

DESIGNwire

When companies change logos and dismantle outmoded signs, castoffs are typically consigned to the graphic graveyard. Unless, that is, designer Aleksí Hautamáki gets to them first: He and Finnish retailer Armas Design have launched Character, a company committed to rescuing abandoned letters and granting them second life in the decorative realm.

Give Me an A!

Hautamáki seals deals with sign producers, then scavenges their salvage for “letters that have character,” he says. Often decades old, the letters are dismantled and cleaned, new transformers are inserted, and neon tubes are replaced by LEDs, which provide 30,000 hours of light. Once power cords are added, the letters are ready to become mood lighting, office sculpture, home decor, even garden art—since most come from signs that used to grace building facades, nearly all are waterproof. The ever-changing spoils cover a range of styles, colors, and heights. Prices start at approximately \$200. ➤

From top: A nearly 2-foot-tall letter from an Aktia Savings Bank sign in Helsinki, Finland, was reclaimed by Character and fitted with LEDs. An assortment from the company's alphabet.

ECO

Design is discovery. We asked a few explorers, "What's your latest, greatest find?"

"I'm absolutely passionate about Hansen Kitchen's 100 percent eco-friendly cabinetry by Knud Kapper. I saw it in Copenhagen and brought it to the U.S."

—Susan Serra of Susan Serra Associates

"I've been taking a fresh look at crochet, particularly cushions and throws by a South African group, Moxy Crochet—completely different from the tired afghans of the 1960's."

—Jennifer Mitchell of Jennifer Mitchell Design

"My new favorites are the Foo Dog napkin rings by Dransfield & Ross, the Harriet pendant fixture by Juliska, and the Artichoke table lamp by Stray Dog Designs."

—Olga Adler of Olga Adler Interiors

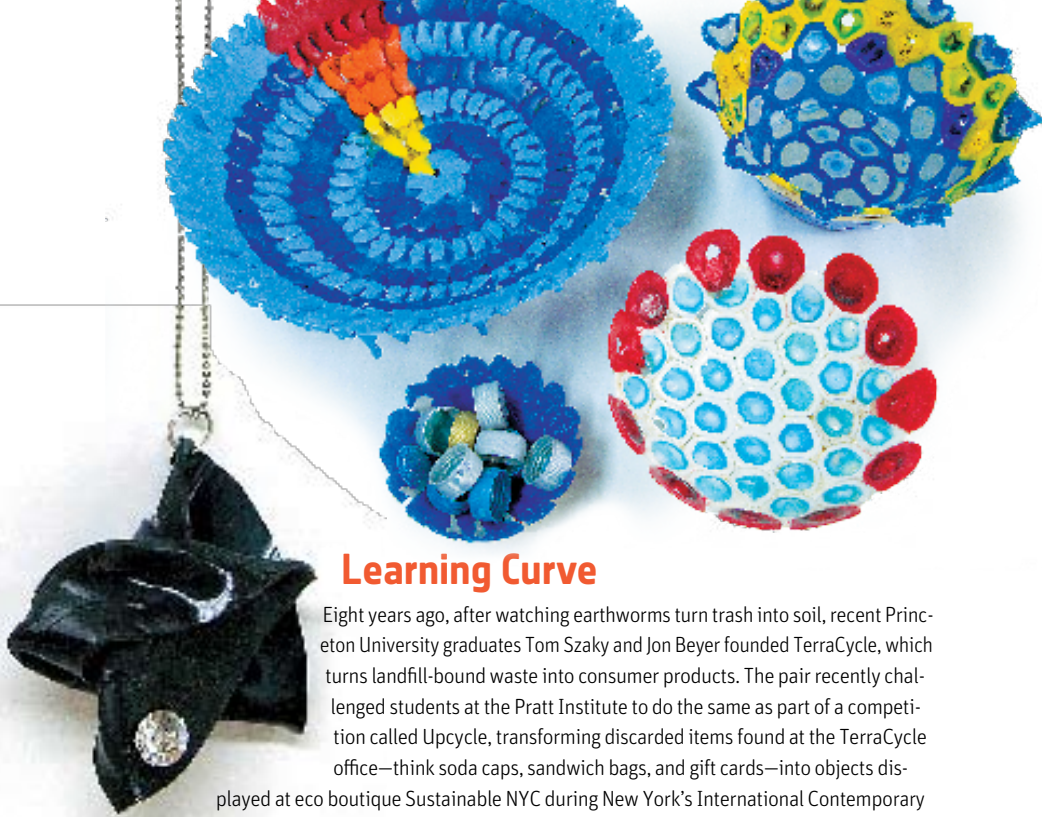
"I'm importing some amazing doors from Res, with no casings, directly from Italy. They're flush to the wall and come in metallics, many other colors, and glass."

—Desiree Denoyer of DM Design Solutions

"Modular Arts composite panels are 100 percent mineral, but they're easy to handle and cut, just like wood. The result is fabulous, cool, modern, and seamless."

