



Trashmagination Podcast #58 – CDs and DVDs

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

This week's episode is about creatively reuse of CDs and DVDs. The only project I have made from CDs or DVDs was a dress. I was participating in a contest with friends called GISH or the Greatest International Scavenger Hunt [<https://www.gish.com/>] which involves doing a whole bunch of stunts and photographing them. The challenge I was doing involved making a dress from e-waste and then taking my photo as if I was a mannequin in a shop window. So I punch a bunch of holes in some old CDs and then tied them together with twist ties. I made a neckpiece from some coaxial cable. I went to my local Ann Taylor store which was the only one nearby that had mannequins in a shop window and asked the people working there if I could take my photo wearing this dress in the shop window. It was a quiet day and they got a real kick out of it. Now this shows how much my husband loves me that he went with me and took my photo standing in the window posing. So I will share photos of my CD dress but that is not very useful to you if you have a bunch of CDs and DVDs that you'd like to creative reuse. So in today's episode, we will talk about:

- crafts you can make with CDs or DVDs, as well as the CD cases (jewel cases) and spindle cases
- where you can donate or sell unwanted CDs and DVDs
- artists who incorporate CDs and DVDs into their work

But before we get into CDs and DVDs, I want to explore the topic of what makes a great creative reuse project. This could get philosophical, but in this case I created a scoring system for creative reuse project ideas. This is a good time to mention it because as I was working on this episode, I kept finding a LOT of creative reuse projects that I really didn't like. I was talking with Stephanie from the podcast *The Sustainable Minimalist* [<http://mamaminimalist.com/category/podcast/>] about how some people might not do creative reuse crafts because the end results look – well – like trash. And if we think crafts made from recycled materials are not nice, it's hard to get people excited about the great options that DO exist.

I created my recycled craft scoring system in 2013 and I will link to the blog where I describe it - "How to Rate a Recycled Craft" [<https://trashmagination.com/how-to-rate-a-recycled-craft/>]. A craft earns points if it is:

- useful and/or beautiful
- for educational or celebratory purposes
- strong
- made from recycled materials
- encouraging imaginary play
- easy to take apart and recycle the parts

This rating system explains quantitatively the values that make a great creative reuse craft. It is a rubric that could **help design students to make better creative reuse projects – or more sustainable designs overall.**

Now today's topic is CDs and DVDs – and unfortunately this is a material that is often made into crafts that would not score well on my rating system. There is something about CDs and DVDs that causes people to make rather odd things.

The most common items people make with CDs, DVDs, jewel and spindle cases are ornaments, coasters, disco balls and clear boxes. It usually involves yarn wrapping, painting, gluing and breaking CDs and DVDs into little chunks. In particular, there were a lot of crafts you might do with little kids where the end result would score poorly on my recycled craft rating system. I understand that kids need to start somewhere, but I also think that we can design better crafts so that the child explores materials while also making beautiful and useful items. I will link to a page in the show notes that lists 25 crafts from CDs if you want examples of what I'm talking about [<http://www.playideas.com/25-brilliant-recycled-cd-kid-crafts/>]. One example would be an ice cream cone craft which involved gluing a CD to a triangle, then cover the CD with tissue paper. This could be achieved with a circle of cardboard and then at least the craft could be put in the paper recycling afterwards. Adding a CD just makes the whole thing end up in landfill.

I am also puzzled by crafts for bird feeders and bird baths that involve CDs and DVDs [<https://tide.com/en-us/about-tide/sustainability/tide-keepsies/bird-feeder>]. Some people hang CDs and DVDs in fruit trees to scare away birds because of their reflective surfaces. If there are any bird experts listening, could you let me know what you think about that at trashmagination@gmail.com.

Projects that Involve Cutting and Baking CDs

The first projects I will share involve cutting and baking CDs. Note that many crafts that involve cutting and baking can only be done with CDs and not DVDs because a CD is basically a circle of clear plastic with silver on it, but a DVD is not. I worry about the baking projects in terms of off-gassing stuff into my kitchen. I would probably do these projects if I had a toaster oven I could take outside, or an art studio with good air flow. My kitchen window doesn't even open!

