

Celebrating Food, Art & Culture

Talk about sweat equity!  
Canning gains new followers  
What's green and modular?  
In touch with our planet



This publication brought to you by:



# What's green and modular?

## These days, it's a custom-made home

When a California architect and designer recently compared building their own custom-designed stick-built home with a green-built modular house by another builder, they were surprised. The similarly priced, factory-built home includes higher quality materials and amenities.

When a family of four wanted a comfortable energy-efficient lodge, a conservatively designed modular house fit right into the narrow lot in a ski resort.

These buyers wanted high-end design and green technologies. New modular houses – manufactured on standardized templates and transported to the house site – fit the bill.

In the last five years, a number of modular-home manufacturers have sought certification under the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) system

LEED's four levels – certified, silver, gold and platinum – consider energy and water use, indoor air quality, types of materials, thoughtful land use and homeowners' education about a home's green features.

Green-built prefabricated homes sell for less than \$100,000 for the house alone (without land and site preparation). But custom builders like LivingHomes ([www.livinghomes.net](http://www.livinghomes.net)) of California are awarded platinum-level certification with architect-designed houses. LivingHomes' founder and CEO Steve Glenn explains that prices start at more than \$500,000 for the house alone (without land and installation) because of custom designs and expensive materials including "a lot more glass than in a typical home." Glenn also notes "LivingHomes' ... much more comprehensive environmental program" and custom design service.



*Blu Homes' Evolution model fits the narrow lot of a Tahoe ski resort for a family of four. Photo courtesy of Blu Homes*

*Sidewalks removed during site work were repurposed as landscaping features at a residence by LivingHomes. Berg/Divis Photography*

Amenities include stone countertops and touchless faucets, the latest lighting technologies and green landscaping with features constructed from recycled concrete sidewalks. Recycled water and rainwater irrigate the yards. Houses are positioned to take advantage of natural heating and cooling.

Massachusetts-based Blu Homes ([www.bluhomes.com](http://www.bluhomes.com)), which opened a California factory in 2011 to fulfill its nationwide sales, builds moderately priced homes that meet LEED silver standards, says Director of Sales Operations Kaitlin Burek.

"(Blu Homes') co-founders started with a concern about the carbon footprint and healthiness of America's homes," Burek says. They backed a joint project by MIT and The Rhode Island School of Design to come up with a new method for home construction by combining the latest home-building technologies and home design. One result of their collaboration: Blu Homes' patented steel-framed house; its hinged walls fold for transporting modules from the factory to a home site.

The company's homes' sustainable features include radiant heating, high-efficiency boilers, certified-sustainable woods and bamboo, low-flow fixtures, Energy Star appliances, natural lighting and healthier low VOC (volatile organic compounds) paints.

Blu Homes also moderates prices by asking buyers whether they want to incur the added costs of LEED inspections for certification instead of automatically including certification during construction.

These builders and dozens of others are creating a green revolution in factories that build houses. And buyers are finding modular homes can be comfortable, beautiful and easy on the environment.

# Lowly discards make lovely accessories

Until recently, eco-conscious fashionistas seeking fashionable, eco-friendly accessories were confined to raiding their moms' closets or rummaging through local thrift shops. Today's options are far from the hippie burlap and tie-dye set; Estethica at London Fashion Week and The GreenShows at New York Fashion Week each were developed to showcase eco-fashion alternatives.

"I think in general, fashion has been made to be pretty disposable; one season, it's in fashion, and the next, it's out," says Heather English, founder and CEO of English Retreads, a Boulder, Colo.-based handbag and vegan leather accessories company. "It's made to be like that; we're taught to be that way. I make products that have a lifetime guarantee; if it comes apart, we will fix it. We want to stay out of landfills. That's our main point."

"Sustainable products used to be specialty items, and I've watched as sustainable has become expected by the consumer and has become less a sub-category, and more the norm,"



*Photo courtesy of English Retreads*

says Kathleen Plate, founder of Smart Glass, an Atlanta-based company that has been featured at LA Fashion Week and at the Sundance Film Festival.

Aside from producing handcrafted, original designs with a timeless yet modern style, English Retreads and Smart Glass share even more basic DNA; both are part of a growing movement in sustainable and fashionable accessories.

