# Recycle the Runway Awards spotlight pandemic-born innovation in sustainable fashion



The Recycle the Runway Awards, an initiative co-hosted by Vogue Business and Visa, celebrated a new wave of emerging designers focused on sustainable practices within the fashion industry. The event, held in the imaginative setting of The Steel Yard, showcased the innovative work of six finalists, each committed to circularity in their designs. As part of the awards, Visa’s Vice President of Social Impact and Sustainability, Katherine Brown, interviewed the winners, highlighting the stories and motivations behind their creations.

Among those celebrated was Kemi Gbadebo, founder of Gbadebo, who described her shift towards sustainable design as a necessity born from the pandemic. "I would love to say that I started with sustainability in mind," Gbadebo admitted, reflecting on her initial ventures during lockdown when fabric stores were closed. This led her to repurpose items from her wardrobe, ultimately selling reworked designs on platforms like Depop. Her journey underscores an important narrative in the fashion world: sustainability can emerge from unexpected circumstances.

Genaro Rivas, the grand prize winner, shared an equally compelling story rooted in community support. His initiative began with a desire to provide employment for female knitters in Peru who faced economic hardships during the pandemic. This small endeavour grew into a broader collaboration with artisans skilled in various crafts, including rug-making and weaving. Rivas articulated a vision for fashion that transcends mere aesthetics, stating, “I firmly believe that fashion should fulfil a purpose… generating a positive impact in the life of others.” His collections, which feature sustainable materials and minimal water use, are a testament to his commitment to eco-friendly practices.

Additional winners included Fanfare Label, Marinava, Sondor, and Been, with each designer presenting innovative approaches to sustainability. Murtz Khattak of Sondor reflected on the bespoke nature of his projects, often involving the melting and reconstitution of jewellery from pieces passed down through generations. Similarly, Genia Mineeva of Been articulated her mission to tackle the waste problem associated with clothing donation: “Can I make something... entirely from waste and can it look like something me or my friends would like and want to buy?” Currently, Been creates products using 75% recycled materials, substantially slashing its carbon footprint by about 80% during production.

This convergence of talent not only spotlighted individual creativity but also reinforced broader industry dialogues around the themes of regeneration and resourcefulness. The initiative has parallels with other recent efforts aimed at fostering sustainable practices in fashion, such as the collaboration between Visa and the London College of Fashion to identify UK-based circular fashion stars. These initiatives are becoming increasingly vital as designers and organisations alike seek to redefine industry standards, moving away from wasteful practices towards a more sustainable future.

As discussions and partnerships continue to evolve, the Recycle the Runway Awards stand out as a beacon of hope within the fashion landscape, showcasing how necessity, creativity, and a commitment to environmental stewardship can drive innovation and justify a shift towards sustainability.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.voguebusiness.com/story/events/vogue-business-joins-forces-with-visa-to-host-recycle-the-runway-awards), [[2]](https://www.voguebusiness.com/story/events/vogue-business-joins-forces-with-visa-to-host-recycle-the-runway-awards)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.voguebusiness.com/story/events/vogue-business-joins-forces-with-visa-to-host-recycle-the-runway-awards), [[3]](https://www.londonworld.com/community/sophie-tea-teams-up-with-visa-to-launch-nationwide-search-for-uks-circular-fashion-stars-5077221)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.voguebusiness.com/story/events/vogue-business-joins-forces-with-visa-to-host-recycle-the-runway-awards), [[4]](https://www.paymentsinnovationforum.org/articles/visa-enlists-artist-sophie-tea)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.voguebusiness.com/story/events/vogue-business-joins-forces-with-visa-to-host-recycle-the-runway-awards), [[5]](https://www.greencarpetfashionawards.com/the-honorees)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.voguebusiness.com/story/events/vogue-business-joins-forces-with-visa-to-host-recycle-the-runway-awards), [[6]](https://www.teenvogue.com/story/junk-kouture-2023)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.voguebusiness.com/story/events/vogue-business-joins-forces-with-visa-to-host-recycle-the-runway-awards> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.voguebusiness.com/story/events/vogue-business-joins-forces-with-visa-to-host-recycle-the-runway-awards> - Vogue Business and Visa collaborated to host the Recycle the Runway Awards, celebrating emerging designers embracing circularity in fashion. Six winners were selected, including grand prize winner Genaro Rivas, a Peruvian designer supporting artisanal weavers. Each winner received mentorship and funding to support their business growth.
3. <https://www.londonworld.com/community/sophie-tea-teams-up-with-visa-to-launch-nationwide-search-for-uks-circular-fashion-stars-5077221> - Visa partnered with London College of Fashion and social media star Sophie Tea to launch 'Recycle the Runway', a UK-wide initiative supporting emerging fashion entrepreneurs committed to circular practices. Six finalists received grants and mentorship to accelerate their business growth.
4. <https://www.paymentsinnovationforum.org/articles/visa-enlists-artist-sophie-tea> - Visa enlisted artist Sophie Tea to launch 'Recycle the Runway', a UK-wide initiative supporting emerging fashion entrepreneurs committed to circular practices. Six finalists received grants and mentorship to accelerate their business growth.
5. <https://www.greencarpetfashionawards.com/the-honorees> - The Green Carpet Fashion Awards honoured Eric Liedtke, co-founder of UNLESS Collective, with the Rebel award. UNLESS Collective brings together innovators, engineers, artists, and activists to address issues in the fashion industry, challenging the goal of zero waste.
6. <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/junk-kouture-2023> - Junk Kouture held its first World Finals in Abu Dhabi, featuring 60 teams of young designers from various countries. The competition focused on sustainability, with designs made from repurposed materials. 'Back to the Future' by Joshua Osabuehien and Solomon Eduard won the World Sustainable Designer Award.
7. <https://www.redressdesignaward.com/2023-archive> - The Redress Design Award 2023 announced its winners, including First Prize winner Nils Hauser, who secured a sustainable design collaboration with Timberland. The competition aims to educate and empower designers to reduce fashion's negative environmental impacts.