

upcycled art

4 free tutorials on upcycling ideas and creating recycled art

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MELANIE TESTA



mixed-media artists are a tribe of collectors, always picking up shiny (or grungy) odds and ends that might become useful someday. But what once was seen by others as an odd obsession is now a talent we can call creative upcycling, turning trash into recycled art.

In this free eBook, *Upcycled Art: 4 Free Tutorials on Upcycling Ideas and Creating Recycled Art*, we offer you recycled art projects that help you winnow down your collection of found objects—and make room for new ones!

In “A Most Original Name Tag,” Laura Ryan shows how to upcycle khaki or denim overalls into a work of art that shouts to all the world, “I am an artist!” wherever you wear it. You’ll be looking at all your old clothing for its upcycling potential.

Recycled art is all about using familiar things in different, unexpected ways. Inspired by Alisa Burke’s upcycling ideas for fusing and stitching plastic bags and junk mail into fabric, Cathleen ‘CB’

Bradley started collecting her own colorful plastic bags. She collages and stitches them, upcycling them into belts, banners, slipcovers, and more. Check out her process in “From Plastic Bag to Fused-Plastic Fabric: Create Colorful Collaged & Stitched Designs.”

Flea markets and yard sales often provide fodder for recycled art. Ivy Demos takes glass dishes, metal buttons, hardware, and stained glass remnants and turns them into “Mixed-Media Glass Flower” assemblages. She gives step-by-step directions on how to use adhesives and work safely with the glass to make your green art creations.

In “Raw Beauty: Make RecyclaBabes to Protect the Planet,” Melanie Testa fashions eco-friendly art dolls out of bits of “trash” she’s collected over the years. A little wire wrapping and sewing here, a little imagination there, and you have whimsical recycled art that seems to dance in the air.

Upcycled Art: 4 Free Tutorials on Upcycling Ideas and Creating Recycled Art will have you looking at your “trash” in new ways, giving you a free source of art materials.

Warmly,

Cate Prato
Online Editor,
Cloth Paper Scissors Today

cloth paper
scissors COLLAGE ARTISTIC MIXED-MEDIA DISCOVERY

**Upcycled Art:
4 Free Tutorials
on Upcycling Ideas
and Creating
Recycled Art**

presented by

Cloth Paper Scissors®

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Where mixed-media artists come to play



