Recycling, upcycling and reusing

Photo Essay

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October 2021
Introduction: Recycling, upcycling and reusing

Not all value materials salvaged from waste are sold for recycling. Reclaimers may use or sell or upcycle some objects they find in bins.
Creating and decorating

The flowers on Simphiwe Rholoma’s purple floral shirt pick up the red sails of the ship painting that decorates the side panel of his shack. Simphiwe is a recycler, a re-user and an up-cycler. He finds and reuses things. Sculptures and pictures surround his home. He also collects materials for Brixton artist Tamzyn Botha. Her inclusive art classes - which often rely on found objects and materials - have included sessions with street children and with reclaimers. Sometimes he finds loose items he can sell – dolls or bags or clothing.
Making and decorating a shelter from waste
David Ralikhomo and his partner Andronica Nthuthe have also furnished and decorated their shack at Metro Centre with found objects.
David says there is very little there that was not found.
“Look” he says “the teddy bear, the clock, the sunglasses over the bed, the mirrors, the bags, the buckets, all the bedding, the tyres and boards we use for the table and even these pictures of Mandala and Bisos. And these angels”.
And all the building material – corrugated sheeting for the windows, plastic sheeting, floor boards, pressed wood, metal sheets, everything.’

The couple have lived here for 4 years. They’ve made a private courtyard stoep in front of their shack. And they cook just beyond that on braziers fashioned from large paint buckets.
Re-using boxes
A barrow operator (as they call trolley pushers in eThekwini) is loading empty but intact cardboard boxes onto a trolley. He is collecting these to be resold to the early morning fruit and vegetable market for R5 each. The intact boxes fetch higher value than the flattened materials. And so re-use is practiced while income is generated. And barrow operators who transport shoppers’ goods to taxi ranks or who load and offload goods for shops during peak hours can participate in the materials economy at other times of the day by collecting empty boxes.
Impromptu flea market
On the side of a busy road flanking the Warrick Triangle reclaimers are setting up an afternoon flea market. It is where they sell found and upcycled objects from their days’ labour.
Reuse
Francelina Lekeno has found many of the floor tiles and some of the other building materials used in the extension of her RDP house at the Northern Landfill site in Mangaung.
Reclaimers often find used clothing in bins or at landfill sites.