

Who would believe  
that these belts are  
made of old tires?

Recycling

# Rubber Redux

Flights of fancy turn rubber into fashion, art and more.

BY KRYSZYNA LAGOWSKI

Since when has it been fashionable to sport a tire around your waist? When the tire has been recycled into a cool, leather-like belt that's not only stylish but also reversible.

It's just one of the vegan-friendly products made by Truth Belts, a Canadian company founded by Renia Pruchnicki, a local designer with a passion for health and sustainability. She gets a kick out of using unique materials, like recycled tires to make fashion accessories.

And Pruchnicki isn't the only one using her creative talents to spin recycled tires into novel fashion statements. New York based Kristy Solomon makes rugged looking wallets, handbags and bracelets. She calls her company "Rubber Pieces," and festoons her creations with colourful snaps and trim.

## Child's play

And while children's swings made of tires aren't a radical new idea, Frontier Swings fashions tires into princess ponies and pirate ponies. Using a healthy dose of imagination, some clever cutting and a few rivets, the swings are cut out into creatures. The swings are completely cleaned, so that black doesn't rub off on tiny hands or clothes. Best of all, they have a 200 lb. capacity and come fully assembled – ready to be hung on a porch or tree, for hours of fun.

Dutch designer AnneMarie van Splunter takes discarded tires and makes them into playgrounds, shaped like a majestic, futuristic tree. The aptly named "Rubber Tree" was created to provide a playground

for children in Thailand, made entirely of reused and sustainable materials. The recycled tires mimic the snaking roots of a tree, and are held in place by conjoined lengths of bamboo that thread through the structure, completely eliminating the need for hardware.

## Indoor, outdoor

Then there's another Dutch industrial designer, Debbie Wijskamp, who used recycled car tires to conjure up a playful line of "Black Ruby" housewares. There are bowls, vases, dishes, and other kitchen vessels that have a distinct black bubbly look. She developed a technique that recycles rubber powder into waterproof, functional objects, creating small tire bubbles. Then she binds the pebbles with polyurethane to make her weird and wonderful dishes.

The Philadelphia based design studio MIO has a line of recycled rubber tire stools that were launched at a recent International Contemporary Furniture Fair in New York. Sleek and simple, the Rubber Stool is also extremely comfortable. The rubber seat is woven onto a white or red steel frame – no hardware required. Traction keeps it in place, and there's no assembly required. And since it's made from hardy materials, it can be used either indoors or outdoors.

And then there's Ji Yong Ho, a sculptor from Seoul, South Korea. He uses dirt, clay and

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recycled rubber tires to create fierce beast-mutants that look like giant spiders, prehistoric birds, and sci-fi sharks. It's meant to be a little frightening – in his artist's statement, Yong Ho says that his message is to warn about environmental destruction. 🌱