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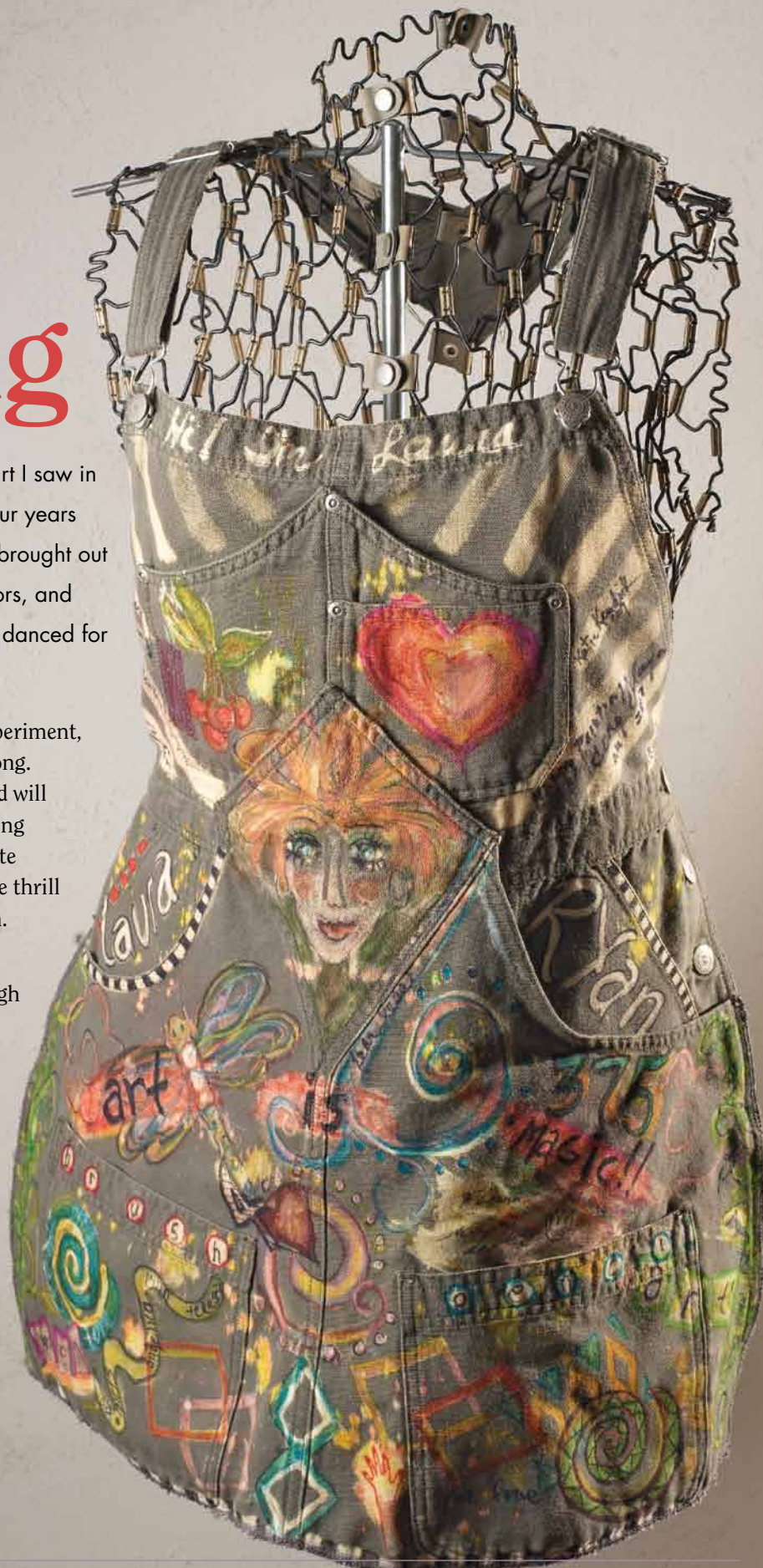
a most original name tag

I longed to create the type of mixed-media art I saw in magazines, but thought I wasn't artistic. Four years ago, a friend treated me to a day of art. She brought out her rubber stamps, glue, glitter, and watercolors, and away we went. My soul, brain, and spirit just danced for joy, and I was hooked.

I'm an inventive kind of woman who loves to experiment, so I didn't stay with standard stamping for too long. Today, I enjoy collage, book arts, assemblage, and will alter anything that doesn't run away. I love sharing my art journey with others, because if I can create something, enjoy the process, and experience the thrill of creating something from nothing, anyone can.

My nine-pocket apron was born as the result of getting ready for a garage sale. As I sorted through clothes for possible sale, I came across some old khaki bib overalls. Something clicked. I remembered there was a name tag contest every year at Art Unraveled in Phoenix. Hmmm, the biggest name tag in the world! I raced to my bedroom (the studio table was covered, but the bed was made) to cut the overalls apart and one thing led to another. Not only did I get out of finishing the garage sale, I won first place in the name tag contest for wildest, or most original. I designed my name tag with the idea of having all my instructors sign, but maybe my next one will have everyone's birthday on it; I just can't remember them all.

BY Laura Ryan





Shaci Bunka

Feby No ART
Kolleksi 1450 7-07

Bumi Batin

Laura

art

b r u s h

directions

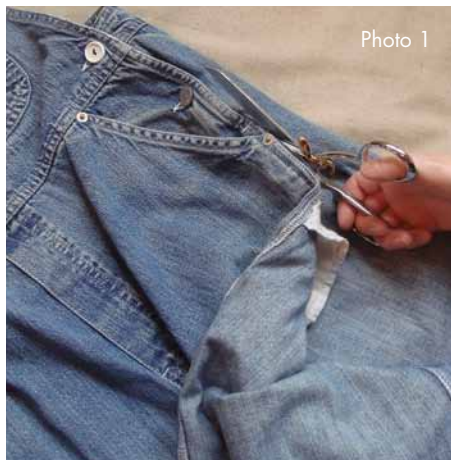
converting the overalls

1. Lay the overalls on a flat surface, front-side up.

MATERIALS

- Sewing machine (Use the denim or heavy setting and a denim needle.)
- Cotton/polyester thread
- Scissors
- Ruler
- Straight pins
- Foam stamps or rubber stamps without a lot of detail
- Assorted brushes/marking tools
- Bleach and bleach pen (I use Clorox®.)
- Saucer or pan for bleach (not to be used for food)
- Fabric paint (I used Jacquard® Textile Color, DecoArt® SoSoft®, and Duncan's Scribbles®.)
- Sharpie® pens
- Assorted embellishments: charms, beads, buttons, etc.