When it comes to baking CDs, some people bake CDs whole. They make a little dish by placing the CD on a glass jar or bottle and then baking it. The sides of the CD melt down to make a dish. Loraine Brummer has a tutorial where she uses suncatcher paints on CDs to make little dishes with her granddaughters [<https://feltmagnet.com/crafts/our-cd-crafts/>]. Fancy Tat Crafts in the UK sells the dishes already made [<https://www.etsy.com/shop/FancyTatCrafts>].

Other people cut up the CDs before baking them. They make little tiles to be used in mosaics. Many people remove the silver stuff that lines the CD and just use the clear plastic. The crafter Mugsy Makes takes a stamp and ink to put designs on the CDs before she cuts them to make tiles [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tIHZZ6U5BQM>].

Another crafter uses acrylic paint to make tiles in all sorts of colors. She cuts the CDs into square tiles, paints one and then puts another square over the painted side. Then she cooks the tiles so they meld together to make a thick, colorful tile [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YxEVzIubVU8>]. They get all bubbly looking in some cases, which looks very professional and almost like actual glass.

The crafter Made By Fate does not remove the silver stuff, but cuts up the CDs as they are to make silver tiles. This is great if you want to have a whole bunch of items that look like mirrors. But the disadvantage of this method is that the CD tiles are not as thick [https://youtu.be/3aIQa_rd8p8]. This crafter makes it easier to cut up the CDs by soaking them in hot water. They also use a hole punch to make a whole bunch of little silver plastic circles that looks like big glitter.

Some projects suggest microwaving CDs. This causes the silver stuff to break into a thousand little pieces and puts on a light show in your microwave. However, it can also destroy your microwave even if you zap them for only a few seconds, so I'm not recommending those projects for safety reasons. You can bake CDs to get a similar bubbly effect.

Once you have made your tiles from CDs, people use them to decorate trays and bird baths. This involves gluing the tiles to an object and then adding grout in the spaces between the tiles. I will share a tutorial by Danny Seo where he decorates a tray with CD tiles [<https://www.facebook.com/NaturallyDannyTV/videos/518607988505500/>].

No-Bake Projects that Involve Gluing Items to CDs

If you don't have a great set-up for baking tiles, these next projects are for you. When searching Youtube for CD and DVD crafts, I was surprised by the most popular results. Many of the most popular videos were Ganpati wall or car hangings. These are created by people to celebrate the Indian deity Ganesha. I asked my friend Rupa about this because

I know she is very interested in Indian handicrafts. She wrote, “It’s not surprising that so many home-crafts and DIY crafts are oriented towards Ganesha. The word Ganesha comes from “gana”= People and “easha” = god/lord/leader and “pati” is another word for lord. So basically he’s the popular deity among common people and a prayer to him first thing in the morning is still very common among religious Hindus. Ganesha art adorns almost every commonly used space, classrooms, printing presses, offices, grocery stores and even car dashboards so he likely becomes the center of pretty much most DIY crafts. Ganesha’s appeal crosses all sects of Hinduism so no matter what your sect, you’re likely to have a special place in your heart for Ganesha.”

There are many videos showing how to recycle CDs or DVDs into these wall-hangings. Mostly it involves gluing beautiful fabric on the CD and then trimming it with gorgeous ribbons. On the face of the CD, the crafter glues a design often involving pistachio nut shells and pretend jewels. I will share a video in the show notes of one of my favorites by Seema Tungare [<https://youtu.be/1HBbdsfuKMM>].

In addition to making wall and car-hangings, I saw that many crafters in India also use CDs to make tea light holders or “diya” holders. This involved putting lots of pretend gems in a design on the surface of the CD or DVD, leaving space for a tea light in the center.

The blog decoist glued small round stones to a CD to make a trivet [<https://www.decoist.com/2015-07-06/old-cds-upcycling-diy/cd-teapot-1/>]. The neutral gray colors of the stones are really popular right now. It looks like they also glued on some gray wool.

Another popular ornamental craft that has a nice final result involves removing the silver part of the CD and then painting a mandala design with puffy paint. Once that puffy paint has dried, the crafter fills in the spaces with stained glass lacquer. The trick with this craft is a steady hand when drawing the mandala design with puffy paint. Many of these videos are in Spanish, but even if you don’t speak Spanish, the production quality is great and you can learn by watching, so I’ll share my favorite in the show notes [<https://youtu.be/bGzj9Ue6e3M>].

