Materiality in Recycling

How to change a materials purpose

By Karen Elzinga

UNDERSTANDING MATERIALITY

So this lesson post is about recycling even the simplest of materials, if you know and understand that that just about anything non organic can successfully be reborn into something else then you were born to be a recycling artist.

This post will get you understanding just a few ways that materials can be altered for a new look.

Think about the simplest of materials, paper for example, it comes from a tree, gets turned into pulp, then ends up anywhere from a piece of paper to a house brick. Paper can be transferred in numerous ways by millions of people. A writer uses a paper sheet, an artist may use paper pulp to create 3D objects turning them into sculptures, designers use paper to create light covers and novelty dresses.

This is how materiality of a material comes into play, it's about taking a material substance and turning into something far reached from what it was, the more you can do that the more successful or interesting your outcome will be.

So lets take a look at how to change materials.

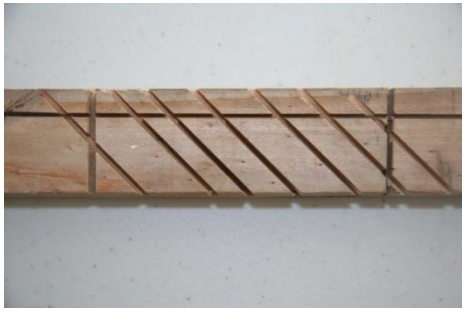
Making paper from pulp

Forming 3D shapes

A Plain Old Wood Plank

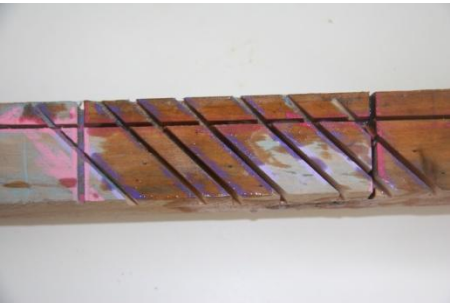
Wood plank

Broken



Cut with a saw

Covered with chalk



Wet with oil

Belted with a hammer

Wood is definitely something you can have a lot of fun with, think how you cut it, what happens to it, what about saw dust, it can used to make MDF board sheets or moulded with adhesives to create 3D objects, it can used in craft for decorating, what about wood turning machines, those stair case railings didn't make themselves that pretty.

Process

Broken – Breaking the wood with force gave the wood a splintered appearance and a rough texture.
Cut with a saw – Gave the wood a decorative edge that could be useful in making totem poles or tribal poles.
Covered with chalk – Covering the wood in chalk was good as it allowed the grain of the wood to be highlighted but not lost completely.
Wet with oil – Allowed for deeper colour and richer appearance.
Belted with a hammer – Added a sense of urgency and fragility to the wood.

Material Investigation – Plastic matting

Plastic matting

un-woven

Sliced with a knife

Sewn

Process

Un-woven – Un weaving the plastic gave it a softened look

Sliced with a knife- gave the plastic the look of fragility, in taters, weakened.

Sewn – gave the plastic a bitter quality, a look of trying to hard, a sense of immortality so to speak.

Material Investigation - Rope

Rope

Frayed

Knotted

Cut with scissors

Process

Frayed- Gave the rope a sense of unrest, turmoil, craziness.

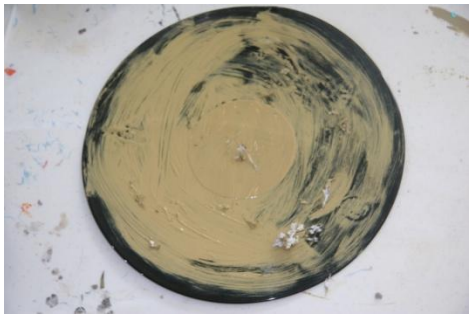
Knotted- Gave a sense of closure, a coming together, unity, strength.

Cut with scissors- Gave a whimsical feel, freedom, fluffy, spontaneous.

4th Material Investigation – Old Record

Record

Melted plastic added



Paint added

Scratched with a knife

Melted to reform a basket

Process

Melted plastic added- gave the record an aged look, the record is a great back drop giving depth to the melted plastic layering.

Paint added- gave a solid surface look, a masking effect, hidden, changing the record from looking like a record to looking like anything that could simply be painted, it is now ordinary.

Scratched with a knife – gave the record more edge and allowed that special record quality to re-entre .

Melted to reform a basket – The record was melted over a flame and reformed into the shape of a basket, so it has now changed its meaning from a musical item into a fruit bowl.

Material Investigation - Pencil

Pencil

Shaved

Cut

Shaved - shaving the pencil completely took it to a different level of reading entirely, it is now unable to be drawn with in the traditional sense.

Cut- Cutting the shavings did not alter the appearance or meaning at all, the shavings are now finer cuttings.