2. Cut along the flat felled seam on the outside edge, starting at the bottom of the pant leg. Cut through the waistband, keeping the pocket intact. (Photo 1) Repeat for the opposite leg.



note: A flat felled seam is the type of seam frequently used on denim.

3. Separate the front from the back, cutting along the entire inseam. (Photo 2)
4. Fold the front in half lengthwise (right sides together) and sew a dart at the crotch area; trim the excess fabric. (Photo 3)



5. Cut the straps away from the diamond shape on the back of the overalls. (Photo 4)



6. To get a sense of the finished look, place the back of the overalls onto the front section and arrange in a pleasing way. The waist on the back portion will be lower than the waist on the front, but the sides will line up pretty well. The widths may be slightly different; if so, trim them. (Photo 5)
7. Cut the back legs off about 1" below the rear pockets. Trim the legs on the front section to match the length of the back. (Photo 6)
8. Sew around the diamond shape and down the center seam to the bottom of the apron. Or, if you wish, leave



Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7: Stitch along the red line.

tips:

- Use overalls made from darker denim for more color contrast.
- Open the seams and other heavily layered pieces where possible. Some areas may be difficult to sew on a regular machine and may have to be hand sewn. A heavy-duty machine will go through all the layers.
- When constructing the neck strap, set the adjustable “clips” at the longest setting. You’ll be able to shorten them later for the best length.
- There will be extra fullness in the apron. Don’t expect it to be perfectly flat.
- Finish the sides and bottom edge with a serger if you have one, or topstitch, leaving the raw edges for a “frayed” look. You could also finish with ribbon, seam binding, lace, or anything else you desire.

the top of the diamond open for an extra pocket.

9. Make the apron ties from the leftover leg material and attach them at the waist.
10. Finish stitching the layers together by sewing along the bottom and side edges. (Photo 7)
11. Cut the neck strap to the desired width and sew it together.

bleaching and decorating

1. Pour some bleach into a saucer or shallow pan. Dip the stamps in the bleach and stamp the apron using medium pressure. Rinse the stamps well after each use; bleach can damage your stamps.
2. Brush bleach onto the apron using various brushes and your favorite mark-making tools. I used broom bristles, a toothbrush, a fan brush, stencils, and drinking straws.
3. Wash and dry the apron.



Above: Design with discharge; use stamps dipped in bleach to decorate the waist ties.

CAUTION: Before using bleach, put on gloves and old clothing. Work in a well-ventilated room or outside and consider wearing a respirator to prevent inhaling the fumes.

4. Decorate it with fabric paint and permanent markers. Draw swirls, geometric shapes, write names, dates, or wishes. Vary the pressure and angle of the brushstroke. Feel free to play. ●

eye-poppers.blogspot.com

Adapted from
CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS®
July/August 2011

THE WORKSHOP from plastic **bag** to fused-plastic **fabric**

create colorful collaged
& stitched designs

I get a lot of questions when people see my art. Simply stated, the fabric I create is made from colorful discarded plastic bags. The process is fusion, and it's all about putting the colors together. I cut, layer, piece, and fuse (using heat) to make my fabric. Free-motion stitching isn't there to hold it together; it's an added layer to bring it together. The crazed stitching is my sgraffito—a scratching and graffiti technique that I love to use in my creations. These defining lines bring the finishing pop to my designs.

BY Cathleen "CB" Bradley





For me, art has always been about using familiar things in different, unexpected ways. Repurposing, found object

MATERIALS

- Plastic bags: large, clean, neutral-colored bags for the foundation fabric and colorful boutique bags for collage
 - Parchment paper
 - Craft scissors
 - Iron and a safe place to set it (eg., pie plate, brick, or tin lid)
 - Heat-safe ironing surface
 - Paper and pencil
 - Sewing machine
 - Leather needle
 - Upholstery thread
- optional**
- Free-motion presser foot
 - Iron cleaner (Try Dritz® or Faultless® hot iron cleaner.)
 - Binder clips or clothespins
 - Mini iron

assemblage, morphing the familiar into something new—this is the basis of just about every piece of art I create. I tip my hat to Alisa Burke (CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS, Jan/Feb 2009) who taught me the basic technique of fusing plastic bags. From there I made it my own.

