



## Trashmagination Podcast #56 – Cigarette Butts, Plastic Lighters and Cigarette Vending Machines

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

This week's episode is about cigarette butts, plastic lighters, cigarette packaging and those old-time cigarette vending machines. Cigarettes are a type of trash that would benefit from creative reuse thinking. If you ever volunteered with litter clean-up, then you know that cigarette butts are one of the most common types of litter in the world. Each fall, there is an event called the International Coastal Clean-up and they gather statistics on what they gather. In 2017, volunteers picked up 2.4 million cigarette butts - it was the most common form of litter<sup>1</sup>. Five trillion cigarette butts are discarded each year<sup>2</sup>. There is plastic in cigarette butt filters, so they are not going to biodegrade.

I have not creatively reused cigarettes or lighters in my art projects, but I have been collecting examples of artists who did this, and I found so many, I felt it was time to share these incredible stories!

### Beach Clean-Up Groups Make Art from Cigarette Butts

When you pick up hundreds of cigarette butts, it gives you time to think about what you can make from them. Here are a whole bunch of ways that beach clean-up volunteers made art from cigarette butts.

Taylor Lane made a surfboard from 10,000 cigarette butts collected from beaches in California [https://www.facebook.com/VTAction/videos/1690143827684600/]. A surfing company called Vissla partnered with the organization Surfrider had a upcycling contest, and Taylor won first prize with his cigarette butt surfboard. You can learn more about the project at the website <https://www.thecigarettesurfboard.com/>. Taylor is now working on a film about the process after a successful Indiegogo campaign.

By the way, you could also design a surfboard or other water craft from recycled materials and win a prize. The deadline for the 2018 contest is September 13, 2018. [https://www.vissla.com/creatorscontest/].

The Florida-based organization Sea Angels does beach clean-ups. On their website, they feature a whole bunch of art made from cigarette butts from beach clean-ups, such as a pelican, a dolphin and a skull and crossbones [http://www.seaangels.org/cigarettes]. They noted that when handling cigarette butts, you should always wear gloves because some people have contracted respiratory diseases from handling used butts. So if you wanted to make cigarette butt art, that something to keep in mind.

Another Florida-based beach clean-up group made a sea turtle sculpture from 1,200 cigarette butts [http://www.onegreenplanet.org/news/sea-turtle-made-of-cigarettes/]. The turtle was made by marine biologist and artist Shelly Marshall [https://www.facebook.com/SHELLartBYTHESEA/]. They called the turtle sculpture "Cig." Kudos to this group because when you make a great visual, it's a great way to get more media interviews!

Another item that people find in their beach clean-ups are plastic lighters.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://oceanconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FINAL-2018-ICC-REPORT.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/20/Suppl\\_1/i25#ref-1](https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/20/Suppl_1/i25#ref-1)

Susan Scott picks up trash in Hawaii but her art focuses on plastic cigarette lighters from the beach and makes art of marine animals such as crabs and albatross

[[http://www.susanscott.net/art/The\\_Art\\_of\\_Susan\\_Scott/Art\\_Home/Pages/Cigarette\\_Lighter\\_Art.html](http://www.susanscott.net/art/The_Art_of_Susan_Scott/Art_Home/Pages/Cigarette_Lighter_Art.html)].

Michelle Doherty makes jewelry from plastic lighters that she gathers from beaches in Thailand where she lives

[<https://www.etsy.com/shop/oceanalien>] [[https://www.instagram.com/ocean\\_alien/](https://www.instagram.com/ocean_alien/)].

### **Other Art Made from Cigarette Butts**

In most cigarette sculptures, the cigarettes still look like cigarettes [[<https://recyclenation.com/2011/05/incredible-cigarette-art-people-animals-recycle/>], but there was one called Filter Rabbit that looks like a soft fluffy rabbit. It's by Tom Deininger [<http://www.tomdeiningerart.com/rabbit.html>].

Jason Mecier [Mah-SEER] makes celebrity portraits from just about everything. I will share two of his cigarette portraits in the show notes – they are of John Waters [<https://www.instagram.com/p/BlzMcWelGoR/>] and David Lynch [<https://www.instagram.com/p/BIMrXYwl6cj/>]. He has a book coming out this month called *Pop Trash* where you can see a bunch of celebrity portraits made from recycled materials [<https://www.chroniclebooks.com/pop-trash.html>].

Jesus Bubu Negron hired street cleaners to collect cigarette butts in his hometown in Puerto Rico. He layered and wove the butts to make a carpet [<https://www.recyclart.org/2010/04/cigarette-stubs-carpet/>]. He made a pattern in the carpet with the yellow and white components of the cigarettes.

