



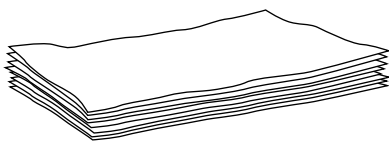
EVERYTHING IMPROVES IN THE NEXT LIFE

Upcycling materials that have been discarded or are surplus to requirements, rather than simply recycling them, adds value to everyday items such as furniture, fashion, decorative items and sometimes even entire homes.

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Upcycling cast-offs often leads to curious scenarios. Examples include transforming a tarpaulin that up till recently was touring Europe on a truck into a shoulder bag for fashion-conscious students, a trendy downtown café using an old discarded CRT television as an aquarium and a resourceful architect making stylish lampshades from old test tubes.

Upcycling is the term used when creative ideas and craftsmanship give discarded products a new lease on life, for example as a chic accessory or elegant piece of furniture. This mostly takes place at cottage industry level, though. There have been no large-scale upcycling projects for disposable products so far, but a number of possibilities do exist. ■



BLACK FROM WHITE

Environmental protection organizations estimate that global paper production in 2015 amounted to some 440 million metric tons. Most of this is recycled and the quality normally suffers. Paper composite panels are the exception. This high-grade surface material is produced from waste paper and phenolic resin using thermal recycling (waste-to-energy) technology. The extremely durable and stable paper composite is used to make items such as kitchen work surfaces, skateboard ramps and guitar necks – in all kinds of colors.

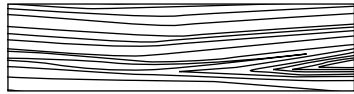


IN THE GREEN

Bonn-based start-up company True Fruits is doing a roaring trade with its smoothies in glass bottles. The juices are made one hundred percent of fruit and vegetables and are advertised using clever attention-grabbing puns. The company has come up with various ideas for upcycling the empty bottles. They use the vitamin drinks' stainless steel caps to produce new attachments that enable the bottles to live on as salt shakers, soap dispensers or drinking bottles. The printed smoothie containers keep the brand fresh in customers' minds while also cutting down on waste – the ultimate in upcycling.







