



EDITOR'S NOTE

NO TIME FOR DUMPSTER DIVING

It's always interesting to see how lighting stories are presented in the mainstream press. One of the most recent was an article on "upcycling" on page one of the "Life & Style" section of my local paper. The article discussed how discarded objects—household items, bottles, even a gazebo roof frame—are being repurposed as light fixtures. Described as "elegant, funky and pure wow," the reborn discards would make 1970s' junk collector Fred Sanford proud.

It was a neat story—a celebration of what our profession can accomplish—but what struck me (after re-reading the article several times) was that there wasn't much discussion of *our profession*. The piece was written from an interior design

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perspective (understandable given the mass audience readership), and there was no mention of the science of luminaire design. No mention of optics, light quality or which "discards" make for better housings. Just stick a lamp in an overturned wastepaper basket, it seems, and

presto, you've got yourself a fixture. *LD+A* contributor Don Peifer had this to say about the article: "Found art repurposed into luminaires can make for a compelling point-of-interest in certain settings, but it is not synonymous with quality of light. In a world obsessed with 'good enough' lighting at the lowest possible price, you're only as good as the source you're using."

Custom fixture designer David Rodstein describes some of the other perils of upcycling: "There has to be a consistency of quality, which requires uniform components of whatever materials are hauled in from dumpsters or salvage yards. Next, the fixtures need to pass UL regulations and the muster of local codes. Some materials are not fire safe; styrene plastic smokes upon flame and is banned in connected-load lighting fixtures. And if it is a hanging fixture and more than 40 pounds, it needs to be attached to the building structure."

In other words, we can have fun with upcycling and turning trash into illuminated treasure, just as long as the experts are in charge . . . not the artists, sculptors or the guys from *American Pickers* with a guest appearance from Fred Sanford.

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LD+A is a magazine for professionals involved in the art, science, study, manufacture, teaching, and implementation of lighting. *LD+A* is designed to enhance and improve the practice of lighting. Every issue of *LD+A* includes feature articles on design projects, technical articles on the science of illumination, new product developments, industry trends, news of the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America, and vital information about the illuminating profession. Statements and opinions expressed in articles and editorials in *LD+A* are the expressions of contributors and do not necessarily represent the policies or opinions of the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America. Advertisements appearing in this publication are the sole responsibility of the advertiser.

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This publication is indexed regularly by Engineering Index, Inc. and Applied Science & Technology Index. *LD+A* is available on microfilm from Proquest Information and Learning, 800-521-0600, Ann Arbor, MI