



Trashmagination Podcast #45 – Trash Fashion Course Advisory Group

Welcome to Trashmagination, a podcast about reimagining trash. I'm Carla Brown.

Today I want to talk about an upcoming Trashmagination project and it involves you. I need your help and I'm not asking for your money. I'm asking for your creative thinking and the creative thinking of your friends.

So as context, I started making this podcast for three reasons:

- 1) I had been making items from trash for almost thirty years, and I wanted to share that knowledge with you.
- 2) I wanted to provide a creative reuse pep talk for people who are just starting to think about doing some creative reuse. By talking about many topics, hopefully one fits your situation.
- 3) I also wanted to let creative reuse enthusiasts know - you are not alone! I sometimes get lovingly teased by my friends and family for the things I make with trash. My family calls me "raccoon" because of how I clean trash items for my crafts. I want to connect with all my fellow raccoons because we are doing great stuff!

So I think that the next step is to make online courses that lets people deep dive in certain creative reuse topics. There are so many online courses I would love to make! However, course development takes a lot of time, so I want to make sure the courses are relevant to the most people. My first idea was to look at which podcast episodes have been downloaded the most. The top three topics have been creative reuse of trophies, trash fashion and recycled art contests. Of those topics, the one that gets me most excited is trash fashion – so that's the first course I think I'll make.

I have been thinking about this for a while, and the main thing that held me back was the idea that who would want to pay for a course about trash fashion? Most people take a craft class because they want to make a gift, decorate their home, wear an outfit or make a business selling their work – and trash fashion is not a solution for any of those needs.

But I have learned that some groups do leverage trash fashion as a fundraiser for a school or community group, and some have made thousands of dollars. Also, some corporations sponsor trash fashion shows as a way to engage their customers. Trash fashion shows are community builders. Here are some inspiring examples:

- The City of Orlando has hosted an event for five years called Trash2Trends [<http://www.cityoforlando.net/publicworks/keep-orlando-beautiful/trash-2-trends/>]. In one year, it raised \$22,000 to help with recycling programs through ticket sales and corporate sponsorships.
- A school in Bend, Oregon raised \$24,000 at their event, Rubbish Renewed [<https://rubbishrenewed.com/>]. At that event, there was a live auction where people could bid on some of the designs and take them home.
- In Ireland, a program called Junk Couture offers hefty scholarships [<https://junkkouture.com/>]. In fact, their big final show is taking place this week on April 19, 2018 in Dublin and I would LOVE to be there. The entries in that show definitely used the most unusual materials I have ever seen, probably because using unusual materials is one criteria in the scoring.
- Aveda sponsors trash fashion shows called Catwalks for Water [<https://avedainstitutessouth.edu/2015-catwalk-water/>] through Aveda salons around the world, and the trash fashion designers can win scholarships.

If you think trash fashion is an event that would only attract young women, let's talk about that. Lots of young men design trash fashion. Last year's overall winner of the Junk Kouture contest was a young man named Mariusz Malon who

made a design that looked like a silver robot [<https://boijunkkouture.com/2017-winners/>]. Some of the materials in his design were an old trampoline, a broken chandelier and an old carpet maker.

And here's interesting observations from Leslie Ware, who teaches fashion design and sewing to kids [<https://whilshenaps.com/2018/04/podcast-episode-118-lesley-ware.html>]. I heard an interview with her this week where she said one of the biggest trends in her classes is the increasing number of students who identify as male, as well as an increasing number of gender neutral designs. Trash fashion is a great entry point for anyone interested in making clothes because it's not "real" clothes, but you still learn design and sewing. You often have to use tools other than sewing machines like drill presses and power saws. Trash fashion is like home-ec meets shop class!

So based on all these points – it's one of my most popular episodes, people have made money hosting trash fashion shows, and it's a growing trend for all genders – I decided to start designing a possible course outline. I took a bunch of post-it notes and wrote skills that I would imagine within a trash fashion course. It became clear that I would like to make two courses:

Course #1 - How to make trash fashion – This would cover technical and design skills such as how to manipulate plastic bags, plastic caps and other packaging types. Here's how I imagine this class – we would look at photos of award-winning trash fashion outfits, and then break down what are the skills and materials used in this outfit. Then we would make our own inspired by these materials and skills.

