

Goldsmiths, University of London Sustainability Champion – Student

The Living Taking and Giving Back Library

About the project

Summary

This project is about discarded items that have been collected, categorized, arranged and offered for re-use by others. People are invited to take objects away and replenish the shelves from the art installation with those that they find.

Project partners

Goldsmiths and anyone who participated.

The results

The problem

People reusing everyday items and not discarding them when they are still useful.

The approach

To showcase in an art form how much waste is created on a daily basis while at the same time inviting people to take away and reuse any of the items they wish from the installation. Participants are encouraged to invent new uses for the items and document their inventiveness, in the hope of inspiring others to do same.

Our goals

To raise awareness of how easy it is to reuse and reappropriate discarded items – rubbish. Another goal is to encourage people to reassess their consumer habits and engage in more sustainable behavior.

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

- HE
- 11,750 students
- 877 staff

Urban Goldsmiths,
University of London
founded in 1891, and has
been part of the University

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Obstacles and solutions

Obstacle	Solution
People taking from the environment and not giving back	Organise the installation as a library and then to record those who take and return items from the installation in a reference book.
Getting people to see how the reuse and re-appropriation everyday items is easier and cheaper than they otherwise may have thought.	Presenting the waste in such an interesting and unusual way so as to encourage people to consider reusing items before discarding them.
Getting people to make reuse and re-appropriation part of their everyday lifestyle in the longer-term.	Witnessing in the reference book how their peers and colleagues have made the change will hopefully inspire more sustainable behavior. They then feel it is more commonplace to reuse items and feel less "embarrassed" about doing so.

Performance and results

The installation has been installed in several different libraries across the UK. Margaret (the artist) has been invited to give talks on this concept locally, at other institutions and at nationally recognised sustainable organisations. Feedback from visitors and participants has indicated a willingness to make more sustainable choices as a result of participating and experiencing the installation. Confident in Margaret's ability as an eco-artist, Goldsmiths managers have allowed her additional space and resources to continue and expand her message of sustainable consumerism.

The future

Lessons learned

To continue and expand on the themes of rubbish and consumerism and to make people more aware of their consumer habits. Margaret also hopes her art work changes people's behavior and attitudes to the finality of the planets resources thereby reducing their ecological footprint.

Sharing your project

This project and indeed Margaret's broader art work has been communicated via social media, by print media and by word of mouth within the Art community. It has reached a wide variety of people - from students to academics and even administrative staff. The local community are aware of Margaret's greening efforts and of her eco-art installations. The effect it has had is mainly getting people to reconsider their "taken-for-granted" consumer habits and changing to more sustainable ones.

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

As Goldsmiths endeavors to operate and teach as sustainably as possible, being a finalist has highlighted our efforts to date. This recognition has raised our profile within the sector and in doing so has encouraged both staff and students to consider the environment in their life choices.

Further information

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