Flore Garcia Bour, a student in France, made a dress from cigarette butts [<http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/fashion/designer-dress-cigarette-butts-raise-awareness-pollution-litter-bad-habit-article-1.146011>]. She did treat the butts before sewing them together so the dress would not smell so bad. If you are interested in making clothing from trash, check out my episode on Trash Fashion which is one of my popular episodes.

### **How to Encourage Cigarette Butt Collection, Not Littering**

I imagine there are times when it is very difficult to find a safe place to put a cigarette butt. You can't put it in a regular garbage can because it might catch fire. There is a product called the Pocket Ashtray made from recycled PVC. The seal created by closing the flap extinguishes your cigarette butt and also keeps odours and mess in. So search for "pocket ashtray" or maybe it would be a great gift for any family or friends who smoke.

I'm sure you have seen those tubes where smokers put cigarette butts. But I also innovative signage where there were two options and a window, and you could put your cigarette butt in one side or the other in order to vote on something. The example I saw involved voting for a favorite athlete, but I think it could be on a variety of topics – whatever it takes to encourage smokers to put the butts in a container and not the ground. A company called Ballot Bin in the UK sells these boxes [<http://ballotbin.co.uk/>].

The organization Terracycle takes cigarette butts and recycles the components [<https://www.terracycle.com/en-US/brigades/cigarette-waste-recycling>]. So if you smoke or own a business where you offer tubes to collect cigarette butts, it would be awesome if you could purchase one of these Terracycle boxes so they butts get recycled instead of going to landfill. They separate the filter and melt it down to make plastic pellets to make recycled plastic products. Terracycle has partnered with some cities such as Pittsburgh, Vancouver and New Orleans to put metal boxes around town to collect cigarette butts<sup>3</sup>.

### How Terracycle Recycles Cigarette Butts

<https://youtu.be/7VxMwKETtUg>

Companies outside of the United States are recycling cigarette butts as well, including a company in Chile called Mantis, and a company in Indian Code Enterprises [<https://www.facebook.com/CodeEnterprises/>]. Scientists in South Korea are

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<sup>3</sup> [https://s3.amazonaws.com/tc-global-prod/download\\_resource/us/downloads/3305/CigaretteResource-Municipalities.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/tc-global-prod/download_resource/us/downloads/3305/CigaretteResource-Municipalities.pdf)

researching how cigarette butts might provide materials for electronic devices

[<https://www.rdmag.com/news/2014/08/used-cigarette-butts-offer-energy-storage-solution>]

### **Art from Cigarette Packaging**

Another source of art inspiration related to smoking are cigarette packaging. Lots of people fold the cardboard and foil to make items such as a bracelet, dress, handbag, sketchbooks and photo frames

[<https://www.hongkiat.com/blog/creative-recycled-cigarette-packs/>]. These rely on origami or paper folding techniques.

Another popular art supply is a wooden cigar box. From these small wooden boxes, you can make a ukulele, jewelry box or shelf. You can see many cigar box crafts at my Pinterest board

[<https://www.pinterest.com/Trashmagination/cigarette-butts/>].

### **Recycling Old Cigarette Vending Machines**

When I was growing up and smoking was more common, there would be vending machines that sold cigarettes. Now there is an organization called Art-o-Mat which has refurbished these machines to sell art [<http://www.artomat.org/>]. I will link to a website where you can search to find a machine near you. They have converted about 100 machines so far, only in the United States. Artists contribute art and get paid when the art sells through these machines. The art has to be at least as small as a cigarette box.

### **Thank you!**

Thank you for listening! I hope you got ideas for how to creatively reuse cigarettes, lighters and cigarette vending machines. I would love to hear about your creative reuse projects at [trashmagination@gmail.com](mailto:trashmagination@gmail.com). I gathered ideas on a Pinterest board about the projects I mentioned today [<https://www.pinterest.com/Trashmagination/cigarette-butts/>] so I hope that is a helpful resource for you.

I have a request which is that I'm looking for broken camping tents. In particular, I really need the poles to prototype a new idea. However, I'm finding it is not easy to catch people at the exact moment when their tent breaks and before they toss it. So if you know where to get a bunch of defunct tent poles, let me know! I was thinking I would go to a music festival that allows camping because I have heard people often leave their tents behind, but there are none near where I live outside of Washington DC. So I'd love your thoughts on that!

I am also collecting colorful plastic bottles, like shampoo bottles. I took photos of a bunch of bottles at my grocery store, and the brands that had the best colors were Garnier Fructis and Redken. You can check out [trashmagination.com](http://trashmagination.com) to learn more about that project, but if you have a colorful plastic bottle and could get it to me, that would be great!

Until next time – may you see cigarettes, plastic lighters, cigar boxes and cigarette vending machines as a source of art in your life!