Heather English started English Retreads ([www.englishretreads.com](http://www.englishretreads.com)) in 2002, after having searched and failed to find a fashionable vegan handbag. So she made a bag for herself from inner tube material taken from large truck tires. Others saw her bag and wanted their own. Before she knew it, she was in business. Today, she has an online store and sells her bad-girl chic handbags to some 100 boutiques across the country.

In addition to the bags, English's catalog includes belts and wallets and she plans to add covers for tablets and laptops this year.

If necessity is the mother of invention, it's also been the impetus for Smart Glass and English Retreads. Smart Glass' Kathleen Plate began her foray into eco-fashion in the mid-1990s when she wanted to make a gift for a friend for her birthday. Already accustomed to working with solder and

glass, she made a pair of stained-glass earrings. Soon after, word spread about her work and she began selling it at local arts and crafts fairs.

Most of the Smart Glass catalog features recycled glass bottles—including a specially licensed Coca-Cola line.

"Glass is so dynamic," Plate says. "I love creating and re-creating new ways to work with it. In the studio I'm always asking myself, 'What if we cut the bottle this way, what if we fire it this way, what will it do?' – trying to find new ways to work with the same materials."

"I have a few restaurants I have gotten on recycling programs for me and Coke sends me bottles," Plate says. "And when need be, yes, I Dumpster dive. Our studio looks like a giant frat party blew up inside of it!"

The handcrafted originals made by Smart Glass Jewelry exude hipness as well as simplicity, providing the perfect complement to a simple white T or an understated strapless number. In addition to jewelry, Smart Glass Jewelry (<http://smartglassjewelry.com>) has expanded to include custom home furnishings such as chandeliers, lamps and tablescape.

"I predict this trend will continue," says Smart Glass' Kathleen Plate, "and my hope would be as we evolve the physical products into more sustainable forms we (as businesses) will start to weave doing good on a humanitarian level into the picture – creating good products and doing good for others via our businesses."



*Photo courtesy of Smart Glass*



*Photo courtesy of English Retreads*

# In touch with our planet

Our relationship with water, air, plants and animals is depicted in the work of three artists chosen for this *Unity* issue focusing on sustainability. All three artists express their commitment, passion and interpretation of their relationship to our ecosystem through the themes and techniques they use. It is their sincere intent to bring a greater understanding and appreciation of the ecological world in which we live. The works of these three artists encourage an ongoing conversation about creativity, the environment and culture of communities and planet Earth as a whole.



*"In My Cage" by Ishita Bandyo*

## ISHITA BANDYO

Ishita Bandyo pursued her lifelong dream of becoming an artist and completed her bachelor of fine arts degree at Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts.

Bandyo's mixed-media collages often include text, which allow her to express more than what images or words can do alone. In "Falling Leaves," she uses text in poetic form and maple tree leaves and twigs that convey the seasonal change to fall. The gold metallic highlights enhance the surrounding boldness of rustic colors. "In My Cage" includes a background of recycled wallpaper with an overlay of screen door pieces. "The inspiration behind this work is assimilating various textures to make a cohesive work," Bandyo states. "The bird is a symbol of freedom."

Chinese lettering, molding paste, tea cloth and even Spackle make up Bandyo's "Hope," a painting inspired by spring and featured on *Unity's* cover. "Spring is the time for renewal and what can be more symbolic than a nest and home for the hatchlings made by its parents?" says Bandyo. This collage on handmade watercolor paper creates a perfect mix of texture and pattern.

Bandyo uses materials and "dug out objects" that she says no longer have value to the human eye. "By reusing these so called 'rejects,' I give my work a sense of history and continuity," says Bandyo. She believes her work helps the environment in a small way and connects with other humans using vibrant color and bold compositions.



*"Falling Leaves" by Ishita Bandyo*



*"Deluge II" by Paul Dacey*

## PAUL DACEY

Paul Dacey's mother recalls that he began to draw at the age of 2 and decided to become an artist when he was 6. It was happenstance when he found a sketchbook of his early drawings in his mother's basement and noticed a pronounced circle in each of those drawings. Hence, his work of multiple circular formats began at an early age. Dacey received his bachelor of fine arts from The Cleveland Institute of Art.



