

TEXTILE TECHNIQUES AND UPCYCLING

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What is Upcycling?

“the process of converting an industrial nutrient (material) into something of similar or greater value, in its second life. Aluminum and glass, for example, can usually be upcycled into the same quality of aluminum and glass as the original products.”

The Dictionary of Sustainable Management

Upcycling is the latest crafty buzzword, and it is directly related to the “greener living” phenomenon that is currently hip in our society. Upcycling is a noble initiative; it is the idea of re-purposing would-be-trash items and materials into new items. These items, once reprocessed, can then eventually be used to create other “new” items, thus, eliminating trash altogether (TeenAngster, para 6, 2007).

Upcycling is a great concept, and professional designers, artists and crafts people alike have embarked on the challenge of creating beautiful upcycled products.

By informing teens about upcycling, they can work together to come up with innovative and creative ways to create beautiful upcycled works of art and crafts from everyday materials.

References

McDonough, M., and Braungart, M. (2002). *Cradle-to-cradle: remaking the way we make things*. New York, NY: North Point Press.

TeenAngster. (2007). Upcycling for greener living. *The Storque*. Retrieved from

<http://www.etsy.com/storque/craftivism/upcycling-for-greener-living-10/>

Programming Idea

Plastic bags transformed into a laptop case



Instead of purchasing fabric to sew a laptop case, durable and waterproof fabric from existing plastic shopping bags can be created. The end product can also serve as a messenger bag.

Materials and tools:

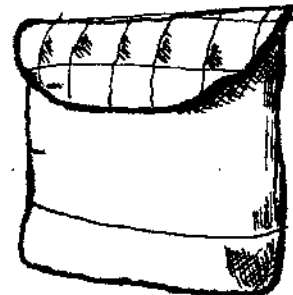
- 10 plastic shopping bags
- scissors
- sewing machine
- thread
- wax paper or normal paper
- iron
- ironing surface
- old sweater or sweatshirt
- bobby pins
- Velcro, snaps or buttons for closure

Before sewing the fabric to create a messenger bag, we first need to make the fabric.

Making fused plastic fabric

1. Flatten out the plastic bags, cut off the handles and cut off the bottom (this allows the bag to be opened up into a large rectangle).
2. Fold the bag so that it is of eight ply thickness (if there is ink on the bag, make sure that it is facing inward, if the iron heats it up, it will make a big mess).
3. Place the eight ply plastic in between two pieces of parchment paper and iron on medium heat for 30 seconds on each side (repeat this step for all ten bags)
4. Remove parchment paper, and voila! Fused plastic.

Once the fabric has been made, we can now sew it together to create the laptop case...



Creating the laptop case

1. Clean up all of the edges of the plastic fabric by trimming all of the jagged edges
2. Line up all of the plastic bags to form a rectangle that will fit your laptop twice with extra fabric for a closure flap. (leave 7 cm extra all around for seam allowance)
3. Using a zigzag stitch, sew all of the pieces together by overlapping them on top of each other
4. Once the desired size is reached, cut the same size out of an old sweatshirt or sweater
5. Place the pieces together (right sides facing in) and pin with bobby pins (**Do Not** use pins)
6. Sew the liner and the shell together, leave one end open
7. Turn right side out and sew a seam 3cm from the edge
8. Sew a seam 5cm from the bottom
9. Stuff the case with scrap plastic bags, every 10cm, sew a seam, repeat until 15cm from the top
10. Fold the top down and sew closed
11. Place the case right sides together leaving room for the flap
12. Sew down both sides and turn right side out
13. Fold in and sew the sides of the flap
14. Add Velcro, snaps or buttons for closure mechanism

Project adapted from

Chua, J. M. (2009, March 25). *Make a laptop bag out of used plastic bags* [video file]. Retrieved March 20, 2009 from <http://www.treehugger.com/files/2009/03/laptop-bag-from-plastic-bags.php>

Etsy Labs. (2007, May 6). Long overdue fusing plastic bag tutorial. Retrieved March 25, 2009 from <http://etsylabs.blogspot.com/2007/05/long-overdue-fusing-plastic-bag.html>

Upcycling Resources

Books

Shoup, K. (2008). *Rubbish!: reuse your refuse*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Vitkus, J. *AlternaCrafts: 20+ hi-style lo-budget projects to make*. New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang.

Electronic Resources

Craft. (2009). *Plastic Bag Crafts* (blog). Retrieved April 5, 2009 from

http://blog.craftzine.com/archive/2007/08/plastic_bag_crafts.html

Make. Make a messenger bag out of trash bags! [video file]. Retrieved April 5, 2009. Video posted

to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sB1mE8e35UY>

SuperEco. Upcycling news. Retrieved April, 5 2009 from

<http://www.supereco.com/glossary/upcycling/news/>