Realizing that I was creating a new fabric set my mind racing. The first thing I ever fused was a funky slipcover for a discarded chair going to auction. After making that, I was dying to make something else, but I wasn't sure which direction to go in. It was as if there were too many choices. Since then I have made a number of décor and wearable items: lamp shades, belts, purses, wall art, and more. Once you create the "fabric," you can make any number of things.



plastic bag notes

- Not all bags fuse well. Boutique bags work better than supermarket bags.
- Bags with the same recycle numbers work well together, but not all bags are numbered.
- Use the discarded handle section for practice to determine how well the bags work together, and to test the number of layers you'll need.
- Food packaging bags aren't the best for fusing, but they will work. Sometimes they have fun colors or patterns you'll want to use; just make sure to clean the bags well before using.
- The heat of fusing can cause the plastic to shrink. Keep that in mind as you create your piece.
- Keep a container nearby to put the scraps into so you can easily recycle what's left over.

the foundation fabric

1. Cut off the handle section and cut the bags open at the seams so you have flat pieces to work with. Place a piece of parchment paper on your heat-safe work surface, and then layer 4–6 of the large, neutral-colored bags on top of the parchment paper. Turn the bags so the inked sides are facing each other.
2. Set your iron to the cotton setting, no steam. Cover the plastic with

Figure 1



Figure 2

parchment paper and iron until the layers fuse together, about 10 seconds, to create the foundation piece.

3. Flip the whole thing over and iron the other side. Repeat as needed. (Figure 1) Create a designated space for your iron while you work, to keep it away from the plastic scraps when you set it down.

note: If you find the foundation is a little thin, you can add another layer of plastic, but keep in mind that you will be adding another layer when you start collaging with the colored pieces.

caution: Make sure to work in a well-ventilated area when fusing plastic. An open window and a small fan work well.

fusing tips

- Exert even pressure and keep the iron moving at all times.
- Start ironing in the center of the piece and work your way out to the edges.
- Keep the ironing to a minimum. The more you iron, the more shrinkage there will be, and your piece may become distorted and faded.
- Check the parchment paper periodically for ink transfer from the bags. Move the parchment paper around until you've used up all of the clean areas, and then use a new piece of parchment paper.
- An iron-cleaning product is your friend for those times when you catch an edge of the plastic with the hot iron. It is best to use this product outside because of the fumes.



Figure 3

the collage

1. Decide on your design; the art comes from how you cut up the bags you've chosen.
2. Flatten the boutique bags onto your work surface. Cut the desired shapes and make little collections of colors and patterns. (See page 29.)
3. Lay out your pieces on the foundation fabric from the center out. Cover as much of your foundation as you can with your colored collage pieces—like a quilt. (Figure 2)

collaging tips

- Dampen the back side of the collage pieces if you are having trouble getting them to stay in place before ironing.
- Have patience. Be open to the fused design not ending up exactly as you envisioned it, because the plastic fuses in its own way.
- If you're not happy with how a piece fuses, try peeling it off and re-fusing it.

note: Work in sections if it's a really large piece, fusing as you go. Static electricity or a small breeze can quickly upset what you've laid out.

4. Cover your prepared collage area with parchment paper and iron as you did with your foundation fabric. (Figure 3)

tip: When the fusing is complete, allow the plastic piece to cool before pulling off the parchment paper. Remove the paper gently. If you pull the paper off when the plastic is still warm, you will stretch the plastic.

sewing

The stitching you add defines your finished piece.

1. Practice your *sgraffito* with pencil and paper before stitching on the plastic.
2. Stitch your design onto the fused plastic. (Figure 4)
3. Touch up your fusing as needed, but be cautious. The heat can cause puckering around the stitching. I use a mini iron for touch-ups. It is perfect for getting to tiny edges and into corners without heating everything.