Finally, if you love to crochet, I saw some beautiful designs where crochet artists actually crochet a design over a CD or DVD. The CD or DVD acts as a shiny backdrop to some beautiful stitching [<https://yarnbombersunited.weebly.com/cd-mandalas.html>]. I don’t know how to do such fancy crochet stitching but I saw some really beautiful results.

Making Toys from CDs and DVDs

Here are a few quick ideas for making CDs or DVDs into toys:

- Stove top details - <https://declutterorganizerepurpose.wordpress.com/2011/02/28/repurpose-cardboard-boxes-into-kid-craftstoys/> - If you make a child-sized play stove from a cardboard box, CDs or DVDs can be the burners where they put their play pots and pans.
- Balloon Hovercraft - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFnlJr8uel&feature=youtu.be>
- Hand weights – Danny Seo built his own set of hand weights by putting a whole bunch of CDs and DVDs on a 12 inch threaded metal pipe and securing them with ½ inch nuts. - <https://www.facebook.com/NaturallyDannyTV/videos/518609508505348/>

Made from CD Jewel Cases

Now I’ll share some ideas for what to make with jewel cases – those square clear boxes that are the packaging for CDs. Many people use clear jewel cases the same way you would use picture frames. They put a photo in the case and hang them on a wall or prop them on a table. A blogger named Trie expanded a photo to a very large size, and then cut the photo into squares the size of a jewel case. She then hung them on a wall side by side to make a huge portrait with jewel cases put together in a grid [<https://my-little-projects.blogspot.com/2012/02/clear-cd-case-art-project.html>].

Other crafters attach jewel cases together to make a clear box with photos or art inside, but the box can hold pencils or whatever. It can become a bird feeder if you put a little shelf along one side to keep the birdseed from falling, and you can still see the birds inside. The blogger Cindy Fortin put a bunch of Christmas lights in clear boxes and decorated them

with a bow to make a pretty holiday decoration and an alternative to stringing up Christmas lights [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUhsQMQUb5M>].

If we expand that box and make it even bigger, we can make a greenhouse [<https://taunieverett.com/cd-case-greenhouse-tutorial/>]. The greenhouse is put together with plastic glue. It holds together well because the jewel cases open on a hinge, and so you glue the open doors of the jewel cases together to make a strong structure.

The blogger Teri Dimalanta from Giddy Giddy designed an ingenious craft from a jewel case which was a little maze toy [<http://blog.giddygiddy.com/giddygiddy/2011/06/diy-cd-case-labyrinth.html>]. She used the crafting supply known as Wickistix which is a wax-covered string. You place the Wickistix in any maze shape, and then put a tiny ball made from Sculpey. Close the jewel case and you know have a handheld toy.

The last jewel case craft I'll mention is fun if you have a bunch of jewel cases that are opaque but multi-colored. The blogger Simply We attached a bunch of these to a window in their home with double-sided tape to make a stained glass effect [<https://simplywe.com/2012/11/18/repurposed-cd-jewel-cases/>].

Made from CD or DVD Spindle Cases

The last trash item that is associated with CDs and DVDs are those spindle cases, which are round and usually have a rod sticking up through the center to keep the CDs and DVDs from falling when you lift the clear lid. There was a photo that made the rounds of the internet a few years ago that showed someone transporting their bagel sandwich for lunch, which was a great idea! [<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/0c/5b/22/0c5b222371c02f4f7d084252b076840b.jpg>]

In terms of crafts, the blog CraftPatisserie covered a small spindle case with felt and felt flowers to make a toy birthday cake which I'm sure would be a cute addition to a play kitchen

[<https://craftpatisserie.wordpress.com/2013/06/20/riuso-creativo-cosa-ci-faccio-col-porta-cd/>]

Where to Sell or Donate Functional DVDs

That was a lot of crafting ideas, but the real question is – can you make money from your old DVDs? I was intrigued to learn about websites where you can type in the title of your DVD, assuming it is in good condition, and they pay you for it. One example is the website Decluttr.com [<https://www.decluttr.com/entertainment/sell-dvds/>]. Often it's something like 50 cents, but sometimes it's like \$5. You can just type in your collection and see if it is worth your time packaging up the DVDs and mailing them away. I will link to a website that suggests 12 websites like Decluttr who do this type of thing [<https://wellkeptwallet.com/sell-used-dvds/>] and I know these types of websites change all the time, but this information is from 2018 so it should be okay for a bit.

