

Recycling Online



Exploring Etsy

by Roger Guttentag

A great deal of ink and electrons have been expended for promoting a less materially wasteful economy through the purchase of products that rely on or support waste reduction, reuse or recycling. This discussion usually focuses on products such as writing papers, beverage containers and landscaping amendments, to name a few examples. However, we are now entering the end-of-year holiday season, a time when many of us are stimulated to procure gifts. In keeping with that spirit, I decided to see what kind of environmentally preferable gifting opportunities were available on Etsy, a huge online market for handcrafted goods that features 1.5 million active sellers. I used such keyword search terms as “recycled,” “reused,” “repurposed” and “upcycled.”

Not surprisingly, this action yielded thousands of hits. The items discussed in this column, which are organized into five categories (art, bags, clothing, furniture and jewelry), should be regarded as just a very small sampling of what could be found based on the search terms I used and my own subjective selection criteria. After doing your own searching you may very well find a way to satisfy your gift-giving cravings while helping small businesses that practice what we espouse.

Art

The seven Etsy shops listed in this category (see Web Address Directory for details) employ either scrap metal or paper to make their artistic creations. Derek McDonald

Artwork utilizes discarded metal objects to make his sculptures while Recycled Artwerks’ sculptures incorporate used bicycle parts. Other artists use scrap paper to make collages, and Eloa Jane Art and Design makes small bowls, baskets or vases from this material. Another shop, Reclaimed By Nature, fully closes the environmental loop by using recycled or repurposed paper scrap from various sources to create stationary and other items that tend to carry nature and animal themes.

Bags

Everyone needs bags; often more than one and in different sizes. So it is not unexpected that many of the crafters on Etsy make bags from a number of different scrap or repurposed materials. The four shops that I have listed use old clothing, old tubes and hosing, textile remnants (and, in the case of RecycledUseful, empty bulk

animal feed bags) to make their offerings. Another Etsy shop, Bags Rugs and More, makes variously sized small floor rugs from textile remnants.

Clothing

When it comes to clothing available on Etsy the term “recycled” is often used as substitute for “vintage” or “used.” There are exceptions and, in the case of Recycled and Re-Sewn and Recycled Threads, we have examples of crafters that take old sweaters and give them new life as mittens, many with interesting or unusual patterns due to their origins.

Furniture and home decor

I particularly enjoyed searching through results in this category because I have a strong preference for objects that are both aesthetically pleasing as well as functional.



Linda McClamrock Recycled Paper Collage is an Etsy shop that uses recycled paper and other materials to create art and stationary.



Warm up this winter with creations from Recycled and Re-Sewn.



The RecycledUseful shop creates bags from animal feed packaging.



A table created from recovered shipping materials, available at Pallets N Stuff.

Many of the crafters in this category harness reclaimed discards such as industrial shipping containers or recycled glass. For example, Bicycles Recycled crafts home decorations made from discarded bicycle parts and Pallets N Stuff offers unique expertise in furniture made from pallets and industrial crates. A number of shops help cut down on the massive tonnages of construction and demolition materials heading into the waste stream: The Andrew's Reclaimed shop creates home and office decor made from reclaimed wood and metal discards, Recycled Brooklyn offers custom-made furniture using reclaimed wood from a variety of sources such as architectural deconstruction and salvage, and the intriguingly named Recycled by the Gray Man fashions home decor utilizing found discards from a variety of sources.

Jewelry

At holiday craft fairs, a large percentage of

Web Address Directory

Etsy Seller Handbook	etsy.com/seller-handbook
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ART	
Derek McDonald Artwork	etsy.com/shop/DerekMcDonaldArtwork
EcoMaRe	etsy.com/shop/EcoMaRe
Eloa Jane Art and Design	etsy.com/shop/EloaJaneArtDesign
Linda McClamrock Recycled Paper Collage	etsy.com/shop/LindaMcClamrock
MsCatsRecycledCrafts	etsy.com/shop/MsCatsRecycledCrafts
Reclaimed by Nature	etsy.com/shop/ReclaimedByNature
Recycled Artwerks	etsy.com/shop/ReCycledArtwerks

BAGS	
Bags Rugs and More	etsy.com/shop/BagsRugsandMore
Kettuak	etsy.com/shop/Kettuak
Reclo	etsy.com/shop/Reclo
RecycledUseful	etsy.com/shop/RecycledUseful

CLOTHING	
Recycled and Re-Sewn	etsy.com/shop/RecycledandResewn
Recycled Threads	etsy.com/shop/RecycledThreadsShop

FURNITURE AND HOME DECOR	
Andrew's Reclaimed	etsy.com/shop/andrewsreclaimed
Bicycles Recycled	etsy.com/shop/BicyclesRecycled
Pallets N Stuff	etsy.com/shop/PalletsNstuff
Rail19	etsy.com/shop/Rail19
Recycled Brooklyn	etsy.com/shop/RecycledBrooklyn
Recycled by the Gray Man	etsy.com/shop/RecycledbyTheGrayMan
Recycled Glassworks	etsy.com/shop/RecycledGlassworks
Recycled Kreations	etsy.com/shop/RecycledKreations

JEWELRY	
Bicycle Recycled	etsy.com/shop/BicycleRecycled
dekoprojects	etsy.com/shop/DekoProjects
Once A Window	etsy.com/shop/OnceAWindow
Recycled Beautifully	etsy.com/shop/RecycledBeautifully
Repurposed Relics of Texas	etsy.com/shop/RepurposedRelicsTX
Upcycled Jewelry	etsy.com/shop/UpcycledJewelry

the vendors are typically focused on jewelry. This situation is mirrored on Etsy, and in fact jewelry came out as the second-largest category in my survey. The diversity of reclaimed, recycled or repurposed materials that are used by jewelry experts on Etsy is quite impressive. Dekoprojects, for instance, makes its items from empty plastic beverage bottles, and Recycled Beautifully leverages copper strands reclaimed from old wiring. Finally, Upcycled Jewelry uses

materials from various sources including circuit boards.

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