



Seeing Double With EK-Reversible

By Casey Hall, 2014-03

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It's an uncommon idea in the world of fashion – a product both eminently functional and also fashionable. But just because it's not the dominant industry norm, doesn't mean it isn't possible, and the folks behind EKReversible are out to show the world how it's done.

When you first see and touch the eight textural knit pieces making up EKReversible's first collection, launched at the beginning of 2014, the quality of the materials and detailing is immediately apparent.

But it wasn't enough for Emily Keller, 27, and co-founder Manuel Garcia, 31, to make something this lovely from the outside; they decided to make it equally as beautiful on the inside, so each of the pieces can be worn both inside out and outside in.

It's a simple enough concept, but not as easy to make work in the real world. If you've ever turned your favourite knitted sweater inside out, you will have seen first hand where all the unseemly parts of the stitches get hidden away, but with reversible clothing there's nowhere to hide.

Luckily, Keller, an American designer with a number of year's experience in the knitwear industry, is a specialist in developing stitches, and set her mind to developing some that look good from all angles.

"I thought a lot of stitches could be double-sided, very clean but quite different on both sides and I thought that should be developed more, and wanted to see the potential for where we can take that," she explained to Talk over a steaming cup of lemon, ginger and honey tea.

Not only was the idea of reversible knitwear attractive as a challenge for Keller, the added bonus of inherent sustainability also piqued her interest.

"I have been looking at doing something sustainable, so it also made sense for me to explore clothing that has more



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than one side to it, so that can be worn a number of ways," Keller said.

"We do think we are on the frontline of this next stage of sustainability in fashion," Garcia, who comes to Shanghai from the Dominican Republic via New York, added.

Though quick to point out the positives of fast fashion, particularly as an entry point for people around the world who may not have been able to afford particularly trendy or stylish clothing previously, both Keller and Garcia believe the world is ready to embrace quality and affordability in their wardrobes.

At RMB 800 to RMB 1,000 per piece, EK-Reversible's first collection is priced at an introductory level for now, in order to entice first time buyers to try their wares. But the brand believes that when people realise they are getting significantly better quality than what is being offered at the low end, and much better value than high-end designer clothing, they will be back for more.



"The idea of function in fashion is something we feel has been overlooked for a while and we want to capitalise on it," Garcia said.

Keller agrees, and reiterates their brand's belief that function and fashion are compatible, rather than irreconcilable concepts.

"That's definitely one thing we are trying to prove wrong. We are trying to do something a little bit different by saying functional clothing can also be stylish and really high quality. I don't see why it can't be," she said.

"Especially when you have so many exorbitant prices on so many brands, I think we should expect more from our clothing and have it do more for us – and it can."

However, they both agree the idea can be taken too far. Garcia jokes, for example, that they aren't looking to make multi-functional clothing, which could be worn as either a bag or a dress.

"No!" Keller laughed. "We're not looking to make sweaters that turn into a bag, because if you have something like that it's going to be hard for it to fit well. But something that is a dress, which can be worn and fits the same way on both sides, that's nice."

In the case of EK-Reversible, it most certainly is.

EK-Reversible's first collection is available at AK Collection, No. 31, Lane 1,285 Huaihai Zhong Lu, near Changshu Lu.

Web: www.emilykeller.co

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