If you want to give your functional DVDs to a good cause, you can mail them to an organization called DVDs for the Troops [<https://www.facebook.com/DVDSTOTHETROOPS/>]. Often people are serving in places where they don't have access to Netflix but they could watch movies, so they appreciate our DVDs.

Artists Who Work with Recycled CDs and DVDs

I love stories of artists who work with recycled materials, and when it comes to CDs and DVDs, there are some really extraordinary examples.

British artist Sean Avery builds elaborate animal sculptures by cutting up CDs and DVDs. He uses shards to make the fur of creatures such as lemurs and penguins. On his website, Sean says that the shards are not as sharp as they look and he mostly only hurts himself when he burns himself with his glue gun [<https://seaneavery.com>] [<https://www.instagram.com/seaneavery/>]

Italian artists Mirco Pagano and Moreno De Turco make portraits of famous musicians such as Bob Marley, Elvis Presley and Michael Jackson by laying out the CDs on a flat surface [<https://www.behance.net/gallery/4017475/PIRACY>]. The CDs come in different colors, and the artists layer them and overlap them to make the art. The CDs are not cut to make these pieces.

American artist Leticia Bajuyo builds giant tunnels that look like black holes from huge numbers of CDs [<http://www.leticiabajuyo.com/discs-installations/>]. They hang from straps from the ceiling. She had a piece in the Nashville Airport called Lift during most of 2017 where the CDs were all along a skylight. When the light would shine through, it would make dappled shapes on the floor. I will share a video of one of her installations in the show notes [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4qi-QVhz3g>]. - <https://www.instagram.com/lbajuyo/>

French artists Elise Morin and Clémence Eliard build giant installations of thousands of discarded CDs. For example, they made a piece from 65,000 CDs in Paris. There is a fascinating video that shows how the sculptures are put together – first by wiring all the CDs together into giant sheets, and then underneath, they pump up these enormous inflated pillows so they make the CDs look like they are rolling hills. <http://elise-morin.com/> - https://www.instagram.com/elise_morin_artiste/ - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkVh4dftFFw>

In 2012, **British artist Bruce Munro** made giant lily pads by attaching CDs together [<http://www.brucemunro.co.uk/installations/waterlilies/>]. Actually he used 65,000 CDs for his project – the exact same amount as Elise Morin and Clémence Eliard. The lily pads made from CDs floated on the surface of the water. This piece was made at Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania, which I have visited and I wish I had seen this installation in person! In 2010, he did an installation called CD Sea in the UK where he covered a huge field with CDs, leaving a swirling path of green grass, and another piece called Blue Moon on a Platter with CDs lining a dip in the earth. [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyEM53XJwnw>]

Spanish designer **Belèn Hermosa** designed a chair made from CDs [<http://media.designerpages.com/2010/02/panda-chair-by-belen-hermosa/>]. He lined up 4,000 CDs on metal tubes and then attached them together into a chair shape. He called it the Panda Chair.

Chilean artist Vanessa Silva makes jewelry using those techniques I described about baking the CDs. Her designs have the perfect amount of bubbly texture. - <http://artenosanas.cl> <https://www.instagram.com/artenosanas/> - <https://acuerdos.cl/heroes/vanessa-silva-artesia-con-reciclaje-de-cds/> - incredible jewelry from CDs - <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bh9zREUI7CJ/?taken-by=artenosanas>

So you can see there are artists all over the world creatively reusing CDs in big and small art pieces – so you can too!

Thank you!

Thank you for listening! I would love to hear about your creative reuse projects at trashmagination@gmail.com – or you can also send ideas for future episodes. I gathered ideas on a Pinterest board about the projects I mentioned today [<https://www.pinterest.com/Trashmagination/cds-dvds/>] so I hope that is a helpful resource for you.

I'm still looking for broken camping tents. They can be broken or moldy. You can check out trashmagination.com to learn more about that project.

If you know about any creative reuse themed art exhibits in your community, let me know! I always love learning about new artists.

Be sure to share whatever inspired you in today's podcast with your friends and family! This will let more people know about the Trashmagination podcast and subscribe to get more creative reuse pep talks.

Until next time – may you see CDs and DVDs as a source of art in your life!