Dacey's piece, "Hell & High Water," (also the title of his exhibition in Japan) was inspired by a reproduction of an 18th-century, black-and-white painting he found in a Tokyo museum catalog. He states that its title comes from his belief that "the earth is overheating and the water level is rising." In this piece, Dacey uses Japanese imagery of medieval and modern times. "The dragon pensively looks up to the oversized sun and appears to be inundated in water," he explains. Dacey says this work explores our relationship to nature in the age of global warming.

During his stay at a Japanese inn, Dacey took photos of a wood grain table, spliced it together on his computer and created the entire pattern. After viewing an exhibit of Leonardo's Deluge series in Tokyo, he marveled at how the wood grain in his pattern looked like a storm and other elements playing a part in it. Dacey made drawings from the wood pattern to represent air, water and fire to produce the stunning images in "Deluge II."

Both pieces featured in this *Unity* issue are painted on recyclable plastic. "At some point," Dacey says, "I began thinking that I recycle imagery and began painting on plastic. I recycle, I reuse and I re-present as my process. Art is an act of giving." Dacey believes plastic embodies the culture we live in and it is "seminal" to his work.



"Hell & High Water" by Paul Dacey



"Tiptoe Thru the Tulips" by Elyse Taylor

## ELYSE TAYLOR

Elyse Taylor was born in Massachusetts and moved to New York from San Francisco to pursue a career in art. She worked as a graphic designer as she attended school for printmaking. Taylor set up a printing press in Brooklyn and printed her own work for many years. She remarks that over time, she began taking nature walks and discovered her love for wildlife and discarded objects.

"Tiptoe Thru the Tulips" celebrates Taylor's walks through Dead Horse Bay, a Brooklyn beach littered with thousands of pieces of broken glass, rusted metal and plastic. Some of those items are thought to be more than 100 years old. The whimsical body and twinkling eyes personify the beauty of Taylor's found treasures as it appears to move through the linear row of tulips made from cut-up sponges. Taylor states that her use of old pottery for the woman's clothing, flower vase and table, and depiction of growing plants in "Watering the Plant" show her love of nature and willingness to take care of it.

Taylor reveals that she is also fond of bird-watching. "My work celebrates found objects from my walks through wildlife and botanic garden areas. I am interested in our environment and express that interest through the materials I use in my work." Taylor is known for her "Growing" wall in front of her Brooklyn studio that consists of more than 700 panels that "continues to tell her life story."



"Watering the Plant" by Elyse Taylor

# Can it!

## The practice of preserving food gains new followers

Local food movement. Farmers markets. Community gardens.

Such are the buzzwords of our times. Add to those the words “home canning,” the process of preserving foods, fruits and vegetables by packing them in glass jars, then heating the jars to kill bacteria. Though canning has a long history, it’s experiencing a resurgence thanks to our nation’s interest in the aforementioned trends and a desire to improve health and nutrition.

Andrea Weigl, a food writer for the Raleigh News & Observer in North Carolina, got into canning about five years ago. She went to a local hardware store to purchase a canning pot, then had an experienced canner show her the ropes. She started with strawberry jam, then took on peaches and refrigerator pickles, followed by Jerusalem artichokes, a tasty and nutritious Southern tuber.

“It’s a lot of fun,” she attests. “For people who like to cook and be in the kitchen, there’s a real peace and rhythm to it,” she says.

Many say that the very process of canning intimidates



newbies. One of the misconceptions is that it’s complicated, when in fact it’s fairly simple. Most often, home canners use a Mason jar with a flat lid and screw ring. Pressure canners are ideal for achieving the proper temperature, which is key for killing microorganisms and preventing spoilage. Another concern many canners have is safety, and indeed, food poisoning is a risk if canning is done incorrectly. But canning is perfectly safe when it’s done properly, and the benefits are numerous.

“When I can in the summer, I’m thinking about Christmas and gifts I can give to people,” explains Weigl of her personal motivation to can. “Then there are people who are avid farmers-market shoppers all year-round, so they are putting stuff up to eat year round. They want the glory of strawberries and peaches in January and February.”