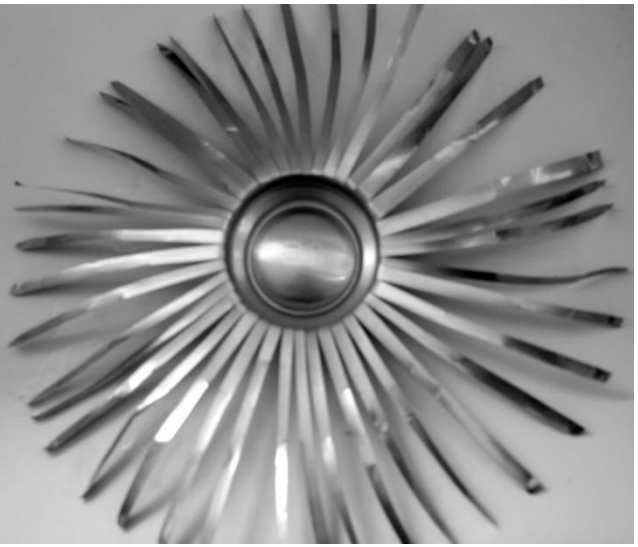
Glass resin – Adding the cuttings into a patty pan case and adding glass resin took the cuttings to a completely new meaning again. The cuttings encased in resin now resemble toffee as the pink lead shavings mix colour into the resin. What once was a pencil now looks good enough to eat! What is not captured here is that the wood swelled and when dried this toffee actually looked like a muffin, for real!

Placed in glass resin inside patty pan case

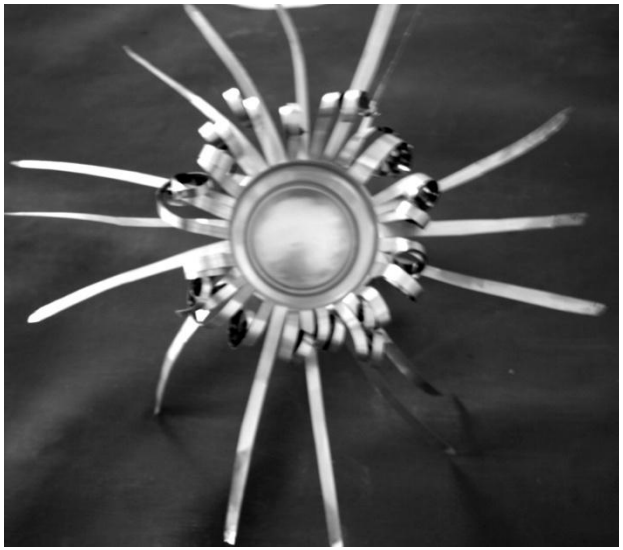
Material -Pepsi can

Cut the top of the can
and cut the sides into thin strips

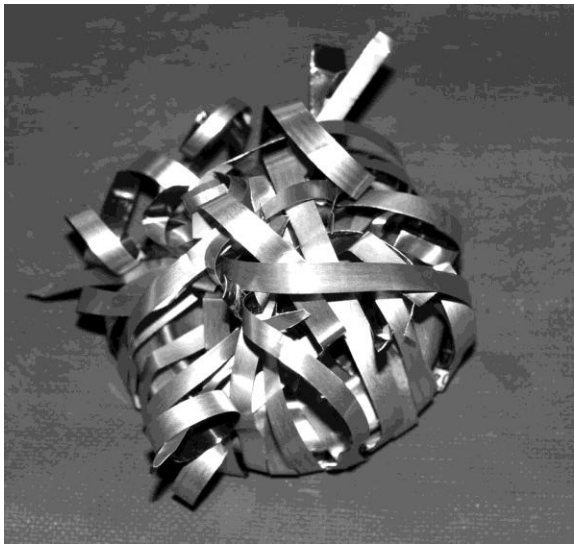
Shape, twist, bend



Finished work 1
Can cut finely and bent to shape



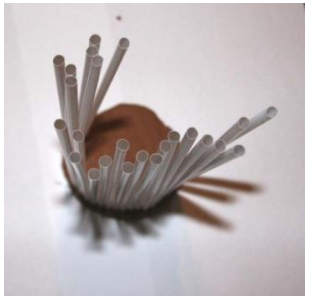
Finished work 2
A knife used to curl metal for 3D effect



Finished work 3.
Metal curls and straight strips
are rolled together for a metal ball.

Material -Plastic drinking straws

Create clay base circle

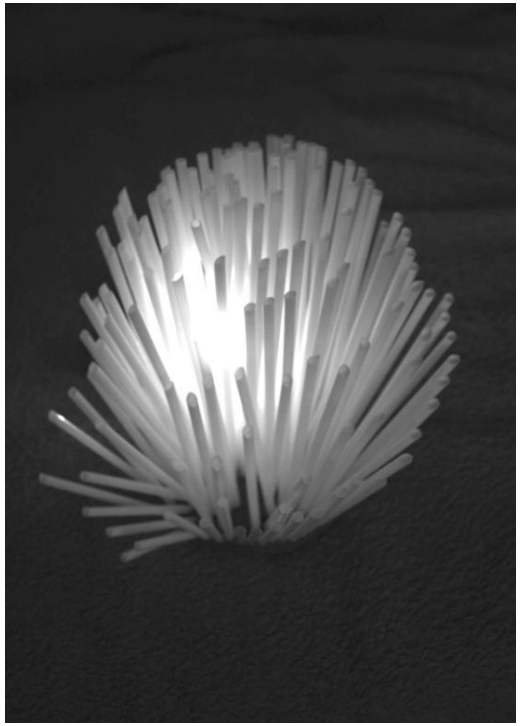


Attach Straws

Straws make great little sculptures, but have there limitations, exploration further could see you joining straws or melting them together for build larger things like outdoor rooms, novelty cars or just about anything.