I have found that it takes a village, literally, to do my fusing. I never buy something just for the bag, but I do ask people if I can have their bag when they're finished with it. Friends, family, and neighbors are amused at the notion of me cutting apart plastic bags to make art, yet they are wowed at the art I create from the bags. People anonymously drop off bags of bags on my front porch. It would be nice if some day "plastic or paper" isn't even an option, but until then, repurposing plastic bags has a lot of potential.

Beautiful polka-dot bags from France, striped bags from baby shops, bags with Japanese characters or bold fonts—How can I "re-fuse" them? ●

<http://studiocb.blogspot.com/>



Figure 4

sewing tips

- Change your needle for every project, because stitching on plastic causes the needle to dull quickly.
- Use a long stitch when stitching on plastic.
- Mistakes can easily be fixed by re-fusing the area.
- Remember, when you make a hole in the plastic it's there for good.
- When working on a large piece, roll up the edge and clip it with a binder clip or clothespin to make it more manageable.

mixed-media glass flower

a found object assemblage



BY Ivy Demos

MATERIALS

- Glass base: casserole lid or glass dish, 6" diameter
- Spray glass cleaner
- Paper towels or baby wipes
- Wire plate hanger
- Glass: yellows, ivory, black, brown, and green
- Towel
- Eye protection
- Hammer
- Gloves
- Glass bowls, 2, 4" diameter
- Glue: Glass, Metal & More™
- Tweezers
- Found objects: brass rings, aquarium gems, cuff links, watch parts, etc.

optional

- Overhead projector

build your ivory sunflower

A sunflower is a composite flower: the center is made of disk flowers; the outer petals are called ray flowers. This project can be altered to make all different kinds of flowers. Choose your favorite blossom, colors, and a few spare parts. Play with your objects and the silhouettes they make; experiment with the composition.

TIP: Work on a white work surface. Put a clean sheet of white paper or fabric on the work surface to mimic light as you assemble the piece. If you are making a small project like this one, and own an overhead projector, you could take advantage of the light box to backlight the glass collage while you layer your composition.

As a child, I was taught to appreciate time-worn objects and the endurance of things well made. Flea markets, antiques stores, and junk shops became my usual haunts. These places are where I collect useful items that speak to me of past lives.

Knowing my reputation for collecting, a local stained-glass artist gave me a large box containing pounds of scrap glass. I marveled at the oddly cut glass pieces, dozens of colors, and the variety of surface treatments. I had little interest in learning traditional stained-glass techniques, and even less in following patterns, but I experimented with the glass using abstract layering techniques, and discovered that when the glass pieces were overlapped I achieved the visual effect of watercolor or color transparencies. This was a wonderful discovery and one I continue to experiment with.

directions

preparing the glass

1. Clean the glass base and affix the wire plate hanger. (Figure 1) Then clean the rest of the glass and any objects you plan to include in the collage.
2. Put on safety goggles and wrap the black and brown glass in the towel. Hit the wrapped glass with the hammer until the pieces are the desired size. These colors will simulate the sunflower seeds. (Figure 2) Set the pieces aside.

caution: Extreme care must be taken when working with broken glass. Be mindful of the sharp edges when handling the pieces, and be sure to hang your finished piece in a safe place, where people can't walk into it or rub against it.

3. Place the ivory and yellow glass pieces in the towel and hammer as before until the pieces are the desired size for the ray flowers (outer petals). Do the same with the green glass for the leaves. Break more glass as needed.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

