

Art of Olive Green

Towards Art, an Ethics & a Laugh

Archives

All posts for the month November, 2011

Domestic Blitz

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

Posted in: In the Field, Uncategorized. Tagged: aluminum, scrapyard, waste. Leave a comment



(<https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/imag1091.jpg>)

One of my favorite things about scrapyards is their casual juxtaposition of the consumer and the industrial, the ornamental and the functional. This dozer was doubtless pushing around a mountain of assorted waste when it hooked this forlorn lawnchair which, having a value by weight of less than a penny for the hollow aluminum tubing of its frame, was too unprofitable to remove from here.

Actions at OWS: The Reformation

Posted by *getraer* on *November 18, 2011*

Posted in: Activism, In the Field. Tagged: Foley Square, march, N17, occupy wall street, OWS. Leave a comment

The bruited about death of OWS was greatly exaggerated. I never doubted it though I haven't returned in almost a month. Despite the destruction of 5,000 books (<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/jacketcopy/2011/11/occupy-wall-street-library-books-thrown->



(<https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/imag10631.jpg>)

At Lafayette and Duane, the numbers insane.

[out.html](#)) and all the accoutrements of outdoor survival in Liberty Park (since Brookfield Properties requested the purge, never mind "Zuccotti," let's revert to its prior name), the movement has only grown stronger. Events of November 17 #N17 bore this out, with unconfirmed estimates of 10,000 people (http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2011/11/thousands_gather_near_foley_sq.html) having manifested.

I stopped by Jamaica, Queens to see if an Occupation of the major commuter hub had taken place, as planned. Forty-five minutes after it was supposed to have started, there was nothing unusual in this swarming station. Continuing to Foley Square, at 1700 I found unprecedented legions of people clogging everything within 3 blocks of the square across from City Hall. Unions and citizens alike stood shoulder to shoulder, and flyering was such that I needed a satchel for it all. PA system was permitted, and in addition to the usual exhortations (even one from a child) highlights included a choral rendition of the First Article of Occupation by the Church of Stop Shopping Choir and some flow from various hip hop performers (but damned if I didn't hear that one was Fab Five Freddy?!). Treatments of James Brown's "The Payback" were appreciated, as was PE's "Fight the Power," but that only made me wonder why Chuck D had not represented at OWS. Fortunately I left as Tears for Fears inexplicably came over the PA: Everybody may want to rule the world, but OWS is not about leaders.

At some point while I was listening to the PA, people began to filter out from Foley Square. There was a crawling procession towards the bridge, which I joined with some friends who'd intermittently visited OWS over its 2 months. The street was solid with people for several blocks, and clusters periodically broke into different chants.

On the bridge, I noticed a big difference from the "Arresting of the 700" march over a month earlier. Traffic on both sides was riotous with support. Motorcyclists revved their engines, cars honked, fists jabbed from windows and moon roofs. It was almost too easy to cross, casually discussing whether the breakup of the camp had been a net gain for the movement. After all, the rout had ended the administrative chore of the encampment, the internecine bickering, the cyclopean effort required to make the movement's practical face reflect its ideals in the face of repression, infiltration and simple incivility.

Someone had requisitioned a huge projector and pointed it at one of the skyscrapers overlooking the bridge, facing towards Brooklyn so it was behind the waves of marchers. "99%" it read in scorching white. When I looked again the stencil font read "We Are Winning."

Prometheus Unbounded: Waste Oil Furnace

Posted by *getraer* on *November 14, 2011*

Posted in: Art, Engaged art, Self-Sufficiencies, Studio, Upcycling. Tagged: casting, furnace, green, recycle. 2 Comments

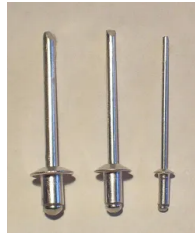


(<https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com>

[/2011/11/imag1053.jpg](https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/imag1053.jpg))

I didn't know bricks could melt.

While roaming countless construction sites in my Arizona childhood, I fetishized found objects of industry as boy-war trophies. Pop rivets were katanas, nailgun cartridge belts were bullets. I dreamt of being able to make anything out of metal. With the furnace I completed this year per the [instructions](#)



(<https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/498px-blindnieten.jpg>)

Pop rivets: samurai swords for ground squirrels, obviously.

(<http://www.artfulbodgermetalcasting.com/>) of the estimable engineer Colin Peck, I can finally do that—though casting technicalities have proven almost as vexing as furnace building.