Course #2 – How to organize a trash fashion club plus how to host a trash fashion show - This would include how to structure your club, how to gather materials, how to teach people the design process, how to get sponsors, how to structure the event to make it a fundraiser, and then a whole bunch of skills around event planning and logistics.

So now what I need is to talk to people who would love to take these courses. And I need your help to find these people.

For the course where we learn how to make trash fashion, I imagine this would be people want to design trash fashion whether there is a show coming up or not. They might want to make outfits for co-splay, for Halloween or just for fun. People of any age might want to learn these skills. Here are the questions I would love to ask this group:

- If you ever made a trash fashion outfit, what did you find frustrating about the process?
- Do you have a type of trash that you find particularly interesting that you'd love to make into trash fashion?
- How much time would you like to spend making a trash fashion outfit – like are you looking for something that takes a few hours or would love to dig into a project that takes weeks?

I could interview anyone in the world who is interested in the course, but I would love to find 4-5 people who live very close to me in Reston, Virginia who would be willing to do the course at my home in the coming months. I would love to work with only teens and adults at this time. So there are two options – just an interview or a step further – to do an in-person course.

For the course about organizing a club or show, here's the types of people I imagine would be interested:

- Teachers – Trash fashion is an obvious choice for an art or fashion teacher. A benefit of trash fashion is that the materials are free so they might not have to dig into their supply budgets to do the project. However, it could also be a great project for a science teacher who wants to teach about manipulating materials or sustainability. It could be a math teacher who wants to teach about measuring and calculating sizes. It could be a marketing teacher who wants to teach how to develop a product and market an event. I'm hoping I can talk with teachers who teach at various age levels because the event is very different when done with elementary school students as compared to middle or high school students or adults.
- Counselors or Youth Leaders – I'm thinking about people who run after-school programs who would imagine a trash fashion show as a long-term project for the kids. For example, I attended a trash fashion show put on by a local Boys and Girls Club in Manassas, Virginia. They partnered with a local secondhand shop to provide some of the materials. It could be an idea for a Girl Scout or Boy Scout leader. For example, Scouts already have events like the Pinewood Derby. How about an event that teaches other hands-on skills?

- Parents – I'm thinking about parents who want to either offer a really engaging program with their kids or also parents who are on PTAs and are looking for a new way to raise money for their schools.
- Sewists, Quilters, Crochet Artists or Fashion Designers – If you love sewing and would love to find a way to volunteer, I bet a trash fashion show would be a great energizing volunteer opportunity.
- People who Run Art Programs at Universities or Cosmetology or Hair Schools – The Junk Kouture trash fashion program in Ireland partners with local art schools to offer scholarships to winners. Cosmetology and hair programs offer specialized awards in those categories. What a great way to connect with potential students for your programs!
- Art Gallery Owners – An art gallery could bring a lot of people in the door by hosting a trash fashion show!
- Waste Management Professionals – I'm thinking about people who do community outreach for waste management companies. This could be people in municipal or state government who want to engage students in ways to creatively reuse trash.
- Thrift or Creative Reuse Store Owners – I mentioned that the Boys & Girls Club who held a trash fashion show were sponsored by a local thrift store. I would think a trash fashion show could be a great event for such a store for community engagement.

Here are questions I would love to ask:

- If you have considered organizing a trash fashion show before, what kept you from doing that?
- What sounds appealing or not appealing about a trash fashion show for your goals?
- Have you organized similar events such as a recycled art show? If so, what did you learn?
- What are the biggest frustrations about organizing an event related to creative reuse of trash?

It would mean SO MUCH if you would let me interview you about what would be most helpful in a trash fashion course. You could be the interview that gives me the energy to make this whole thing happen. If you have a friend who works in these areas, it would be amazing if you could pass along this idea to them. Contact me at trashmagination@gmail.com. You can live anywhere in the world because we can arrange a call over Skype.

Also, if a trash fashion course does not appeal to you, but you'd love for me to design a course around a different area of creative reuse, I would LOVE to hear from you.

Until next time – may you see trash as a source of community engagement and fundraising in your life!