

iinouio brings 'shoddy' production back to Yorkshire and history is remade

Industry veteran John Parkinson's new venture, **iinouio**, is breathing life into the Yorkshire textile industry with a new range of recycled woollen yarns and fabrics, the first of its kind to be produced in the UK for more than twenty years.

Launched on April 3rd, **iinouio**, arrives more than 200 years after mill owner Benjamin Law transformed discarded rags into new cloth and initiated textile's first 'circular economy'.



Though Law veiled his methods of shredding old clothes into new fibres ('shoddy') in secrecy, the results saw Batley and the surrounding towns, until then mostly small hamlets, energised into a thriving industrial textile hub, known locally as the 'Heavy Woollen District'.

'My life has been consumed by recycling textiles' John enthuses 'and we are determined to preserve and improve upon this craft's impressive heritage and the legacy of my own family's 'shoddy' business'.

John spent most of his career in the textile industry, initially as a rag grinding machine operator before graduating to mill foreman in his dad's small family business. In 1990, he started Evergreen, a pioneering concern employing the highest eco-friendly values, exploring new recycling possibilities such as polyester fibres (made from plastic bottles) and denim. Based in Batley Carr, he sold to Tesco, Debenhams, Esprit, Mitsubishi, WWF, Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, as well as many small-scale designers and artisans.

A massive fire destroyed everything in 1995 and forced him to retrain as a teacher.

Twenty five years on, John has tenaciously carved out a new production route and formed **iinouio**, itself a recycled business and the only one of its kind in the world.

'It was like an itch that wouldn't go away so I'm returning to my greatest passion. Experts warned me that, as the local manufacturing infrastructure was so depleted, it wouldn't be possible to make textiles from recycled wool the way I did in the 90s. They were very nearly right because it hasn't been easy'.

To get started, John sorted 1.5 tons of rags by hand, removed all the buttons, zips and fasteners (to be used in other creative ways). He arranged what remained into eight shades to form a new range of recycled wool craft materials for knitting, crochet, embroidery, weaving, felting, cloth and home furnishings, craft kits and much more.

'It's an amazing process and doing this work still feels like being part of a magic show surrounded by all these other textile wizards. It's spell-binding to see throwaway knitwear changed into yarn and made ready to start another life'.



Supported by social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, **iinouio's** website account offer yarns made from 80% post-consumer recycled wool, providing colour without dyeing a second time as this is recovered along with the fibre.

'We're looking forward to manufacturing bespoke products for designers and artisans at specialist wholesale price points and, when possible, we'll be attending exhibitions and craft workshops around the country to share the environmental benefits, history, education and our passion. We support the re-use of products and a slowing of consumerism, whilst choosing more responsible methods and materials'.

John suggests that recycled fibre production could contribute to a move away from the 'fast fashion' throwaway culture and, through **iinouio**, he strives to be inquisitive and collaborative.

'Whilst dedicated to traditional techniques, I mean to explore every possibility of enhancing these with new technologies. The **iinouio** philosophy is grounded in discovery and a desire to 'do things better'.

John Parkinson is available for interview. Contact him on john@iinouio.com or visit www.iinouio.com to learn more about his wide-ranging aspirations.

iinouio: recycling our past; designing a future.