous form. For years, designers have employed countless strategies towards a more sustainable future. From the banal to the revolutionary, people are realising the need to uphold a more conscious attitude and begin the pursuit for a more meaningful relationship with the materials around us.

Through the removal of pre-defined functions and narratives, an object becomes a material or multiple materials that have undergone a transformative journey to become what it is in front of us.

*Anthropologist, Tim Ingold once said, “Objects and materials have a life history - we count from the moment of manufacture to that of discard or eventual recovery, it is not just the history of a life intrinsic to the stuff of which it was made but also the human life that has surrounded it and given it meaning.”*



For centuries, materials were invented, inverted, destroyed, deconstructed and we always find a metaphysical battle between attainment and appreciation. Meaningful Deconstruction employs a lens that views objects as materials, in order to extend the life cycle of an object and expand the possibilities of what it can become.

When we acknowledge the life of the material, then can we fully appreciate its value. The object, a silk scarf, was once just a blank textile, a spun thread, silk fibres and a silkworm’s cocoon. In its origins, the material was a home; a form of refuge for the silkworm’s metamorphosis. It then became the material for a maker’s craft; spun, woven and printed.

By revealing the abundance of layered narratives within its past, one can fully grasp the multifaceted significance of its materiality. From here, we can create more emotionally durable relationships with the objects around us.

But what happens after it fulfils its intent to be a scarf? How can its life after leave traces of its origins and journey? *Meaningful Deconstruction* blends cultural craft techniques, narratives, time and sensitivity, with the aim of creating respectful rituals of material deconstruction & reconstruction. It attempts to bring about circularity within its treatment and its narrative.



A ritual is born from the innate identity of the material, the latter breathing life into the former. There is undivided attention to what one holds in his hands. The repetitive gestures reinforce a continuum of an emotional pace. By deconstructing, one reveals layers; nuances within the material narrative and sensitivities within its construction.

A new pattern emerges.

I invite you to slow down, & appreciate the deconstruction & reconstruction of the material.

# PRINCIPLES TOWARDS MEANINGFUL DECONSTRUCTION

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- 1 View discarded objects as its materials.** This brings us back to the raw material; its fundamentally purest state. This sheds light on more techniques and narratives which are innate to the material.
- 2 Study the life cycle of the material.** Listen to the material. Philosopher, Giambattista Vico wrote in his work, *The New Science* in 1725, that human understanding is primarily poetic in nature. We can only comprehend the world partially, the rest we naturally fictionalise in order to connect. By understanding the different makers, states and processes that the material had to go through, one is able to revalue the essence of the material.
- 3 Remove, not add.** When creating rituals of deconstruction and reconstruction, one needs to remember the purpose of extending its life cycle with circularity in mind.
- 4 The art of deconstructing & reconstructing.** We learn from the makers before us. With the knowledge of its construction, we can borrow, take apart, reverse and combine different traditional craft techniques, in order to inform the creation of its next form.
- 5 Meaningful for the maker.** Besides the plethora of traditional craft know-hows, the act of creating a ritualistic gestures reinforces a continuum of an emotional pace. A form of meditation and an homage to the material.
- 6 Meaningful for everyone.** The eventual material form will visually reflect the layered narratives, states of materiality and craft know-hows. The addition of value to the discarded material does not come from the addition of material but the knowledge of slowness, tenderness and history embedded within its process.