HAWAIIAN AIRLINES SEAT COVERS GET A FASHIONABLE SECOND LIFE

News / Airlines

The fleet of 18 Boeing 717-200s that Hawaiian Airlines uses for its interisland service received an interior makeover this year and, in addition to a fresh color palette and new tray tables, the jets got brand-new lightweight cabin seats.

The old seats didn't go to waste.

Hawaiian Airlines gave surplus leather and fabric from 19 first class and 23 main cabin seat covers to Honolulu Community College's Fashion Technology program and challenged current students and graduate designers to create wearable upcycled fashions and accessories.

"I accepted [the challenge]," said fashion program professor Joy Nagaunese, "Our students can do anything! I'm overjoyed they've been given this great opportunity."

The work of seven designers who participated in the "Cabin [to] Couture" project will be unveiled Friday, as part of an exhibit for Honolulu Fashion Week.

Chai Lim created a flowing short skirt paired with a structured strapless top. Jacky Lau was

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inspired by the shapes of the seat covers and created a futuristic tail jacket paired with fitted cargo pants. And Randy Oribello constructed a corset mixing both first- and coach-class seat materials. Other designers created pieces ranging from a leather fanny pack and a simple tote to a cocktail dress.

"Fashion and design have always been deep-rooted in the Hawaiian Airlines brand," said Alisa Onishi, director of brand management at Hawaiian Airlines, in a statement. "This project allows us to give back to our local community through education in a very unique and original way."

"Each day, our flights take many travelers on the vacation of their dreams throughout our islands," Onishi added. "Now, our unused seats are supporting a different kind of dream for up-and-coming designers in our community."

Other airlines have worked with colleges and businesses to recycle and upcycle materials removed from aircraft. For example, old JetBlue uniforms were turned into messenger bags and toiletry cases and Southwest Airlines seat leather has been turned into duffle bags.

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