



Trashmagination Podcast #101 – Lessons from 100 Podcasts

Welcome to Trashmagination, a podcast about reimagining trash. I'm Carla Brown. Today's episode is the 101st episode of the Trashmagination podcast, and I thought I would take this opportunity to look back over my first 100 episodes and talk about what I have learned by doing this project.

I started this podcast in November 2016, so it has been 3 ½ years. I started it so I could spend more time researching creative reuse which is an activity that makes me feel peaceful. I also was curious whether there a worldwide community of people like me who care about this.

I searched for other podcasts about creative reuse but I did not find any. I found podcasts about environmental issues but I found them depressing. I found podcasts about artists but not specifically those who creatively reuse materials. So it felt like I had something new to contribute. My plan was to share a story from my own creative reuse adventures, teach a skill and then recommend a book. Over time, the format evolved. Now I mostly share ideas for how to creatively reuse a material and then tell stories about artists who use that material.

So what have I learned from the first 100 episodes of Trashmagination? Let's start by looking at the numbers – and by that, I mean the number of downloads for each episode.

Trashmagination Download Numbers

Since November 2016, the Trashmagination podcast has been downloaded about 17 and a half thousand times. That's not much if you compare it to popular podcasts, but I like to imagine 17,000 people in a room listening and then it doesn't seem so bad. To summarize, it started with about 100 downloads per month and now we have about 1,000 downloads per month.

The most popular episode has been about creative reuse of toilet paper tubes which I posted a month ago. It has been downloaded more than 850 times. The next most popular episode is creative reuse of stuffed toys at 500 downloads. The third most popular episode was making musical instruments from recycled materials at about 400 downloads.

What makes a popular episode? I think the episodes that get downloaded the most are those which appeal to people who are trying to make things with their kids or creatively reuse their kids' toys when the kids grow up. Other popular episodes are about sewing and that's likely because I'm a member of a few Facebook groups for people who sew with recycled materials so I have a way of reaching that specific audience.

If I think about who is my ideal audience, mostly I would like to connect with people who are interested in creative reuse in general i.e. people like myself. However, part of the challenge of getting Trashmagination to the right people is that most people who care about creative reuse specialize in a certain material. They build community with other specialists. When I imagine my audience members, I'm usually imagining art teachers who work with many materials and who are looking for activities to do in class. I am hoping they appreciate how I gather up a list of artists who are using that material so they can teach about artists while teaching about a technique.

There is a podcast called *How To!* with Charles Duhigg where each week he finds someone with a problem and then he matches them with someone who is an expert in that topic. The expert likely addresses the problem at a level far beyond what the person needs, but they normalize the fact that the problem can be solved. And that's how I view this

podcast. I'm assuming people have these materials in their homes and they want it to be used ethically. So they would love to hear about an expert who spent their whole lives thinking about that material.

99 More Episodes – What Keeps Me Motivated?

While I enjoy making the Trashmagination podcast, I did have a thought to make 100 episodes and stop. I don't get paid to make this podcast, and I don't receive many emails or messages from listeners. But I have decided to keep going and I'm trying to figure out why.

I keep making this podcast is because **it gives me hope**. It makes me feel like there are options for this planet because there are creative people. I would find garbage day completely depressing if I didn't make this podcast. When I walk up my street and see people throwing away marvelous things or buying cheap things that they knew would break very quickly, I get super sad. But then I research artists doing creative reuse and I feel okay. Or even better, I make art from trash myself and I feel even better. Making art from trash is my bubble of good mental health.

I could do this research or make art and not make a podcast. In fact, it would free up my time if I stopped making the podcast. However, I feel a duty to share this info in case there is someone who is despairing about the status of trash, and they need something to keep going as well. I feel compelled to give them a life preserver of hope.

I also think artists who focus on creative reuse have a special kind of wisdom that the world needs to value more. If we could connect these artists with people in various industries, they could help reduce waste and invent new products that don't even exist today.

My dream is to make a creative reuse design school at the front door of a landfill. I imagine a place where people learn how to reuse stuff and we could walk out the door and get more materials as we needed them. This exists in San Francisco at the Recology Center which I talked about in my episode about creative reuse artist residencies, and it exists at a few other landfills around the world. It also exists at the ReTuna Återbruksgalleria in Sweden which is a shopping mall where everything is recycled, which I talked about in episode 17 on making a creative reuse business district.

Beside the school, I imagine a workshop where people do creative reuse and we sell their products. Maybe they take apart mattresses or weave plastic bags. I would love a workshop like Ragmate in Finland where they employ female Syrian refugee artists to make furniture covers from the textile industry's excess fabrics [<https://www.ragmate.com/the-story-of-ragmate/>]. Or like Epimonia where they make bracelets from the refugee boats found on the shores in Greece [<https://epimonia.com/>]. Or like Rethreaded where they employ survivors of human trafficking to make scarves from recycled t-shirts [<https://www.rethreaded.com/>].

