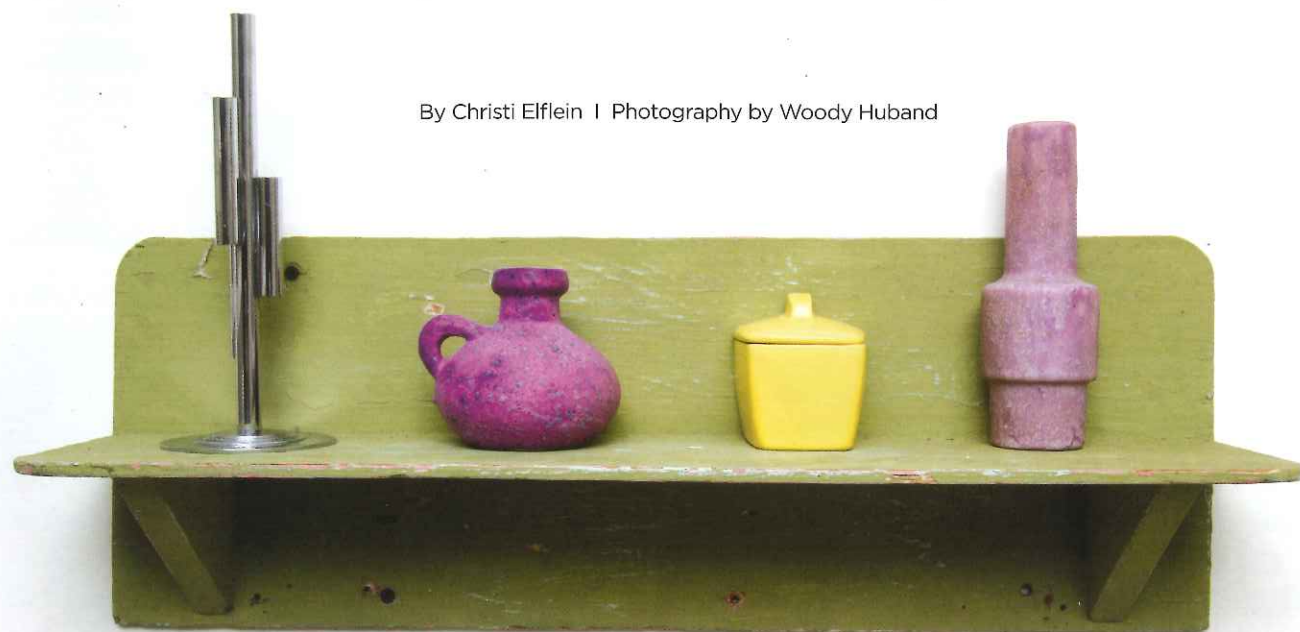


reduce, reuse, recycle & UPCYCLE

To help make the world a better place

By Christi Elflein | Photography by Woody Huband



Upcycling is the one of the latest green crazes in the world of design. It takes the motto "reduce, reuse, recycle" one step further. A big step further, moving beyond minimizing the bad (less of a negative environmental footprint) and focusing on doing more good (having a positive footprint). In its simplest form, upcycling is the lifecycle of an object. Created with non-toxic materials, it is then disassembled and remade into something useful and often better, then disassembled and recreated again and again until it returns to the soil.

Right: Mixing vintage antiques into a contemporary aesthetic is a part of the rustic revival trend in design.





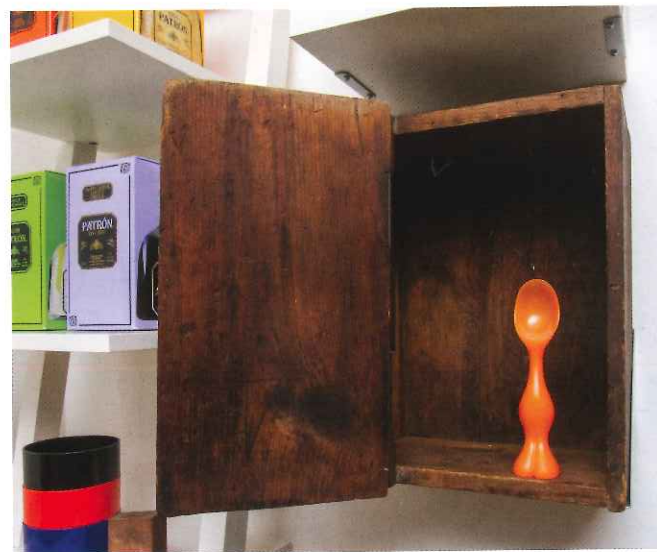
It's the idea of fostering innovation by starting the decision making process with values defined rather than benchmark goals named.

For example, hardwood floors enjoyed for generations may one day be used to create a wooden dining room table. After decades of use, the table could then be made into particle board. The particle board could be turned into paper and then burned. As long as no toxic glues or dyes were used in the creation processes, the healthy ash could once again be a part of the soil's nutrients. A tree has worked its way through the system in a clean loop.

