

Think Green: Recycle, Reduce, Reuse!



Craig Roland

Many artists and designers today are working to raise environmental awareness and solve ecological problems by collaborating with local garbage disposal agencies, revitalizing urban waste sites, recycling discarded materials in their work, designing environmentally sensitive products, and much more. This month's column features six such artists and designers from around the globe whose work can serve as catalysts for encouraging your students to come up with creative ways to recycle.

Susan Leibovitz Steinman typically uses materials salvaged from community waste streams to construct public art installations and sculpture gardens that explore links between local daily life and environmental issues. Steinman often collaborates with community residents and public school students in her work. View highlights from Steinman's thirty-plus years of making eco-friendly art on her website (www.steinmanstudio.com).

Artist and environmental educator, Nancy Judd (www.colores.us) designs and creates high-fashion garments from throwaway materials including rusty nails, junk mail, Plastic shopping bags, soda cans, crushed glass, old cassette tapes, bottle caps, and more. Judd exhibits her Recycle Runway collection of glamorous recycled

fashions at major airports around the U.S. to educate people about the importance of recycling and sustainable living. Showing your students Judd's work would be a perfect inspiration for staging a recycled fashions show at your school.

African sculptor El Anatsui uses found materials like brightly colored bottle caps, golden bands from discarded liquor bottles, and discarded tops of evaporated milk cans to weave large tapestries that resemble bolts of kente cloth. While Anatsui's rich tapestries and three-dimensional sculptures draw upon traditional African aesthetics, they also address contemporary issues like globalization, consumerism, and waste. View works by Anatsui and listen as he discusses three of the objects in his 2008 solo exhibition at the National Museum of African Art (africa.si.edu/exhibits/gawu).

The Museo Aero Solar is a solar-energy-powered hot air balloon made from recycled plastic bags that have been taped together. Argentinian artist Tomas Saraceno conceived the Museo Aero Solar as a way to spread awareness about global warming and the dangers of plastic bags in the environment. Saraceno travels with the giant inflatable around the world, adding sections at each destination. Learn more about the Museo Aero Solar, view photos and video of it at

different locations, and get instructions for creating your own solar-powered inflatable on the project's website (www.museoaerosolar.org).

Israeli designer Abu YoYo (www.abuyoyo.co.il) has designed a line of handbags, wallets, book covers, kitchen accessories, and purses made out of street-side advertising material. Each of her bags, made out of used advertisement banners, is unique—no two bags have the same pattern on them. Some of her more recent handbags are made from movie posters.

Lastly, Jean Shin (www.jeanshin.com) transforms discarded items into compelling and conceptually rich installations. Shin's works, which address both formal and cultural issues, incorporate obsolete materials such as worn shoes, used prescription bottles, or broken umbrellas that she gathers from friends, relatives, or members of the community surrounding the venue for her work. She disassembles and reassembles the objects into large site-specific installations or elaborate sculptures that instill new life into the castoffs of our consumer society. ☺

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