

DOWN TO URTH

TRANSFORMING ONE'S TRASH INTO ANOTHER'S TREASURE

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Think for a moment about old milk cartons, juice boxes, telephone books and newspapers, and then about where they are most likely going: the trash. Yet everyday products like these can often be used to create new items that help foster the ecological growth and well-being of the rapidly depleting natural environment. UrthBags, an eco-friendly handbag line based in Huntington Beach, has been working for the past two years to create trendy, environmentally friendly handbags for women with a greener sense of style.

Monica Ralli, founder of UrthBags, knew that creating such a one-of-kind line would inspire people to develop a stronger sense of eco-consciousness and help reduce the amount of waste generated everyday in our overly disposable world. "Our handbags and purses became the vehicle for this mission," says Ralli. "I wanted to create a line of stylish and planet-friendly purses made from recycled materials such as juice cartons, seashells, fashion magazines and coconuts that were hip, whimsical, smart and green."

What resulted was a distinct handbag line that not only made its mark in the world of avant-garde fashion but also in the environmentally conscious community. Even more admirable is the fact that UrthBags is also helping to stimulate the job market by providing work to local craftsmen and women's organizations worldwide.

Targeted to women 12- to 80-years old, UrthBags has a purse for everyone. Some of the line's best sellers include the recycled magazine bags, the juice box bags and the sea shell purses. Our personal favorite? The newspaper tote bag. Waterproof and large enough to fit a towel, iPod and a pair of shades, this roomy recycled

carryall is the perfect accessory for a day at the beach. Affordably priced between \$20 and \$90, the UrthBags line is not only fashion forward and environmentally sound, but also a realistic purchase in these recession-relevant times.

With new and upcoming projects in the works, Ralli is focusing on expanding her collection to utilize an even broader scope of recyclable materials and to keep creatively transforming them into wearable works of art. "I feel that imagination is the most powerful tool to help generate more ideas," says Ralli. "My plan for UrthBags is to constantly work towards sourcing additional materials that have been tossed aside as useless trash. The more consumers purchase eco-friendly and recycled products, the greater the demand will be for them." Bags are locally available at The OC Spa & Wellness Center and Bella Vita Spa & Boutique, both in Huntington Beach, and the company's Web site.

In an age where we now have the choice to opt for greener, more eco-friendly products, it is exciting to see a company like UrthBags merge the concept of environmental preservation with style and fashion. With these recycled handbags, people can now play an active part in controlling their natural surroundings by saying no to toxic manufacturing measures and materials such as PVC that cause harm to the environment. Blending creativity with resourcefulness and imagination with innovation, UrthBags is not only stylish and fun but also delivers a powerful message to the public that recycling is significant to our era and we can all participate in our own way.

Recycle your way into spring at www.urthbags.com

