

Page turners



decoration, the reality is book ownership is in decline. Repurposers (yes, I too struggle with the term) will argue that their designs are simply a celebration of a once cherished item being given a new lease of life.

It may be a relatively recent phenomenon but there are already several established fields in re-purposing. Some designers have chosen to acknowledge the actual content of the book, often with quite poetic results. The Literary Gift Company makes snowflake confetti from old copies of A Christmas Carol and hearts from Mills and Boon novels.

Then there are designers who use the hardback covers. One downside of the Kindle is that you don't get to display the book you are reading. Now you can opt for Caitlin Phillips's delightful handbags crafted from vintage classics to show off your literary pedigree. Or Pamela Paulsrud's huge circular carpet made from book spines.

Other artists are making more poignant statements. Veteran repurposer (he was doing this in the 1990s) Robert The transforms books into sinister objects by means of highly skilled cutwork. The books' original titles – Art in Crisis, The Bible, Poetic Justice – take on a new significance when the spine becomes the barrel of a gun or a hand grenade.

Then there are the book builders – those who make furniture or even rooms using books as components. A stunning example of this was the elegant Ark Book Tower by architects Rintala Eggertsson, seen at the VA's Architects Build Small Buildings exhibition last year. Or there's David Karoff's eccentric Reading Chair, made from paperbacks, which will bring a smile to even the most ardent book traditionalist.

But the truly charming side to repurposing has to be the handiwork of those who work with the page, either by printing or drawing new images on to the beautiful old typography, as done by Dreamery Studio in New York, or by folding books in the newly-coined practice of Bibliogami. There are already several masters of this craft, Isaac G Salazar and Lucile Moroni to name two. It is worth looking for their astounding work online. Salazar creates sculptural words and skulls from the pages of books, while Moroni stitches elaborate fan work that bursts out of the covers.

Bibliogami can be quite simple to do – basically, anything that can be achieved with paper can be done using the pages of books – such as making Christmas baubles. But many contemporary designers are not shying from the fact that they are dealing with books and are producing quite complex structures. Dutch company Bom Design makes beautiful one-off lights from large, fan-folded books, as does British designer Lucy Norman, whose Light Reading chandelier is a triumph.

If you want to learn more about the art of repurposing then look no further than the queen of the craft Lucy Occhipinti, whose new book The Repurposed Library is full of great ideas such as gorgeous paper vases (above left) which you can try yourself.

Is it art or the destruction of books? **CATHY O'CLERY** investigates some of the new uses old books are being put to

WITH THE ASCENDANCY of the Kindle and other electronic readers, the purchasing of printed books is inevitably slowing down. The result is a glut of used books forlornly filling the shelves of charity shops or that increasingly rare sight on our high streets – the secondhand book store. Bodice rippers and biographies alike are now so unwanted and devalued, there is the inevitable threat of them ending up in the pulping machine. Or so we think.

Thankfully there are still people who have such an emotional bond with books they're seeking to give them new worth by re-using them in innovative ways. With old junk, this is optimistically known as upcycling; with books, it is called repurposing.

Although some purists will be horrified at the written word being chopped up as mere