This furnace is the most olivegreen thing I've built: it's made of an industrial shop vac's stainless shell welded onto a chassis of gnarly angle iron from a curbside in Bushwick, Brooklyn. The lining that supports the 100 pounds of refractory cement inside is fake wood-grain aluminum siding from an above ground pool, riveted together. The frame holding the lid is steel salvaged from a fun-park carousel interpreted in a Queens sculpture park, attached to a hollow steel stem that was some piece of crap my neighbor gave me when they feebly encouraged my eccentricities. The carburetor is aircraft-grade stainless steel, maybe a rejected Boeing or Sikorsky part, from a Brooklyn machining plant, regulated by a valve I machined from a cast-off block of aluminum from another Brooklyn machining plant. A vacuum cleaner motor brought from Chicago by a friend (which lived, in the vacuum, in my basement for 3 years) provides the blast for the furnace.

Every step of this process was taken blind into uncharted territory, which is excruciating because I want to make art, not tools. Colin's plans require that you do what you can with materials you can find, which results in so many grey areas I'd have torn all my hair out if I had any. Yet though I'm a terrible and impatient engineer, this thing works astonishingly well.

Every fuel element is waste. A local carpet dealer that takes pallet shipments every week gives me the wood I use to kindle it. I ignite a small fire inside it, which the blower cyclones into a high heat, then turn on the oil valve. (The oil, as I've mentioned in another post, is from a pizzeria and a transmission shop.) It flows towards Colin's ingeniously simple carburetor where it is vaporized into the woodfire-heated concrete interior where, the temperature being correct, it combusts and the REAL burning starts. 1.5" of industrial refractory cement stores the accumulating heat—I've seen it glow red. The furnace handily reaches the 1400 degrees F. needed to melt aluminum, and it's actually quite safe with no potential of explosion or even fire. Oil must be a fine mist injected into very hot flaming air to burn at all.

My last burn was supposed to produce many sculptures and pieces of jewelry, but due largely to a crucible failure I was unable to pour anything but the smallest bits, which had their own problems. I had never charged the stainless pot with more than 10 lbs of aluminum, and when the 15 lbs melted it ate through the bottom of the crucible. Three pinholes dribbled aluminum steadily onto the floor of my furnace, which I noticed only when I lifted it. When the resultant mess cooled I saved it as an object lesson in heat: have you ever seen a melted brick encased in aluminum?

DIY Drycleaning

Posted by *getraer* on *November 5, 2011*

Posted in: Self-Sufficiencies. Tagged: ammonia, cleaning, DIY, dry cleaning, ecology, FDR, olive green, solvent, wool. Leave a comment



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

[/2011/11/ccc_constructing_road.png](https://artofolivegreen.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/ccc_constructing_road.png))

FDR's CCC, a New Deal program, at work building infrastructure. (Remember that?) My hat is the rightmost.

The approaching winter stirs memories of the prior one's harshness, and has occasioned a breakthrough in vintage/surplus clothing rehabilitation.

I was trying to get several woolen items into wearable condition without spending hundreds of dollars. In an [earlier post](https://artofolivegreen.wordpress.com/2011/05/25/a-greener-clean/) (<https://artofolivegreen.wordpress.com/2011/05/25/a-greener-clean/>) I investigated the merits of hydrocarbon cleaning for delicate old items, but I don't have \$50 USD every time headgear is too stinky to touch, let alone wear. And if headgear is \$50 to clean, imagine what a coat would cost! I read a bit about various home cleaning solvents, and discovered bleach and ammonia are most effective at destroying mildew.

Years ago, I had used a 1:4 solution of ammonia and water in a clothes steamer to rescue a suit jacket too dirty to dryclean. A drycleaner would not have accepted it before my ammonia-steam-and-pat-dry process, so I thought of ammonia again because it doesn't harm wool or, it seems, leather. But steam makes the wool smelly and slows the cleaning process.

I have a canvas & wool hat (above) from the Civilian Conservation Corps, a much-loved New Deal program that conserved and developed natural resources nationwide until 1942. Though unused, it smells like it's been in damp subterranean storage since the Philadelphia quartermaster's tag says: 1940. I sprayed it with undiluted ammonia, sandwiched it between two white terry-cloth towels, and pressed it piecemeal with an iron on 100% heat, no steam. I turned it inside out and did the inside as well. The towels absorbed the dirt, mildew and most of the fumes—[ventilate as much as possible](http://www.safetyxchange.org/health-safety/what-every-worker-should-know-about-ammonia) (<http://www.safetyxchange.org/health-safety/what-every-worker-should-know-about-ammonia>)—and the hat emerged smelling entirely like ammonia and nothing else. After it had aired on a stick for a few hours, I could find no trace of funk or solvent on it.

In a short time I had similarly restored a 1942 jacket that would otherwise be unwearable. Both items not only smelled mildew-free, but clean, and of course did not shrink or deform. Both had become softer as well, probably having been stiff with dirt and/or tacky with mildew. This process works as well as drycleaning, evaluating strictly on odor and hand—but how else can you tell how clean your items are?