

MATERIAL WORLD /

Inner-Tube Purses, Pure Body Oils, Peace While You Sleep

PURSER FROM INNER TUBES

In America, tire repair shops (take out the inner tube, patch, etc.) are ubiquitous and carry the lively name of "vulcanization." The Greek Vulcan, god of fire and smithery. At some point, the inner tube must go — but it's not the end. Uca Ruffatti, an artisan based in El Salvador, has found an ingenious and sustainable way to recycle the rubber bags. Sleek, sturdy, chic, and, of course, black, these purses are available from oneworldprojects.com



MAXIMELY BIODEGRADABLE TAMPONS

Long ago, Egyptians first made tampons from softened papyrus. Nowadays, feminine hygiene products are commonly made from rayon, or wood pulp. Even when made of cotton, they are often treated with pesticides and the material with which they are made may lead to health problems due to the dioxin released during the bleaching. Maxim hygiene products start with pure cotton to create a natural product that is soft, absorbent, biodegradable, and completely biodegradable. Maxim also goes the extra mile to create recyclable packaging and manufacturing facilities that are fully green. See maximhy.com.

PURE BEAUTY OILS

Many of the best "natural" commercial skin products are filled with unknowns — at least to the nonchemist. And while an SPF lotion is essential for daytime use, there's no good reason to fill your pores with aluminum starch octenylsuccinate before bed. While any olive oil will do for cleansing (simply massage the oil on your face to remove makeup or dirt, then dab gently with a hot wet cloth), something thicker will leave less mess on the pillowcase. Jason Pure Beauty Oil with 5,000 IU of vitamin E is a luscious combination of almond, apricot, avocado, and wheat germ oil. It smells wonderful and works so well that you may find yourself tossing out the old one as well — and oiling yourself from toe to toe.



PEACE AND A SOLAR OVEN

Over three billion people — half of the world's population — rely on biomass (wood, dung, crop residue) for their



cooking fuel. These smoky fires are inefficient, unhealthy, and polluting, and families commonly spend a quarter of their income on fuel or spend hours out of their days scrounging for the materials — it's a lose/lose situation. Solar Household Energy (SHE), a nonprofit corporation, has created a solution in its solar cooking oven. The entire package arrives in a box the size of a Crock-Pot, and indeed, that's because the largest item is a tempered glass bowl with a lid. The oven itself looks like a piece of shiny origami and comes in either cardboard or aluminum (nonedible to goats). Amazingly, the contraption can boil a liter of water in under an hour under a strong sun. It can also bake a cake in one hour and a four-pound chicken in two hours. SHE currently has projects in Mexico, Central America, and Africa. To purchase an oven or to donate to a project, go to she-inc.org.

BUILD PEACE WHILE YOU SLEEP

Over the last 100 years, Burmese and ethnic minorities have been migrating to northern Thailand, escaping from war, privation, and dictatorship. The Khom Loy Development Foundation is a nonprofit, nondenominational foundation that works with these refugees to build innovative and sustainable means of support and advancement. One of these projects is the fair-trade Izara Arts, which helps the hill-tribe women to create an income for themselves. Izara Arts is about both conservation and progress: it cultivates traditional techniques and combines them with modern designs for world markets. The results are clever and colorful. One favorite product is the silk eye mask, with Hmong patterns that appear to mean "Do Not Disturb" in any language. Visit the foundation at khomloy.org and follow the links to the store.

—HEATHER SHAW

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BLACK P

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