—Carrie Maniaci of M2 Design Group

Q **Next:** For our art issue, tell us about your favorite unsung museum. E-mail us at q@interiordesign.net.



Learning Curve

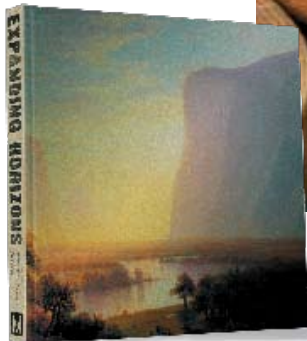
Eight years ago, after watching earthworms turn trash into soil, recent Princeton University graduates Tom Szaky and Jon Beyer founded TerraCycle, which turns landfill-bound waste into consumer products. The pair recently challenged students at the Pratt Institute to do the same as part of a competition called Upcycle, transforming discarded items found at the TerraCycle office—think soda caps, sandwich bags, and gift cards—into objects displayed at eco boutique Sustainable NYC during New York's International Contemporary Furniture Fair in May. Naima Frankel's jewelry and Morgan Street's vases were the grand-prize winners; Austin Doten's bowls and Dana Oxiles's coasters were runners-up. If the winning products are deemed suitable for production by TerraCycle, the students will receive a 1.5 percent royalty.

From left: Naima Frankel's jewelry made from melted toothbrushes, LPs, gift cards, and the like won the manufacturability grand prize in the Upcycle competition sponsored by TerraCycle and the Pratt Institute Center for Sustainable Design Studies. The runner-up in the material-transformation category, Austin Doten's bowls made from melted plastic bottle caps.

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From left: The catalog for "Grandeur Nature: Peinture et Photographie des Paysages Américains et Canadiens de 1860 à 1918" at the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal is printed with vegetable ink on recycled paper. Molo Design benches made of 50 percent recycled kraft paper.



With a current exhibition of American and Canadian landscape painting and photography, the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal has taken its love of nature to the next level. Chief curator Hilliard Goldfarb hired Orangetango to print the catalog with vegetable-based ink on Forest Stewardship Council-certified recycled paper and Atelier Big City to reduce the use of toxic adhesives during installation. Visitors take it all in on Molo Design's benches, snaking honeycomb forms containing recycled kraft paper. ➔

FROM TOP: DIANA PAU (2); COURTESY OF THE MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE MONTRÉAL (2)



Consciously cool.
modernfan.com



Good Enough To Eat



Talk about good-for-you. Since opening two years ago in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington, D.C., Sweetgreen has been offering customers all-natural salads and frozen yogurts in biodegradable packaging—inside a small space powered by wind. Additional locations bowed this past spring in Dupont Circle and suburban Bethesda, Maryland. All three feature paneling and custom furniture made from reclaimed wood, some of it re-purposed from bowling alleys. The cafés are the work of Core Architecture + Design, which had previously completed the interior of Founding Farmers, a notable LEED Gold-certified restaurant in the capital.

From top: The three Sweetgreen eco eateries by Core Architecture + Design include an outpost in Bethesda, Maryland. Inside, custom tables and benches made from wood reclaimed from bowling alleys.



The **Bamboo Bike Studio** in Brooklyn, New York, and the Earth Institute at Columbia University are establishing factories to make sustainable bicycles in developing countries, starting with Ghana, Kenya, and Ecuador. The Brooklyn studio provides local participants with New Jersey-grown bamboo and a course on tube-cutting, mitering, and frame-binding. Pedals, wheels, handlebars, and a chain are added for a \$1,000 fee, most of which goes straight back into the piggy bank to pay for additional factories, wages, education, food, and health care.

FROM TOP: MICHAEL MORAN (2); JOE ZORILLA (2)

DESIGNwire ECO

Look out! Tiny creatures are invading a gallery at Washington's Bellevue Arts Museum.

Opening June 27, "**The Miniature Worlds of Bruce Metcalf**" showcases 70 diminutive cartoonlike figures dreamed up by this Massachusetts artist, curator, and writer from the 1970's to today. All are made from natural materials, primarily silver, copper, and wood. The 4-inch-tall *Learning To Build*, in precisely those three materials, calls out to our inner architect.



july - august

China International Building & Decoration Fair

July 8-11
Guangzhou International Convention and Exhibition Center, China; 49-40-39999-050; cbd.merebo.com.

Design DC '09: Architects Leading Change

July 14-16
Walter Washington Convention Center; 202-667-1798; aiadesigndc.org.

State of Design

July 15-25
Multiple venues, Melbourne, Australia; 61-3-9650-3963; stateofdesign.com.au.

American Craft Council Show

August 14-16
Fort Mason Center, San Francisco; 800-836-3470; craftcouncil.org.

CODE

August 27-30
Bella Center, Copenhagen; 45-3252-8811; code09.dk.

American Craft Exposition

August 28-30
Henry Crown Sports Pavilion, Evanston, Illinois; 847-570-5096; americancraftexpo.org.

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