

Art of Olive Green

Towards Art, an Ethics & a Laugh

Archives

All posts for the month December, 2011

Arizona Suite

Posted by *getraer* on *December 28, 2011*

Posted in: *Self-Sufficiencies, Upcycling*. Tagged: *green, olive green, responsibility, upcycling*. [Leave a comment](#)



(<https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com>

[/2011/12/imag1170.jpg](https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/imag1170.jpg))

Note the staples and drawstring.

Without meaning to be an upcycler, my father invented a clever solution to Arizona's woodpecker plague upon citrus. Every year woodpeckers flock to orange trees and lance the fruit with their beaks to slake their thirst. When a person tries to pick the fruit later on, it has become a Death Star of rot, perhaps seething with some larval beetles or flies as well.

Arizona newspapers recommended festooning your trees with compact discs to scare off the woodpeckers, but it worked no better than other homestead woodpecker remedies. My father hit upon the idea of slipping the foam-net sleeves often used for Asian pears over the oranges, but we could never eat enough of those to cover a whole tree's fruit. Rifling through the materials reserves, he found some rolls of kitchen drawer liner.

Kitchen drawer liners are sold in much larger square footage than anyone needs, to be sure the manufacturers can make a profit. The nubby ones that keep things from skidding around when drawers are used allow plenty of air flow and have a texture woodpeckers seem to find repellent.

With the meticulousness evolved by retirees, he crafted little bag/sleeves out of liner squares by folding and stapling them together at the edges. He even laced drawstrings



(<https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/imag1178.jpg>)

Oranges: juice boxes for woodpeckers.



(<https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/imag1173.jpg>)

Believe me, they're worth it.

for some. Incredibly, he then slipped them over every growing orange within reach—and has done so yearly for nearly a decade.

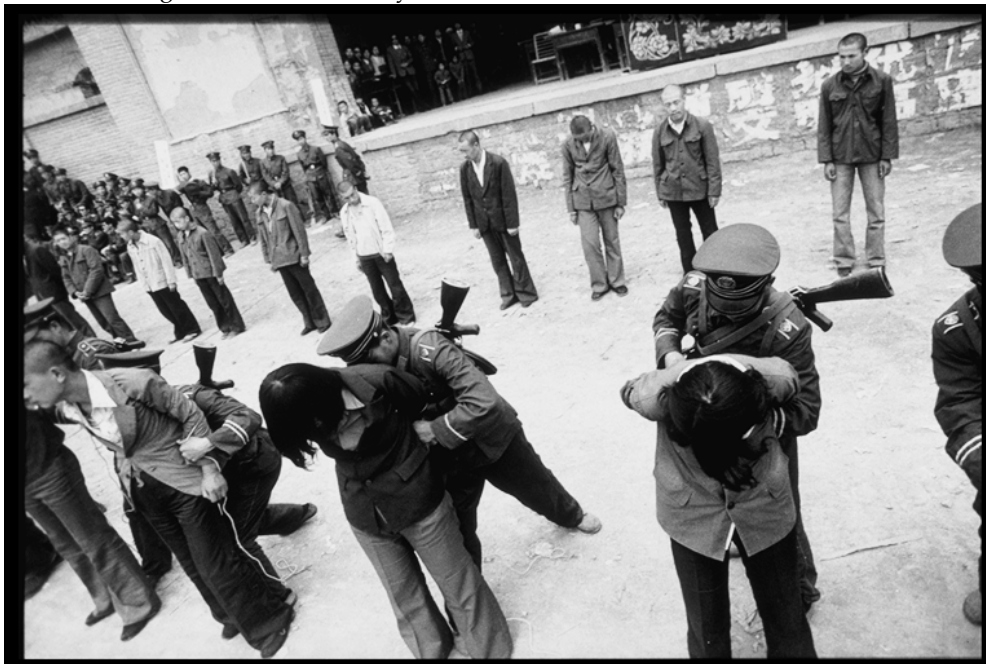
The bags don't deteriorate in the harsh desert sun,

and they allow room for growth and light exposure. Maybe we share blood with whomever invented the "poire prisonniere" method of growing a pear inside an eau de vie bottle (<http://massenez.info/poire-prisonniere/?lang=en>). I'd pitch my father's upcycling solution to a local newspaper, but suspect that only we think a glass of fresh Arizona Sweet juice is worth such trouble. Cheers, dad.

Slavery-Free Christmas: What Is to Be Done?