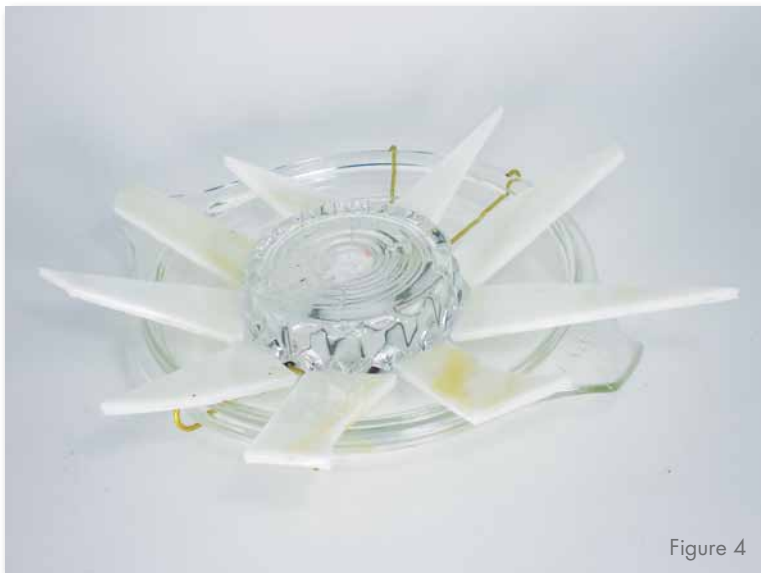


Figure 4

tip

Glass, Metal & More from Beacon Adhesives is my glue of choice. It holds without yellowing, clouding, or cracking in the sun, and it dries to a hard rubber-like consistency. It is a little goopy when applied, and can produce annoying tiny strands after you dab, but for me, there is no substitute. This adhesive is visible under transparent glass, and it will not work with wood or other porous materials, such as unfinished pottery. Please note that Glass, Metal & More is solvent based and must be used in a well-ventilated area.

creating the flower

1. Make thin rings of glue on the inside of 1 of the small bowls and place the black and brown pieces (disk flowers) onto the glue. Continue adding pieces until the inside of the bowl is covered. (Figure 3)

tip: For safety, use tweezers to hold the small glass pieces, and to place them on the glue. This will maximize control of placement, and minimize glue on your fingers, too.

2. While the disk flower dries, position the second small bowl in the center of your base as a placeholder. (Figure 4) Before you glue your petals, make sure that your glass base is level to prevent the glass pieces from sliding out of position.
3. Apply the ivory and yellow flower petals (ray flowers) to the glass base using a small amount of glue. (Figure 5) I use dabs of glue the size of half a pea to adhere the pieces. If you use a thicker layer of glue, it is likely that the objects will shift. Allow this

Figure 5



Figure 6

portion to dry completely (overnight is best).

tip: It is always a good idea to check your glued materials for movement. If you find a piece that has shifted, you will be able to move it back during the first 15 minutes or so after application.

final assembly

1. Remove the small glass bowl that was being used as a placeholder.
2. Put glue along the rim of the disk flower (small glass-covered bowl) and

place it face down in the center of the base. Continue adding glass and found objects around the center of the flower. I added cuff links and watch parts. I couldn't resist adding a guitar tuning peg that matched the ivory glass.

3. Add more tiny pieces in concentric circles on the disk flower. I used antique aquarium gems and little brass rings. (Figure 6) Place the collage on a flat surface to dry undisturbed for at least 2 days.

note: The glue will appear to be set after a few hours and can be trusted at that time to be held up for critiquing. But don't leave the flower vertical for too long, the pieces could slide or fall off.

4. Trim any visible glue with a razor blade, or camouflage it with more collage materials.

note: Be careful when removing glue from metal objects; metal may scratch. ●

<http://www.etsy.com/shop/ariaarts>



raw beauty

Adapted from
CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS®
November/December 2009

make RecyclaBabes to protect the planet

BY Melanie Testa



rusted bottle caps, nuts, washers, tile spacers, soda can pulls, pretty plastic barrettes, museum admission buttons, and silk flower petals are just the beginning of what I have collected over the years. I don't know why these bits of trash have caught my attention, but I pick them up on a regular basis and place them in my pocket to be sorted and stored in my studio. This is the detritus of daily life, the overlooked refuse of humanity. I suggest we begin to see these parts and pieces, this rubble, as raw materials, and turn the unsightly into beauty. Let's create an army of RecyclaBabes: protectorate of the profoundly sacred and utterly profane—our planet and our trash. These sassy babes have wayward tongues and strong backbones. They take their jobs and their uniforms quite seriously. Rubbish is a badge of honor for these trashy ladies; make no mistake about it.

If we have elevated debris to the status of art supply, it is time to start shopping. Here is a partial list of items used in the making of these dolls: metal strapping, soda pop tops, keys, nuts, clothespin parts, copper cuttings, barrettes, candy wrappers, wooden matches, and bakery string. Combine these things with the cuttings and scraps found in your studio trash can, and you are well on your way to creating a feisty troop of your own.

directions

1. Cut one strand of silk cord about 6½" for the arms and another about 10" for the legs.
2. Choose something that will work as a head—any found object that strikes your fancy.
3. Wrap the silk cord legs just below the head with a strip of cloth to create a torso; this will give the doll a form or base to sew on to.
4. Tie a knot along the length of one leg and you've created a knee. Remember, the legs don't need to be the same length.