When canning is done properly, foods can be stored safely at room temperature for a year or longer, allowing people to enjoy the taste of fresh produce no matter the time of year. In addition to the ability to enjoy fresh foods long past harvest season, canning helps families control

what they consume. “People today are more interested in what goes into their food,” adds Weigl. “If you make pickles and preserves yourself, you’re controlling the amount of salt and sugar that goes into them.”

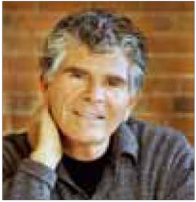
Not only does canning allow for the ultimate in quality control and preserve the fruits of an abundant harvest, it also preserves the past in a sense. Canning puts people in touch with a long-standing tradition and instills a sense of pride in the canner. And while some see canning as an expense, it is in fact a worthy investment, one that many sources say will save you money in the long run. The extra produce and food can be eaten year round and don’t have to be discarded when spoilage occurs.

For those who are ready to embrace home canning, it’s easy to get up to speed on safe canning practices. Keep in mind that what worked for our grandparents won’t necessarily work today, so it’s important to find a reputable source of information. Home canning course offerings are springing up across the nation, and The National Center for Home Food Preservation, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has a wealth of information available online.

From there? “Start with freezer jam,” Weigl says, who recommends strawberry jam. “There are freezer jam containers with a recipe on the back of the box. Freezer jam is a great gateway to home canning. Start there and then you can make the leap.”



# Cultivating a taste for righting food wrongs



Oran Hesterman  
Photo © Douglas  
Elbinger 2010

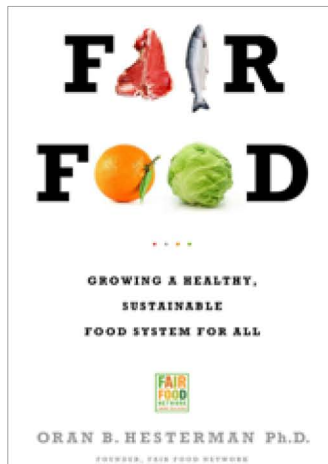
"Everyone should have the right to healthy food, just as they should have the right to a good education for their children and access to adequate health care," says Oran Hesterman, founder and CEO of the nonprofit Fair Food organization ([www.fairfood.org](http://www.fairfood.org)). "Fair food is food grown in a way that is environmentally friendly, that is healthy and that provides for the economic well-being of everybody in the system, from production to processing to distribution."

In Hesterman's book, "Fair Food," he explains how our current system of farming and distribution is broken, how we can act as individual consumers to improve the system, and how we can become activists in public policy and distribution practices. He goes beyond finding a simplistic explanation of the current problems to providing practical ways for readers to make a difference for everyone.

Hesterman holds two degrees in agronomy from the University of California at Davis and a Ph.D. in agronomy and business from the University of Michigan, St. Paul. For 15 years he was program director for Food Systems at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. He has published more than 400 articles and papers on agronomy and food systems and

policy, and taught in the crop and soil sciences department at Michigan State University in East Lansing.

"It's really important that each of us take personal responsibility," Hesterman says, "and the reason I wrote the book is because I believe the changes we need to make in the food system are so important and so big that we need to make the shift from conscious consumer to engaged citizen ... we need to start becoming what I call fair 'food activists' or 'solutionaries.'"



Like others who have written on the subject, Hesterman begins by showing that many people in our country do not have access to healthy food. He points out places like urban Detroit, where the last major supermarkets closed in 2007, leaving corner quick marts and gas stations as the primary sources of groceries.

In the first section of "Fair Food," Hesterman shows how current large-

farm practices and distribution systems are wearing out the soil, delivering less nutritious food, putting most profits in the hands of distributors and driving small farmers out of business. The second section, "Principles of a Fair Food System," demonstrates the benefits of sustainable farming practices, including diversifying crops and integrating good land practices with meat production. He encourages buying from local food retailers and, whenever possible, directly from local growers.

The book's third section, however, goes beyond the usual consumer-oriented recommendations to move a "Conscientious Consumer to (become an) Engaged Citizen." Using his knowledge of business strategies and public policy decisions, Hesterman encourages readers to change our system of tax subsidies, and support programs and public policies in ways that will promote local farms, food co-ops and healthy eating practices on college campuses and in public schools.