William McDonough and Michael Braungart publicized the idea of upcycling in their 2002 book *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*. Then gave it real traction in their 2013 book, *The Upcycle: Beyond Sustainability—Designing for Abundance*.

Today, if you search "upcycle" on Pinterest, you'll see endless ideas on how to upcycle. Turn an empty pill bottle into a hide-a-key. Modify an outdated TV console and create a beautiful dog house. Create a modern fire pit from a washing machine drum.

The idea of upcycling as explained by McDonough and Braungart is much more than the conversion of outdated household items into



Above: An antique wooden box mounted on the wall becomes a beautiful rustic cabinet.

Top of page: Jeff Edelson holds a vintage apothecary drawer, which he uses as shelving for small collectibles.

new household items. It's about rethinking how manufacturers produce items, how we approach feeding our energy needs, how humans can have a symbiotic relationship with nature, and more. It's the idea of fostering innovation by starting the decision making process with values defined rather than benchmark goals named. For people passionate about upcycling, such as Jacksonville resident Jeff Edelson, it is more of a lifestyle than a trend.

The Treasure Hunter

Jeff Edelson lives on the South Bank of downtown Jacksonville, in the Strand. A self-proclaimed treasure hunter, he recently left the corporate world to follow his passion of pairing found things one would not normally combine for both function and art.



Edelson's dining room wall sconces were once lamp shades on a Pullman Railroad car.

Unintentionally, his artistic endeavors have led him to be an upcycler.

Edelson's apartment is a testimony to how upcycling is a rising trend in the world of design. The process of acquiring pieces is as much work as transforming them into home furnishings. His great finds come from such places as flea markets, salvage yards and estate sales. Metal wall sconces that were once lamp shades on a Pullman Railroad car flank his dining room walls and may one day be used for its metal properties. Three rectangular steel oil drums are pedestals for art in his living room, and could one day be reconstructed for use in an automobile. A rustic wooden box turned on its side and mounted on the wall is now a cabinet in his kitchen, and could one day be insulation pulp.

"I do it for the enjoyment and satisfaction of putting unique pieces together

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Top Left: A discarded piece of glass from a coffee table is mounted on saw horses to become a modern desk.

Bottom Left: A window pane mounted on a box is reconfigured as both a table and storage.



that normally would never have had a sense of belonging, but when paired with another unique piece it becomes magical," says Edelson. "It gives life to these older pieces as a preservationist and moves them through generations of time, bringing them back today. They now belong."

One unique piece of furniture in his home that is an assemblage of several upcycled items is his desk. The etched glass desktop is from a cocktail table and it sits upon two saw horses. The desk organizers sitting on top of the desk are crafted from apothecary drawers turned on their side, with small pieces of scrap wood inserted as shelves. Many of these pieces were found at Edelson's favorite place to treasure hunt, Eco Relics.

"Amist a sea of miscellaneous items, a treasure can be found," he says.

Edelson has plans for transitioning this interior work to a local venue where he can pursue this full time. He says, "Stay tuned to see what I'm going to do next."

Eco Relics

Local architectural salvage yard Eco Relics is banking on Jacksonville embracing the idea of upcycling. Mike and Annie Murphy opened the doors of Eco Relics in

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— Jeff Edelson



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From vintage cookware to antique hardware, Eco Relics is a treasure trove for upcyclers.

West Riverside last spring. It's a treasure hunter's paradise, located in a 50,000 sq. ft. warehouse with an additional 1.5 acres of outdoor space full of architectural salvage, construction materials and tools.

The items in their warehouse come from building demolitions and renovations, left-over supplies from contractors, estate sales and donations.

One of Eco Relics' key services is salvaging. Eco Relics will send in a demolition team for free. It is a win-win-win. The home owner doesn't have to pay for the demolition or disposal of the items. Eco Relics brings back the materials to sell at the warehouse. And the environment wins because materials destined for the landfill are kept out.

Eco Relics recently conducted the interior demolition of a home in Avondale under renovation. They are creating rustic farm tables from the door frames of this house. Doug Kohl, a carpenter at Eco Rel-

ics says, "You can't find 250-year-old wood except at Eco Relics." Kohl constructs the tables for approximately \$100 per foot.

The salvage store also recently participated in a renovation project in the Dyal-Upchurch Building at 6 E. Bay St. in downtown Jacksonville. The Dyal-Upchurch Building was the first multi-story building built right after the Great Fire of 1901 and was designed by famed architect Henry Klutho. The recent renovations include updating the floor with concrete to meet code. Eco Relics removed the wood floors, so that they wouldn't be thrown in the dump. The beautiful floor joists are now being made into fireplace mantels.

"We don't throw away much," Murphy says. "We will save the cut off pieces and use them for something else, like a decorative shelf bracket."

Kohl passionately speaks about the salvaged items in their warehouse. "It breaks my heart," he says about the idea of these salvaged items being thrown away. "There is no reason it can't be made into something else, whether it's decorative or functional."

A table is constructed from the door frames of a demolition in Avondale.



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