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For Miami designers, trash is treasure

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Ecoist

Chip bowl, \$25, made from recycled Frito Lay chip bags

Some sleek, unique and occasionally quirky items for the home showcase the rich potential of recyclables.

Arty pendant lights, for example. Previously, fire extinguishers.

A soft-green dining table designed for a Weston home. Previously, wine glasses.

Perky bowls in playful patterns. Previously, printing waste from snack food packaging.

South Florida is key to an assortment of recycled products — from building materials manufactured in Italy to desk-top accessories handcrafted at kitchen tables.

Various local artists, artisans and businesses are enthusiastically focusing their attention on

devising and promoting fresh uses for old stuff that might otherwise be trash.

“Green design is becoming more upbeat,” said furniture designer Bannavis Andrew Sribyatta, of PIE studio in Miami. “There are a lot more designers focusing on green and they’re doing cutting-edge design.”

Pendant Lights

Hollywood artist Valentino Llegada spins old fire extinguishers into functional and decorative objects, including pendant lights.

Before he applies wispy swirly bands of color using two paint brushes simultaneously, Llegada puts some effort into transforming the former safety equipment into a workable canvas. He soaks the extinguishers, strips the red paint, then sands and polishes the metal.

The pendants are made by slicing the oblong shapes in half, yielding two basic styles — rounded or flat topped. Some are unpainted, allowing the polished silver metal to shine. A few feature the painted design and an extra pattern, created from drilled holes.

For Llegada, working with discards adds an extra dimension to his art.

“When you create something with something that other people dispose, it’s great,” he said. “It’s great for the world.”

Available at www.valentinollegada.com

Bio-Glass

Broken bits of vodka, beer and wine bottles are reshaped into fresh glass panels for such uses as countertops, desks and tables.

The product, Bio-Glass, is designed, manufactured and sold by Coverings ETC, a business based in Miami.

The selection provides an assortment of hues, derived from the material being recycled, said Jennifer Ryan, the firm's business development manager.

A coffee-brown glass is made from recycled beer bottles. A soft blue variation, entitled Aquamarine, is formed from vodka bottles.

The manufacturing, which is based in Italy, involves heating and fusing the bits and nuggets of recycled glass, naturally yielding visual texture, Ryan said.

The look is part of the appeal, according to Jon Kaplan of Greenworks Cabinetry in Deerfield Beach.

Greenworks Cabinetry used the mint-green shade of Bio-Glass, labeled Oriental Jade, when building the dining table and matching side table for the Weston house. The glass panel atop each table is in the center of a bamboo frame. Kaplan's description — "Awesome." The same product was used by MCX Construction for kitchen countertops in a Miami condo.

The price for Bio-Glass ranges from \$90 to \$115 a square foot, uninstalled, Ryan said.

Available at Coverings ETC., 7610 NE Fourth Ct., Miami, www.coveringsetc.com, 305-757-6000

Recycled Magazine Picture Frames

Annette Davis of Fort Lauderdale is a recycling enthusiast. So stacks of magazines she regularly receives for her work in the advertising and marketing field serve as a ready source for her artistic whims.

Rather than simply toss piles of periodicals into the recycling bin, Davis went online to gather ideas for reusing the slick pages with such vibrant colors.

For her bowls, picture frames and vases, Davis' palette is composed of paper strips, selected and cut specifically to achieve a color-coordinated design.

Some pieces are built with layers of flat strips. Others involve patterns made with strips rolled into skinny tubes, positioned side by side forming a texture that looks a bit like bamboo.

Most pieces are priced from \$15 to \$70.

Available online at www.etsy.com/shop/gr3een?ref=seller_info, or email info@gr3een.com

Candy Wrapper Chair

Ecoist is probably best known for its candy wrapper handbags and purses.

The merchandise, which is handmade for the Miami-based business by artisans in Peru, also includes some items for the home, such as bowls formed from potato chip packaging.

As with candy bar wrappers, the recycled chip bags that provide the raw materials for Ecoist products are acquired from misprints, excess stock and other printing waste from the food manufacturers, said Ecoist co-founder Jonathan Marcoschamer.

Among the newest additions in the Ecoist line is the candy wrapper chair. Atop a frame built from sustainable wood, the upholstery is made — as with other Ecoist products — with a technique that involves folding and weaving wrappers.

With each Ecoist chair made to order, the design may be all silver — from the reverse silver side of wrappers — or in an assortment of color patterns based on the front sides of the selected wrappers.

The woven-wrapper upholstery, Marcoschamer, is naturally water repellent, so the products may be wiped clean. And, yes, feel free to sit on it. The price is \$1,800.

Available at www.ecoist.com

Recycled aluminum chairs

Trained as an architect, Bannavis Andrew Sribyatta, of PIE studio in Miami, designs furniture using untraditional materials, often recycled from such waste as water hyacinth plants and even hurricane debris.

For a temporary project at a design event in New York, he and his team built a substantial 7-foot-wide chandelier made with hundreds of plastic water bottles. The project also featured an airy yellow and white screen wall formed with interlocking dry cleaner hangers.

Sribyatta said sometimes the labels of sustainable or recycled are associated with boring and bland products. His goal is to produce products that change that perception.

Among them are a line of highly sculptural chairs and stools formed with metal strips containing recycled aluminum. “The easiest way to describe [the chairs] is that they are hand woven in random pattern,” Sribyatta said.

Prices for most are \$1,000 to \$6,000.

Available at PIE studio: Project Import Export, www.pie-studio.com, 305-722-2999