

Sweet salvation

Salvaged pieces get a clever, modern twist in
the home of eco designer Adrian Draigo

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OPPOSITE Adrian and Rowan with two recycled lamp creations – an anglepoise-style floor lamp and the Monolith lamp CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The fun eggcup door handle is the perfect solution to avoid bumps for Rowan, who loves scooting in this corridor; the reconstituted glass Lumamodule; the Pipeclock INSET A table lamp made from a Seventies shade and a piece of pipe



ARTIST AND DESIGNER Adrian Draigo is one of those people who must be annoyingly clever at jigsaw puzzles. Picture it – you’re all sitting around the kitchen table and, just when you think you see the bit of sky that meets with the bit of wall in the shape of...Oh, he’s found it, matched it, and another ten pieces to boot. And the reason this must be so? The home that Adrian shares with his partner, conceptual artist Jennie, and their three-year-old son, Rowan, has been almost exclusively furnished and decorated with objects that Adrian has saved from the rubbish heap before reworking them into new and exciting forms.

There’s the Pipeclock made from an old car clock that’s slotted perfectly into a plastic pipe; a wire eggcup that’s now a toddler-friendly door handle; old glass bottles that have been broken and reformed into the Lumamodule lamp; even an on-trend wall clock made from numbers cut out of the newspaper. Then there are the larger pieces – a classic Anglepoise-style lamp made from odds and ends, a Glow-ring wall light constructed from milk bottle tops, and a futuristic Slitlamp made from old photographer’s lamps. This is no simple recycling job, but the work of a master matchmaker.

However, Adrian speaks lightly of his ability to spot unusual things that fit neatly together. “It is just serendipity, not any genius,” he says. “My mother had an ethic of not throwing things away, so I probably inherited a bit of that from

my parents; they had that ‘make do and mend’ mindset. Besides, I always liked fixing things, so I think it just evolved.”

Nonetheless, Adrian’s modest claim to simply be making do and mending is belied by the fact that his work has not only been shown at the 100% Design London exhibition last year, but is currently on tour around the country as part of the Lighten Up tour organised by the [re]design group. In fact, Adrian studied and worked in film and 3D graphic animation before becoming a designer, and his ability to think in 3D comes in handy when he is conceptualising how a piece will fit together.

“I’m just combining my creative thinking skills with my ‘make do’ thinking,” says Adrian. “I will often go to car boot sales and pick up bits of metal and things that I can’t even identify. Also, when I’m out and about, I stop and take a look in skips. Even when I’m walking with Rowan, I can’t help but take a look – he always wants to take a look too.”

But while his finds may appear to be rubbish to the untrained eye, Adrian is quite particular about what they will become: “It is all about the marrying of a very futuristic modern aesthetic with recycling principles. Everything needs to fit into that eco modern design aesthetic.”

Each of the pieces looks retro and futuristic at the same time, and the designer admits that he has been influenced by visions of the future from Fifties’ sci-fi movies and comics, such as *The Day The Earth Stood Still* and *Dan Dare*. “I love the stylised visions the *Dan Dare* artist had of the future.”

While his designs have become increasingly popular





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
 Adrian with the
 Glow-ring light in the
 background; two action
 men's heads found at a
 car boot sale sit atop
 some of Adrian's 'green'
 survival manuals; Rowan
 in a pensive mood; the
 newspaper clock; the
 Slitlamp, which reminds
 Adrian of the robot
 Gort from *The Day The
 Earth Stood Still*



within the design world, it has taken Adrian a little longer to convert Jennie to the wisdom of bringing his finds home. "I think at first she was taken aback with me bringing back bits and bobs," he says. "But now she just rolls her eyes and expects me to do this kind of stuff. I think that, over time, she's seen that it does make life more interesting, and that it is actually quite a lot of fun for Rowan."

Indeed, one of the best things about Adrian's creations is that some of his favourites can be whipped up at the kitchen table without any special tools or knowledge. "The clock was fun to do – we did it in an afternoon," says Adrian. "The body of the clock is just an old sugar bowl that I drilled a hole in the bottom of to fit the clock mechanics inside. The numbers are all just cut from newspapers – mostly ads (which, when you look at them, are actually quite colourful and use lots of different fonts). So we just stuck those onto cardboard, so they stand proud of the wall." And the end creation? A clock that would happily compete with a George Nelson classic.

From a creative point of view, these sorts of activities are also great to do with your children, and there is something very satisfying about coming up with your own creation rather than heading to the store to buy it every time you need something new. "Recycling not only saves the environment, reducing the strain on the world's resources, it also saves you money," says Adrian. It is a very strange fact that while we are constantly trying to declutter our homes of rubbish, we then refill them with yet more things.

"I previously worked with Greenpeace and have been very much into environmental issues throughout my life," says Adrian. "It's a strong part of my ethos. As I became interested in design, it was inevitable it would be on the green side. I find eco designs like

those by Bill Dunster and his BedZed company (www.ruralzed.com), as well as initiatives such as the Eden Project very inspiring."

But where can we, less 3D-animation savvy people, begin? "The trick is to find things that are quick and easy to do together," Adrian suggests. "We all have short attention spans, so keep it simple." He also recommends collecting anything that you get over a long period of time, as they can be used to make patterns of colour or shape. Take his Glow-ring light for example. This is simply a collection of plastic milk bottle tops – in all their many colours – that have been strung together to form a repeating pattern – then threaded through

"There's something satisfying about coming up with your own creation rather than buying it"

with an LED light to give them a luminous other-worldly glow. There are two of these designs: the circular version (the Glow-ring), which is installed in Adrian's home, and the Glowworm, which snakes its way through banisters, and is currently on tour with Lighten Up.

And what about the future? Well, what with the make do and mend ethos firmly back in favour, the environment being top on our 'To Save' list, and the world economy looking gloomy, it would help if Adrian could put together a weekend project book filled with ideas so we could all learn how to fit more pieces of the recycling puzzle back into place ■
 For one-off designs and commissions, visit www.draigo.com; for more information on the Lighten Up tour, visit www.redesigndesign.org