Posted by *getraer* on *December 15, 2011*

Posted in: *Activism, MadeInUSA, Uncategorized*. Tagged: *Christmas, dissidents, Etsy, Falun Gong, globalization, holidays, laogai, laogaimuseum, laojiao, locavore, religious freedom, slavery*. Leave a comment



(<https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/immagineb.png>)

This begins to look like lots of Christmas.

I'm not too shy to say "Christmas," though even my annual token obeisance at a church thousands of miles from my home has gone unobserved for years now. I don't need to have a "Keep Christ in Christmas" sign on my lawn either. If I must give gifts they must

reflect humanist principles. I do need to see my family and emphasize something often forgotten in the shove-flooding savagery (<http://www.mainstreet.com/article/smart-spending/bargains/deals/black-friday-2011-violence-continues>) of this grasping holiday: Slavery.

“People hoisting themselves out of poverty with hard work” is boilerplate globalization-speak in defense of outsourcing. But expropriated peasants and dissidents, for their part, are not choosing to leave “poverty”—or freedom. Al-Jazeera recently produced a program about China’s (<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/slaverya21stcenturyevil/2011/10/2011101091153782814.html>) *laogai* (<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/slaverya21stcenturyevil/2011/10/2011101091153782814.html>) (government labor camps), part of their ongoing series on slavery.

This has never been a popular news topic in the States. A little digging yields yellow(ed) coverage like this 1999 CNN chestnut (<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/1999/china.50/red.giant/prisons/wu.essay/>):

Red Giant!...A fundamental policy of the Laogai states that ‘forced labor is a means toward the goal of thought reform’...**Organ harvesting!**...We cannot condemn the evil actions of the Nazi concentration camps and the Soviet Gulag while we ignore the continuing brutality of the Laogai.

Then in 2002 China entered the World Trade Organization (<http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/004/y6000e/y6000e08.htm>), whereupon even this shrill searchlighting disappeared from our shores. Al-Jazeera takes a more serious tone, but still includes indictments like “state-sponsored slavery” and compares the face of slavery past (woodcuts of African-Americans chained at the neck) to the face of slavery today (Homer Simpson slippers made in a *laogai*). It’s a well-done piece rich with facts; I took an envelope-back of notes while sitting on my Chinese-made couch (don’t ask). Among the gems:

In 2010 U.S. imported \$250B worth of goods from China...3-5,000,000 people are in *laogai* at any time (www.laogaimuseum.org (www.laogaimuseum.org))...*laojiao* means “reeducation through labor”...Chinese saying: “*Laogai* is dark and *laojiao* is bitter”...“Abigail” was charged with worshiping in an unlicensed Christian church (“disturbing order and security of society”) and made Christmas lights during her sentence in the *laogai*...The EU lacks even the token protections of the U.S., importing \$355B USD yearly from China, without a single law or regulation covering *laogai* products.

“**WHAT IS TO BE DONE?**” one asks, but maybe not in caps. I can only offer what I did by way of suggestion. This year I’ve found refurbishing my wardrobe very liberating, as I did so entirely with vintage, surplus and U.S.-made items, often military or workwear. (No one can tell the difference anymore since designers have been jacking designs from utility clothing for decades.) I bought a grip of stuff from Etsy where other makers like myself are, and some Made in USA items, and for the first time in memory feel proud of my holiday shopping. *None* of it supports the slavery of which I am the sworn enemy’s scion.

If you live in a food desert (<http://www.marketmakeovers.org/node/147>), where all your subsistence shopping must take place at a Wal-Mart, you’ll have to use the Internet, which I did for all of this shopping because I live in BoxStoreTon, a stripmalled suburb of New York City. These are a few of the items I and a like-minded friend found with an hour’s effort, and we’re proud to say we didn’t go Doorbusters or pepper-spray anyone to get them.

- A hummingbird feeder (<http://t.co/rDjtpMt0>) designed, tooled & molded in the U.S. The unusual design (54 ports simulate real flowers!) may survive the brutal Arizona sun and make my mum smile.
- A snakewood and gold-plated letter opener (<http://www.etsy.com/transaction/66074149>) to replace the clunky, tatty one used by her father-in-law. The wood is from Surinam, but this is Our America anyway.
- A nuno felted scarf (<http://www.etsy.com/transaction/66074035>) for her mother-in-law, who will doubtless appreciate the drape and textures of this silk gauze fused with wool felt.
- A wall-pocket fused glass vase (<http://www.etsy.com/transaction/66009945>) that a girl I’m interested in will love, because she loves essential oils and this is the perfect way to decorate a wall while diffusing rosemary fragrance throughout a small room.
- A glass-tile photo-applique pendant of Chicago’s skyline (<http://www.etsy.com/transaction/66009879>) which will remind same girl of Chicago, the only other place in America she knows well, and which she often misses. It looks even better in real life.
- An daunting oatmeal cowl scarf (<http://www.etsy.com/transaction/66064238>) with handmade zebrawood buttons (which had better be made by the same women in Brooklyn...). Its versatility is part of its charm.
- You might also consider a hammock from Twin Oaks (<http://www.twinoakstore.com/Traditional-Rope-p-1-c-257.html>), an intentional community of 100 people in rural Virginia who have been exemplifying horizontal democracy since 1967...Nowadays, there’s a waiting list (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RO8gSI19CU>) to join.

