



## Carla Tennenbaum, Age 29 São Paulo, Brazil

In a society where consumption is such a determining part of people's lives, changing our consumption patterns is a crucial step toward creating an ethically and environmentally sustainable world. But we aren't only consumers — we're workers, artists, teachers, mothers, employers, friends and neighbors. In short, we're human beings. And as human beings, we need to re-evaluate not only the way we consume but the way we produce, the way we take and the way we give. In other words, we need to rethink the way we relate — to the planet, to other species and to each other.

The production system we have inherited from our fathers and forefathers — and that we recreate every day — is extremely harmful for the environment and for ourselves. We will be forced to change beyond what we can envision at the moment. This idea might cause some real anguish, but do we really feel comfortable in our lives? This system consistently fails to deliver the satisfaction that is supposed to be achieved through the consumption of goods, even for the most financially fortunate among us. I myself am in the 25 percent of humanity consuming above what is considered the minimum requirement level. Do I feel comfortable?

I was shocked when, 10 years ago, I began to realize the gigantic volume of non-recyclable waste generated by commercial and industrial activities in São Paulo. Since then, I have created technologies to turn this refuse into works of art, allowing low-income women to develop dignified ways to generate wages and express themselves creatively. While this is an important way to address the issue of human and material waste and transform people's attitudes toward how goods are made and sold, I am well aware that it is not enough.

Instead, it is one small step on the way to a more sustainable system of production where this kind of waste will not be generated in the first place.

Clearly, we are in the early stages of “conscious consumption.” For some people it is still about shopping for “greener” products from “greener” brands, but this awareness will continue to spread and intensify. A real cultural re-evolution must involve a deep reassessment of the way we spend not only our money but also our energy — how we live our lives, what we wake up for and how we shape the world around us.

I believe there are thousands of beautiful and viable ways to thrive on this planet. The principles of change need to be searched deeply and respectfully at the most sacred places we can find within ourselves and our communities so we can create a truly diverse, abundant and enjoyable reality.

While I do not know how long this process will take or what we will have to face along the way, it becomes ever more clear that change is both a necessity and a blessing. The sooner we accept this, the richer our options will be to produce something truly better for ourselves and our planet. **Y**



Carla Tennenbaum is a Brazilian artist living in São Paulo. For more information on EVAMARIA, the social enterprise she founded, visit [www.evamaria.org](http://www.evamaria.org).

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