Finished work 1.

Standard effect, straws are placed into Clay, all straws are one length.



Finished work 2.

Straws are cut to different lengths and shaped strategically with light added for a more visual experience.

Finished work 3.

Straws are melted and painted for a. completely new look.

Material- Old Toys

Idea – to use plastic toys found at the refuse or opp shops and transform them from a child's toy into a sculpture for adults.
Concept – Glue toys together using strategically placed toys to fit intricately together in order to showcase the toy at it's best angle and so it fits with the scheme and visual appeal of the structure, but to also promote durability and strength within the sculpture.

1. Start gluing toys

2. Form a circular shape

3. Start building upwards

4. Start rounding off top

5. Finished sculpture – unpainted

6. Spray painted red

Step 7. After step 6 the work was reviewed and resolved. In this process it was discovered that the sculpture needed more height, a better and more prominent centre top piece and a different colour paint exterior to really make the work speak.

Step 8. The size (height) was doubled, a fantastic centre piece was found and metallic spray paint added for a much more dynamic effect.

Material – Water

Even water can have it's materiality changed, By adding things to the water and freezing it can give very interesting results when photographed, artists have added clothes to water and freezing giant ice blokes such as artist Nicole Dextras www.nicoledextras.com who does amazing things with ice.

Just adding simple things like wool (pictured) can bring a beautiful almost symbolic quality to a simple block of ice.

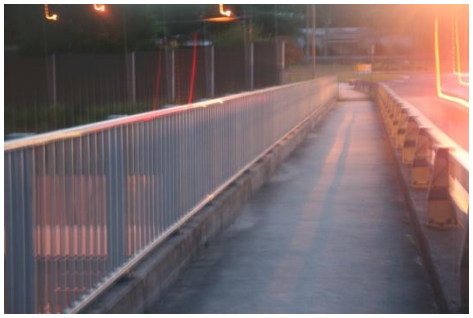
Material - Light

It was recognized to get the needed effect numerous light sources would be required. An intersection which included traffic lights, shop lights, street lights and vehicle lights as a combination was located. In order to achieve the cause and affect strategy of bending time and space with colour and movement for optimum results the camera required tweaking of shutter speeds, lengthening and shortening of camera lens whilst in a moving vehicle and it the required the perfect amount of light affected space, with a stocking affected lens.

Changing the materiality of light -

This can be really fun, you do require an SLR Camera that you can manually change the lens by quickly moving it in and out whilst taking the picture, but the results can be very exciting, and very one of a kind, you will never capture the same image twice. Try settings when there a lot of moving cars and traffics lights, you'll be amazed by the results.

Material – Light (Here are some more examples)

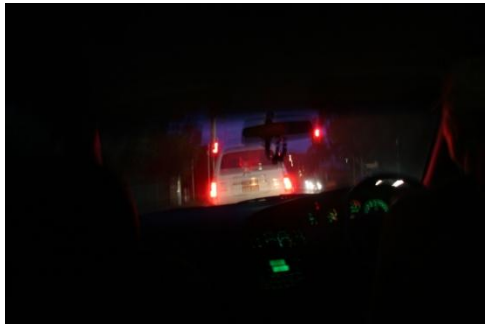


1. Location – walk way over freeway.

2. Two directional vehicles

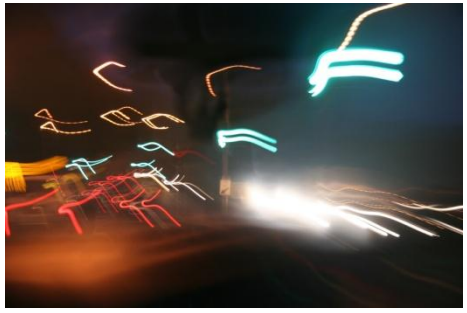
3. On coming vehicles

4. Side view



5.Change of direction – Car windscreen from inside moving vehicle

6. Experiment - On coming vehicles



7. Shop lights/traffic lights, cars, combination of all achieved the above three picture.

Changing the Materiality of everyday Materials

So you see recycling materials can not only be fun, but very rewarding when you think outside the box.

I hope you have enjoyed learning about materiality and how to change materials, it really is fun to see and discover what you can come up with.

This has been another Karen Elzinga blog post for Elzinga Collective