Clean Slate

The Issue:
This campaign addresses the high demand on purchasing new materials for student projects, which leads to unnecessary consumption and waste. Within the School of Design Innovation, many students default to buying fresh supplies, even when useful scrap materials from paper to wood to foam board are already available. This mindset contributes to material waste, but also overlooks the creative potential of reusing materials. “Clean Slate” challenges the idea that good design must begin with something new, encouraging students to see already used materials as valuable resources.

Campaign Overview:
“Clean Slate” is a participatory design activism campaign that invites students to participate in a creative reuse challenge using only reclaimed or found materials. The campaign stems around a “Resource Rescue” cart stationed on campus, where students can donate and collect scrap materials. Signage such as *“Take what you need. Use what you have.”* and *“Start with waste.”* sets the tone for idea making.

Students are encouraged to take on the Clean Slate Challenge designing a mini project (a zine, tool, model, or prototype) using only materials from the cart or other reclaimed sources. These projects are then documented through a campaign wall and/or social media feed. Participants share their work with a short caption like *“This used to be a…”* and a hashtag such as *“#ResourceRescue”* to highlight the material's transformation and to make it easy to find everyones projects with the hashtag.

Previous students' work may be showcased with QR codes underneath them that link to a short video describing how they were made. Showing a timeline of what the materials were before the project was made.

Engagement Strategy:
The campaign uses a mix of physical and digital tools to make engagement simple, fun, and traceable. Posters, stickers, and installation signage carry a distressed, repurposed visual style, reinforcing the reuse theme. QR codes placed on rescued materials link to short histories of the item, creative reuse ideas, and a form where students can track what their item became. Other QR codes placed on posters and final displays link to short videos, captions, or time-lapses showing how each project was made, building a connected archive of creative sustainability in action.

Design Mediums and Interventions:

- Physical: Resource cart/station, posters, stickers, reclaimed material installations

- Digital: QR-coded archive, Instagram feed, short videos, zine or map of material transformations

- Interactive: Submission forms, mini project prompts, student-led engagement

Campaign Goals:
The project raises awareness about material overuse and encourages students to rethink waste as an opportunity. It showcases how constraints (like using only scrap) can give more inventive and resourceful design outcomes. “Clean Slate” also fosters a culture of shared materials and communal resourcefulness within the design school.

Sustainable Design Strategies Applied:

- Material Circularity: promoting reuse and reducing dependency on virgin materials

- Participatory Design: inviting students to co-create the campaign and shape its outcomes

- Low-impact Prototyping: encouraging low-carbon design through found and local materials

- Narrative Sustainability: using storytelling and tracking tools to extend the life cycle of materials and ideas