

Ana De León

Ruta 10 upcycling

URUGUAY



“Our goal is to improve women life conditions and future possibilities by giving a second chance to the discards and scraps we use as raw materials to make fashionable accessories”



RUTA 10 is an up-cycling design company created in 2015 by Ana De Leon, that makes bags and accessories out of scrap and discard materials. The company currently uses discarded inner tubes as main material. Inner tubes are one of the most problematic waste materials in the world, because of the large volume produced and because of its long lifetime. To make its products, Ruta 10 follows sustainable productive processes, including social, environmental and economic aspects. They collect rain water to wash the rubber and use renewable energy sources (solar) for lightning and electric machines. They also try to reduce scrap production to a minimum, using small pieces of rubber and other materials to make accessories, jewellery and other small objects. From a social point of view, Ruta 10 is widening the horizon of second chances to people through a workshop installed at the prison in Maldonado. They are specially giving a second chance to imprisoned women by teaching them the techniques of rubber manufacturing, so that they can work for RUTA 10 and receive a fair salary and working conditions.

Each year, more than 1500 million air-chambers are thrown away in the world. Ruta 10 give them a second life by employing women inmates from Uruguayan prisons and creating fashion products. Many of their articles are customized by textile and plastic artists and are therefore unique pieces that will last a lifetime for their owners. When buying a product from RUTA 10, customers do not only take a unique piece of design, but also contribute to prevent this material going to the dumping sites or worst, to the oceans and rivers, so helping to keep our Earth clean for the future generations. For Ana, the main challenge has been the installation of the workshop in a jail. She met people whose values and habits were very different and whose priorities didn't include working, learning or improving. She had to deal with this very respectfully and honestly, to finally find an area of common interests and collaboration. The jail has also imposed operative problems. Being there, each little detail becomes a big deal. More than once she thought the project was going to fail, because she could not move forward according to schedules, and she felt powerless in face of

many hurdles. But having a clear goal and using huge amounts of persistence, allowed her to go ahead and, little by little, transform the world around for the better. Ruta 10 is currently working with only one prison and would like to include new ones soon.

The Empretec workshop was instrumental for Ana to learn to plan and set goals on a regular basis. She understood what her main strengths and weaknesses were. She also realized how important it was to share plans with her employees and make each of them feel like part of the company. Ana plans to replicate the business model in other jails of the country and the region, inviting other design start-ups to follow this sustainability path. She wants to create a network of sustainable design start-ups that give a second chance both to materials and people.



RUTA 10 UPCYCLING

Uruguay

www.ruta10upcycling.com