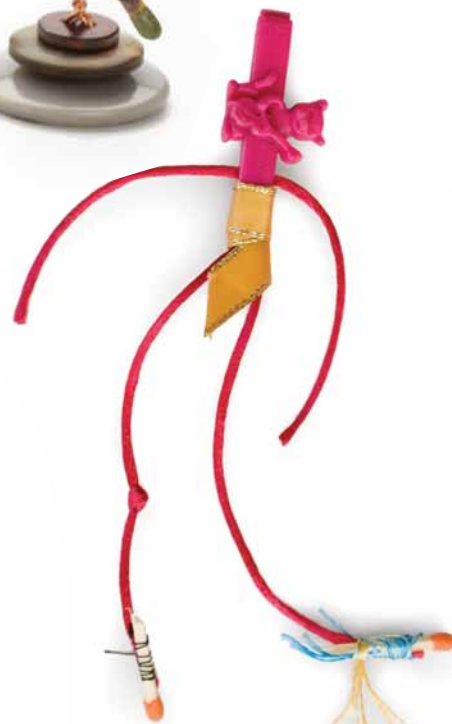
MATERIALS

a wildly incomplete list of what you might need:

- Found objects in excess
- Silk cord
- Ribbon
- Scrap cloth
- Embroidery and hand sewing thread
- Needles appropriate to thread
- Wooden matches
- Large buttons
- 18-gauge wire
- Dremel® tool with drill and grinding bits
- Pliers



5. Prepare tiny scraps of tulle to fluff out a skirt by cinching a pinch of the tulle with thread. Baste a line of stitch along a scrap of fabric, gather, and you've got a skirt. Layer it over the tulle.
6. A buttonhole stitch and embroidery floss work wonders to create sleeves. Or stitch a loop of cloth together to create kimono-like sleeves.
7. Whipstitch bits of cloth to the legs for a pants-under-skirt look.
8. Embelish your doll—these girls like to wear jewelry. Small bits of cylindrical ephemera and beads can be placed on their arms just prior to sewing their hands in place. I used Kelli Nina Perkins' "Dipped





and Delightful” technique (CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS, July/August 2007) to make paper beads that were then cut down to create bangles.

9. Use eye hooks, tiny safety pins, and O-rings for hands. Thread the silk cord through the eye hook or pin, and whipstitch to secure.
10. Give your doll some feet. Wooden matchsticks make great slippers; snap them to size and whipstitch tightly in place. Knot off.

tip: Be messy! Snip your threads to dangle as though ribbons and ties. These dolls love their bawdy attire.

11. Once your little divas are complete, make a stand by cutting a length or two of copper wire, folding it in half, and threading it through a stack of buttons (use one length of wire per set of buttonholes). Holding the cut ends of the wire with pliers, twist the buttons away from you until the wire has a uniform twirl. You may need to give the base an extra bit of torque to ensure the wire remains upright and secure. If you are able

to wedge the stand up into the body of the doll, great. If not, sew the stand to the back of the doll with a tight whipstitch.

Talk about hoarding! The tiniest scraps of cloth and the oddest little bits of refuse and rubble can easily be upcycled into a rabble-rousing force of art doll glamour. Hop to! Take a walk, find some mutable art supplies, ask your friends for the gleanings of their studio circular bins, and start wrapping, tying, and sewing your very own force of RecyclaBabes. ●

melanietesta.com

tips

- I have found a Dremel tool to be quite helpful. It allows you to drill holes and, say, make bottle caps into buttons. And once holes have been created in your chosen head, sewing stray bits to the head to form a body becomes quite easy. You can also use a Dremel tool to grind away rust and reveal a shiny metal area.
- Apply a swipe of Aleene’s® Tack-It Over and Over to a rusty bottle cap, allow it to dry, and apply metal leaf. This simple application will add a sense of incongruity and sparkle to the decomposing metal.
- You may use any technique you like to attach the silk cord arms and legs to your chosen head. Tying is the simplest technique, but your head may call for sewing or wrapping the arms and legs in place. In one piece I was able to tie the arms and legs onto a metal “button,” and the plastic hair clip allowed me to wedge the arms and legs into the barrette before closing it.