Billboard

Posted by *getraer* on December 2, 2011

Posted in: Earth Safe Finishes, Self-Sufficiencies, Upcycling. Tagged: DIY, ecology, green, responsibility, upcycling. Leave a comment



(<https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/imag11072.jpg>)

What's that logo suffocating under that comm truck?

I'm finished with promotional materials masquerading as useful objects. Even donating your time you're bound to accumulate some as "thanks"; a friend worked for a food donation project hosted by Barilla, and got a branded bag and a T-shirt that somehow ended up in my drawer. (These things are like bad pennies.) A bank gives you a T-shirt advertising the

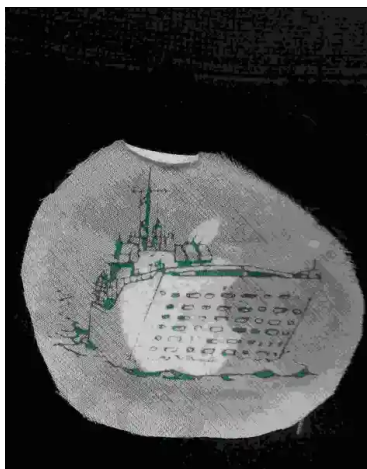
bank for giving them your personal info on a credit-card application: a twofer!

We save these items until they crowd out wearable clothes, then trash-bag them for "charity." This guarantees that whenever we drive through an area replete with government housing, we see children frolicking in oversize shirts hawking sodas or airlines or discount sporting goods. Wearing this crap enables their parents to spend money on food or medicine. When they in turn give it away, threadbare and faded, it ends up in the Global South through the "rag trade" of clothing-by-the-pound, where it is beamed back into the Occident via late-night commercials promising help for harelip children or starving displaced peasants.

The final irony may be the garment's retirement in its hometown. Production of promotional garments uses the cheapest of cut-rate textile labor—just check the labels of anything wearable and free, then look up the country of origin+sweatshop or +exploit or +"child labor." So a shirt produced in a Honduras sweatshop may return to finish its days on a child in Talanga. Has so much value ever been wrung from an advertising farthing?

Among my idle fancies of usefulness: If I were to teach welding in the hood, I would teach young adults how to make bookcases out of kitchen sinks (http://alexfethiere.com/files/gimms/6_center-sinkhold.jpg). This assumes good enough schooling and parenting that they would care about reading, and that they wouldn't be too proud to use bookcases made out of scrap metal, itself an aesthetic of privilege—so never mind.

Covering ads on free clothing would be a more fun and realistic thing to do, with a younger group, maybe as part of a larger arts workshop. I think explaining **why** endorsements should be covered would be most of the point, perhaps taking the angle that if Serena Williams and Kobe are getting paid so much to appear with those logos, why should you only get a XXL T-shirt big enough for a fort?



(<https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/imag1108.jpg>)

Oh, that's who. Note the T-shirt elastic at top.

I recently discovered I could use Earth Safe Finishes' gel medium to adhere patches to work clothes, and thought to re-message some hats and tees that I'd wear if they didn't carry ads. ESF gel medium, intended as a paint base, actually works better as a fabric glue than anything I've used intended for that purpose. I burn, cut through and dissolve a lot of fabric in my work, and have been able to join fabrics as inapposite as canvas duck to denim, or sheer polyester to wool/cotton blend. I'm happy that I can do this without VOCs or solvents, for what good is preservation if it requires further destruction?

You need only smear the covering fabric patch liberally with gel medium and press it over the logo or slogan, then wait about 10 minutes for it to dry. Then a few passes with a dry iron at 70% heat will fix the adhesive and secure it against wear, tear, washing & drying. It remains flexible enough for knees and soft enough for the inside of hats, but stronger than store-bought patches. An environmentally responsible product that's more effective and versatile than comparable substitutes—this really is the 21st century.



(<https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com>

[/2011/12/imag11111.jpg](#))

Look at these nice soldiers helping some farmer with his cactus silo!