



Creativity meets sustainability

Maximising value through upcycling

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Once we discard unwanted items into trash cans, they are out of our minds forever.

Yet somewhere, the environment is bearing the burden of our overconsumption habits.

While it is easy to feel discouraged that individual actions make little difference in the global problem, some are proving that no effort is too small.

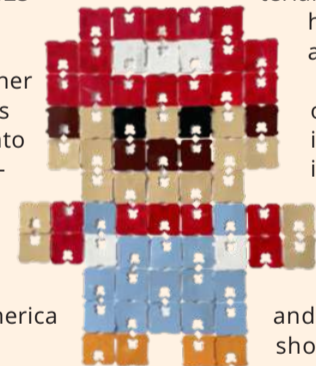
They have made it their mission to rethink how to inject new life into items that no longer serve their original purpose, and to inspire others to follow suit.

Art with environmental message

Action: Make art out of bread tags

Impact: More than 30,000 bread tags saved from landfills, as of November 2025

In the crafty hands of Tan Sher Wyn, bread tags are arranged into shapes of ducklings, flames, pineapples and even pop-culture characters like Captain America and Mario.



Her foray into bread tag art was sparked by a collection of chance encounters: zero waste lifestyle movement, videos on marine pollution, bread tag art installation and an internship at EcoKnights. Collectively, they fuel her desire to spread an environmental message through art.

A Facebook post in 2019 asking people to save bread tags for her eventually led to setting up collection points in Klang Valley, Melaka and Perak.

"How do I tell people they shouldn't simply throw away plastic because it will affect the ocean?" she said. "If I create something nice – for example a dolphin, attributed in memory to a dolphin that is suffering in the ocean – people will say, 'The dolphin is so nice.' Then I could capture their attention and start a conversation."

For Tan, success would mean no longer needing to rescue bread tags. If manufacturers switch to recycled materials, she would consider her original mission accomplished.

To those thinking of repurposing waste into art, her message is simple: Just start, and keep going for a year. Don't be afraid to ask for anything you want, and have the courage to show your work.

Creative fashion upcycling

Action: Turn fabric and plastic bags into everyday items

Impact: Upcycled 1.4 tonnes of fabric and 2.8 tonnes of single-use plastic bags, as of Q2 2026

What can 20 single-use plastic bags become? A one-of-a-kind clutch that is sure to invite curious glances and spark conversations.

And 250 plastic bags? A sturdy "pasar bag" to carry everyday essentials with conscious style.

Ekha, established in 2020, has been transforming plastic and fabric waste into handbags, wallets, keychains, lanyards and more.

To create plastic sheets durable enough for daily use, founder and creative lead Rebecca Yau layers reclaimed plastic bags and fuses them together with a hot iron on baking paper. Additional plastic cut-outs introduce colours and patterns to the creations.

Over the past three years, Ekha has expanded its production to cater to demand from consignment retailers, corporate clients and pop-up events.

"The most rewarding moment is seeing how this solution evolves into creative and entrepreneurial skills among the local artisans and communities we work with," she said.

While Malaysia's push to reduce single-use plastics has led to more conscious consumption in urban areas, Yau noted that industrial plastic use remains high. In rural areas, everyday usage is still prevalent.

"If we announce casually on social media asking for single-use plastic bags, we can collect about 7kg within two days. Imagine the amount!"



Photos courtesy of Ando Fixes, Instagram/@theartofbreadtags and Ekha