"I wrote the book for someone who may just have a couple hours a week to put into making better choices in their own home, in their communities and in the neighborhoods where they live," Hesterman says. "I wrote the book for people who see themselves putting some of their life passion and energy into the fair food issue. ... I also wrote this for people who want to create policies that are going to enable everyone to have access to healthy food and that are going to help farmers reduce the toxic load to the environment and also save our soil."

In "Fair Food," Hesterman invites readers to share his passion and turn it into a way of life.

## Quick Sautéed Greens (locally available winter, spring, fall)

*This recipe is an example of Oran Hesterman's advice to "Eat seasonally. Shop locally."*

1-3 tablespoons shortening or butter    1-3 cloves garlic, chopped (to taste)  
 ¼ -1 whole onion, chopped                Salt and pepper  
 About 4 cups raw spinach or other tender greens

Heat shortening in pan, sauté garlic and onion (if desired). Add spinach to hot pan and toss until just wilted, or cook greens 5 minutes (as needed for tenderness).

**Yield:** 4 servings



# Talk about sweat equity!

Pollution, plus ozone and climate change all have negative effects on our environment and health. It's ironic, then, that the very activities we undertake to better ourselves from inside out could possibly create even more health hazards in the form of increased pollution.

The good news is that exercisers at gyms across the country are working up more than a sweat – they're also taking a bite out of the gyms' actual energy use.

In Hong Kong, Australia, the United States and Europe, sustainable gyms are opening, using generators connected to exercise bikes and treadmills to power themselves and harnessing energy from members' workouts. According to [www.ecoearth.com](http://www.ecoearth.com), an information portal on environmental issues, one person spending an hour a day running on a specially adapted treadmill could generate 18.2 kilowatts of electricity, preventing 4,280 liters of carbon dioxide from being released per year.



Green Microgym owner Adam Boesel rides a retrofitted stationary bicycle, which captures exerciser-generated energy. Photo courtesy of Green Microgym

Green Fitness Studio in Brooklyn, N.Y., and Green Microgym in Portland, Ore., both opened in 2010, are among this growing movement. New York-based Equinox, a boutique fitness



Yoga students work out on Green Fitness Studio's living roof that acts as natural insulation for the Brooklyn, N.Y., facility. Photo courtesy of Green Fitness Studio

chain with locations in seven states and Washington, D.C., has also taken steps at its clubs to reduce water use and use eco-friendly products where possible.

Green Microgym owner Adam Boesel says the concept is popular with its members. "Not only are you doing the one thing that can reduce your risk of death by disease by 50 percent, but your effort is also contributing to making the world a better place," Boesel says. "Also, our energy-saving culture is based on member control of their environment (fans, TVs, lights, etc.), making for a far more personalized member experience."

"The concept is very indicative of the Bushwick neighborhood (in Brooklyn) itself and fulfills the need for a facility that embraces the meaning of wellness on multiple levels such as physically and environmentally," says Cheryl Martinetti, a Green Fitness Studio representative. "This is a community largely comprised of artists and creative individuals that tend to believe in accountability and sustainability when it comes to the planet. It only makes sense that there's a (fitness) facility that applauds and embraces that healthy lifestyle."

From the minute you rack your bicycle at Green Fitness Studio until

your post-workout shower, you're part of the solution, promoting the three Rs of green living – reduce, recycle and reuse.

"The bike rack we manufactured is made from old bike we took out of the landfill in Brooklyn, says Barry Borgen, one of the gym's owners. "All the equipment is remanufactured. However, the steel was blasted and powder coated in Bushwick (zero VOCs, or volatile organic compounds)." Aside from the gym's refurbished LifeFitness treadmills, Green Fitness' other equipment is entirely self-powered.

Other green initiatives include:

- Sustainable flooring including bamboo and recycled rubber in group fitness studios and workout areas.
- A living room that acts as natural insulation and helps to lower heating and air-conditioning costs.
- Bathroom areas featuring energy-saving infrared saunas as well as water-conserving toilets, faucets and showerheads.
- Heat-mirrored glass in the atrium to reduce cooling and heating costs, added solar panels and repurposed windows taken from an old Manhattan hospital.
- Locally sourced organic and sustainable foods for the gym's Verde Juice Bar.