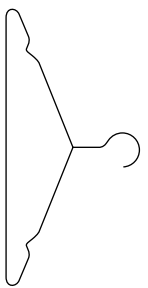
AHEAD OF HIS TIME

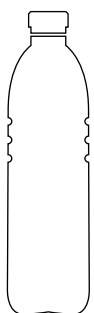
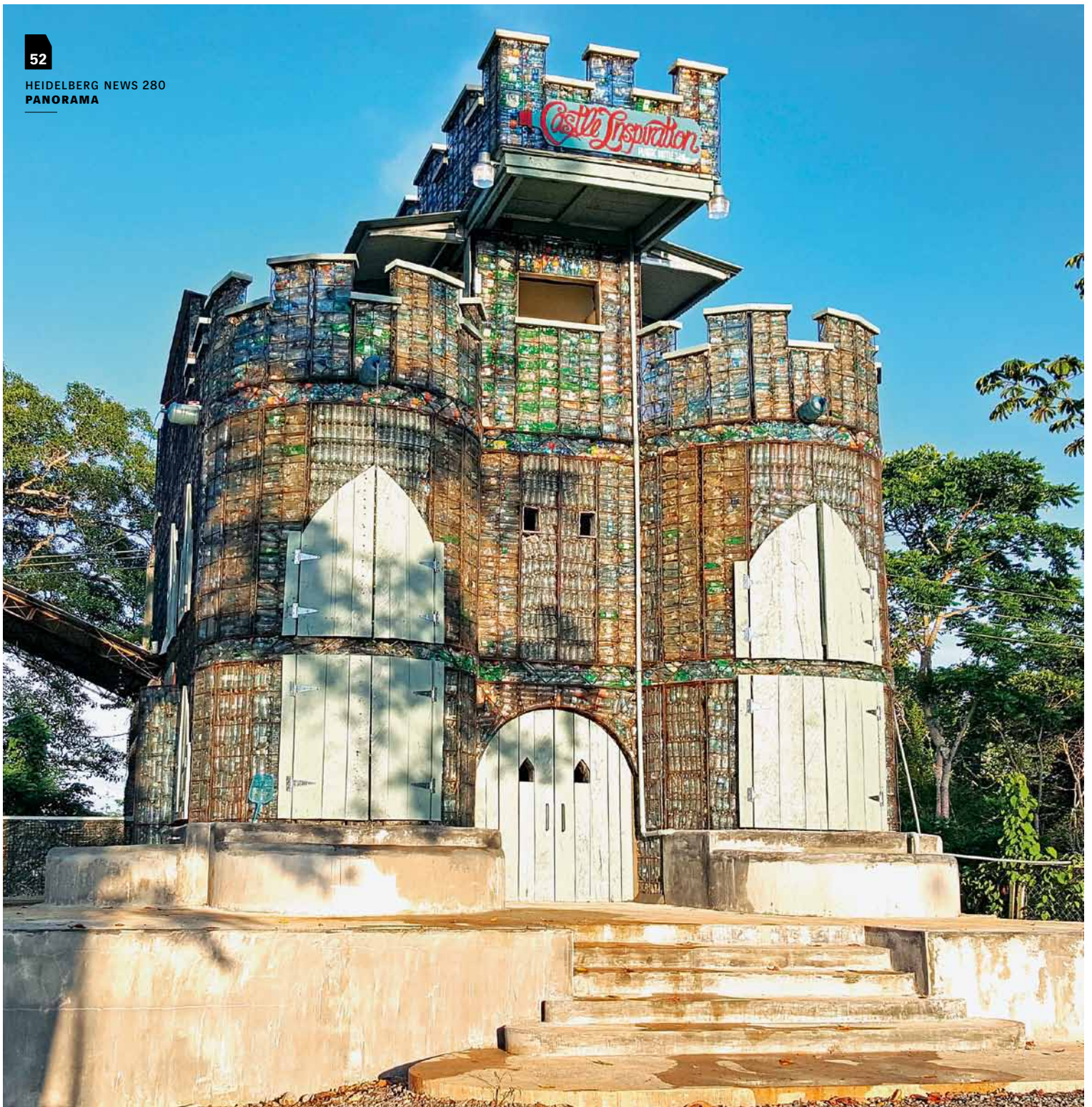
Adam Hills was an upcycler before the term was even coined. He started his furniture design business in London in 1993, long before the “used look” interior design trend became popular in homes. The architect and his wife used materials from empty, derelict houses to produce beautiful furniture for their own home. Visitors were impressed, which soon led to the opening of Retrouvius – a store for interior decoration, furniture and home accessories. Almost everything in the store – from lampshades, windows, doors and timber to paints and fabrics – is made from old materials. Hills now gets interior decoration assignments for fashion stores and show homes – often with a budget running into millions.



ROOM WITH A VIEW

“Be the change you want to see in the world” is the motto of the team running Vienna’s Boutique Hotel Stadthalle. The hotel has 1,400 square feet (130 sq. m) of solar panels, a photovoltaic system and a water heat pump, while a new extension meets the passive house standard – entirely in keeping with the hotel’s “sustainability in tourism” business model. The latest facet of this sustainability was the result of a collaboration with Vienna’s University of Applied Arts at the beginning of 2014. Seven guest rooms have been renovated and furnished almost entirely using upcycling, including firewood turned into coffee tables, books serving as nightstands and newspapers acting as footrests. With coat hooks fashioned out of old cutlery and shelving made from bicycle parts, anyone spending the night here will leave little or no carbon footprint.





DISPOSABLE REAL ESTATE

Panama has beautiful beaches but also mountains of discarded plastic bottles that no one disposes of. This bothered Canadian Robert Bezeau and he started collecting the bottles. Having accumulated around one million in the space of one-and-a-half years, he came up with an idea for putting them to good use. Stacked in large wire baskets and supported by concrete pillars, the bottles combine to create houses that can be built quickly and cost-effectively. "Plastered inside and out, they are stable and can even withstand a hurricane or earthquake," says Bezeau. Money is not the main motivation for him. The aim of his idea is to free the planet of a little waste and draw attention to the importance of waste prevention. What's more, anyone having a house built in this way will have recycled the equivalent of all the plastics bottles they will use in their entire lives.