I think often about making a virtual creative reuse design school but I have not made progress on that goal so far. I would love to have a collaborator who is just as excited about this idea as me and who wants to spend time on it with me. This project would go much better if I was not alone. But I have not found that person yet.

Topics for the Next 99 Episodes

To finish this episode, I encourage you to go to the show notes where I list themes I'm researching for the next 99 episodes. Whenever I encounter a cool creative reuse idea or artist, I think about what theme they represent, and I make a card in Trello which is a project management software. Then I add ideas to that theme over time. Once I have at least 10 items on a card, I make an episode. If you see an idea on my list and you have a suggestion, please let me know! Or if you have something you would like me to research, I always like to hear from you at trashmagination@gmail.com or message me via social media.

Thank you for listening! To help celebrate the first 100 episodes of the Trashmagination podcast, I made a Word Search that you can download just for fun! Also, here's some news. I love the podcast called The Art of Decluttering and the hosts Amy and Kirsty have a saying which is "Don't put it down, put it away." They asked the listeners to perform songs based on that theme. I recorded myself playing a song that I made up, and they played on it! Thanks to Amy and Kirsty for mentioning Trashmagination and I was so excited to be featured on your podcast!

If you would like to be featured on my podcast, all you have to do is ask me to research a creative reuse topic – so be sure to do that at trashmagination@gmail.com. Or you can leave a review for this podcast wherever you listen to podcasts and I'll read it out on the next episode. Until next time, may you see trash as a source of art in your life!

1. Aluminum cans & pop tabs
2. Animals which reuse
3. Baby Wipe Boxes
4. Beads from recycled materials
5. Bedsheets & Duvet Covers
6. Beer grains & Bread
7. Birthday party activities
8. Blankets
9. Board Games & Pieces
10. Bowling balls & lanes
11. Brushes and Brooms (including paint brushes)
12. Candy pouches
13. Cardboard large sculptures
14. Ceiling Fans
15. Christmas Traditions
16. Clothing Fabric Labels
17. Coaxial Cable / Wire
18. Comics
19. Creative reuse workshops run by refugees
20. Crystal Light containers
21. Cutlery / Silverware / Utensils – plastic & metal
22. Dog & cat sculptures from recycled materials
23. Doors & windows
24. Dryer Lint
25. Event planning – how to creatively reuse at events like weddings
26. Eye glasses & contacts packaging
27. Fairy Gardens
28. Fish Skin & Bones
29. Fixer's Collectives / Repair Cafes / Tool & Toy Libraries
30. Flooring samples & leftovers
31. Flowers from recycled materials
32. Foam Mattresses
33. Garden & fire hoses
34. Gift & credit cards (expired)
35. Glitter & alternatives
36. Graffiti, Dried Paint & Spray Paint Cans
37. Hair, Fur & Teeth
38. Hangers
39. Hardware - Nails, nuts, bolts & screws
40. Headphones / earphones
41. Health concerns of creatively reusing certain materials
42. Helpful tools for creative reuse enthusiasts
43. Hockey gear
44. Holiday Lights
45. Hotels that creatively reuse
46. Inflatables / Beach Toys / Body Boards / Lifejackets
47. Insects or fish from recycled materials
48. Junk mail & envelopes
49. Keys & locks
50. Kinetic or automata art
51. Leather (belt, couches, coats)
52. Leaves
53. Letters & stamps
54. License plates
55. Lottery tickets
56. LOVEwork signs from recycled materials
57. Magazines
58. Metal bottle caps
59. Military items - Uniforms & ammunition
60. Mittens & Gloves
61. Movie film / Negatives
62. Neoprene / Wetsuits
63. Nut shells
64. Packaging designed from the start to be easily creatively reused
65. Panty Hose / Nylons / Stockings
66. Plastic mesh bags (the kind from vegetables)
67. Plastic shredding machines
68. Plastic soda bottles (2 liter)
69. Toothbrushes & toothpaste tubes
70. Postcards
71. Puppet making
72. Rubber gloves & bands
73. Sails and Buoys
74. Saris
75. Science lessons that involve creative reuse
76. Seat Belts
77. Six-Pack Rings
78. Slides & carousels
79. Spools
80. Steel Drums / Barrels
81. Styrofoam
82. Swim Caps & Bathing Suits
83. Tetrapaks
84. Tins (including Altoid tins)
85. Tires
86. Twist Ties
87. Umbrellas
88. Vehicle parts (planes, trains, cars, motorcycles)
89. Venetian blinds
90. Visible mending & stitching meditation
91. Watch Parts
92. Wax (Babybel, candles)
93. Wooden craft sticks (Popsicle sticks)
94. Yarn bombing & community murals
95. Yoga mat