



Reclaiming Waste

ages 6 and up | 60 min

Inspiration:

This virtual tour of Yevgeniya Kaganovich's *grow*. October 28, 2012 - October 2, 2016

<https://lynden.tours/yevgeniya-kaganovich-grow/>

<https://www.lydensculpturegarden.org/exhibitions/artist-residence-yevgeniya-kaganovich>

Yevgeniya Kaganovich thought of her project *grow* as a series of installations in public buildings throughout the Milwaukee area. At each location, a system of plant-like forms, simulating a living, growing organism in multiple stages of development, would grow over time. These systems were created from a single material, recycled plastic bags, and their growth rate was determined by the number of bags accumulated in an official recycling bin at each site. The layers of plastic were fused together to create a surface similar to leather or skin, molded into plant-like forms, connected with plastic bag "thread," and stuffed with more bags. Like weeds, these organisms grew into unused and overlooked spaces: niches, stairwells, and other peripheral and forgotten architectural elements.

"My goals for *grow*," Kaganovich said at the outset, "are to transform an artificial manipulated material into a seemingly unchecked, feral, opportunistic growth; to visualize and punctuate reuse by juxtaposing it with slow, methodical, labor-intensive making that plays with control, 'craftiness,' and precision; and to speculate about how artificial lifecycles are sustained."





What started out as tending to and growing an artificial organism, became tending to and growing a community. After *grow* launched at the Lynden Sculpture Garden, public involvement ranged from contributing plastic bags for specific locations to participating in workshops. Kaganovich and her students led regular workshops inviting the public to aid in the making of these works. “Plantings” of *grow* were sited at public locations throughout Milwaukee and eventually also in Florida, Texas, and Pennsylvania—further supporting their similarity to invasive species. At the culmination of the project, all the forms were brought back to Lynden, where they were exhibited as a combined system before they were offered to visitors for a final “transplanting.”

I wonder...

- Why did Kaganovich limit herself to one material—plastic bags?
- How did Kaganovich transform waste into a resource that helps instead of harms? In the long run, did she solve the problem of plastic waste?
- Like weeds, these plastic organisms grew out of unused and overlooked spaces. Why do you think she displayed these works in this way?
- Why do you think Kaganovich included the community in this work?
- What kind of world do we want to live in? Our actions matter. How is plastic waste affecting our planet?



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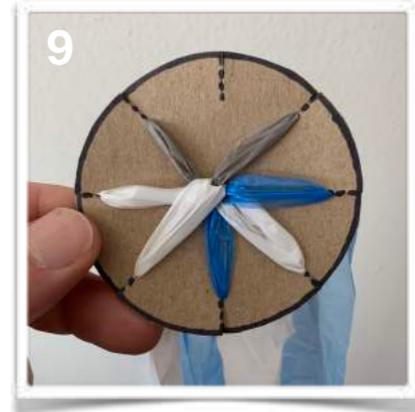
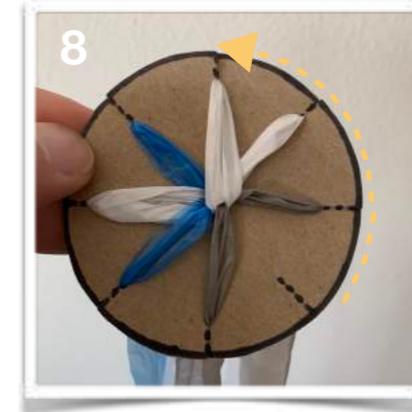
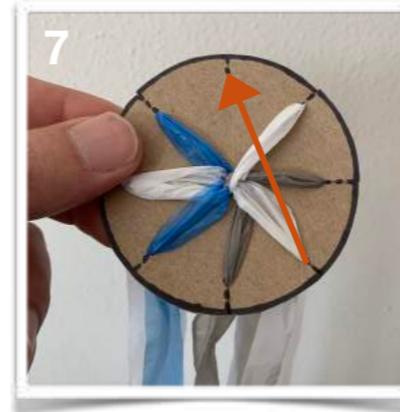
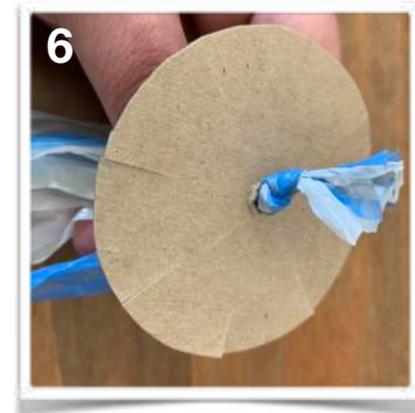
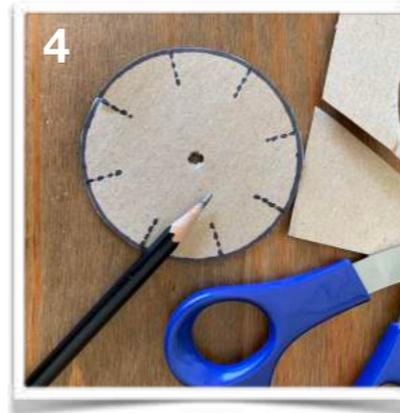
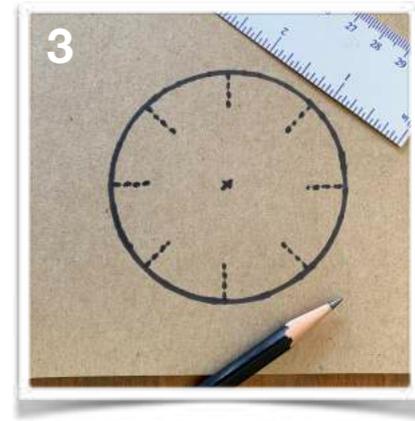
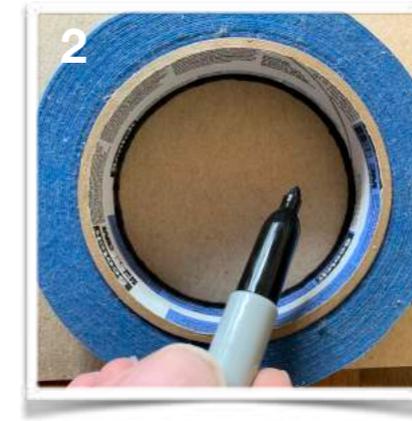
grow used methods and tools to transform everyday waste into works of art. Like this artist, we, too, will experiment in transforming reclaimed plastic bags into works of art. Adapting a traditional weaving tool called a circle loom, we will repurpose it to weave plastic bags into a length of braided rope.

Materials:

3 plastic bags (various colors but all the same size), scissors, tag board (cereal box), object to trace a circle (glass, tape roll, etc.) pencil or marker

Making:

1. Flatten plastic bags on a table top. Beginning from the bottom of the bag, cut across horizontally into 1" strips. Cut the resulting loops open into 24" long strands. You will need 7 of these.
2. Make your circle loom: Trace a 3" circle onto a piece of cardboard using the inside of a tape roll and a pencil (Picture #2). Cut out the circle, then cut 8 small slits evenly spaced around the edge. Each slit should be about 1/2" long. Also, use your pencil to poke a hole through the center of the circle. (Be careful not to poke your hand!) Picture #4.
3. Line up the ends of your 7 strands of plastic, then tie a simple overhand knot (Picture 5). Poke the knotted end through the hole in the center of the circle loom. Picture #6.
4. Then clip one piece of plastic into each slot, except the top slot. Your hand loom should look like picture #7.
5. Weaving with the circle loom is really easy! There are just two steps to learn and repeat.
 - A. Hold the disc so that the empty slot is at the top. Un-clip whichever length is in the bottom-right slot and clip it into the top slot, as in picture #7.
 - B. Next, the bottom right slot will be empty. Rotate the whole circle loom so that the empty slot is at the top again, as seen picture #8.
6. Now, just keep repeating Step A, Step B, Step A, Step B etc... As you continue, you'll see your weaving growing down through the hole in the center of your loom, as in picture #10. Give it a tug occasionally to help it along.
7. When your weaving is done, tie an overhand knot (just like in step 3) right at the point where the weaving ends. Picture #12.





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The product of this work will leave us with a length of braided rope made from plastic bags. Inspired by *grow*, I fashioned my weaving into a plant-like form that resembles these jade plant leaves. When we did this project with students at Lynden, we asked them what they might use their weaving to make that transforms waste into a resource that helps instead of harms. Some answered they'd make their rope into a bird feeder or wearable sculpture. What will you make with yours?

Lynden teacher-in-residence Sue Pezanoski Browne has a great project related to this she calls "Plarn," or plastic yarn. You can see her examples of other ways to experiment with reclaiming plastic bags here: <https://tinyurl.com/wtvrjd7>

After *grow*, Kaganovich collaborated with other artists to continue experimenting with these forms. One of their projects was to grow pearl oyster mushrooms out of plastic bag forms.

Vocabulary

Reclaim recover (material) for reuse

Organism the material structure of an individual life form

Recycle convert (waste) into reusable material



Sources

Lynden IEI lesson field trip lesson Nov. 2017
<https://www.homemade-gifts-made-easy.com/make-a-friendship-bracelet.html>
<https://tinyurl.com/wtvrjd7>