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Interview: Gurit Magen of Junktion

by Who'd Have Thought? on September 24, 2013



Telephone Clock by Junktion

Upcycling creativity knows no bounds with Tel Aviv- based designer Gurit Magen. An architect by profession, Gurit felt there was more to life than designing buildings and five years ago launched [Junktion](#), where she transforms vintage junk into practical, useful pieces. It seems there is nothing she can't re-purpose. Jerry cans become mailboxes, old television sets become storage cupboards, olive cans become magazine holders, bicycles become chairs, a roller shade becomes a bench. You name it, she pretty much does it!

I first discovered [Junktion](#) when I was looking around for a suitable image to use on the [Contact page](#) of our store website – the three old phones-turned-desk lamps are so much fun – and so I decided to find out more about the brains behind the designs.



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Gurit Magen founder and designer of Junktion

Please introduce yourself. What is your background and how did you end up starting Junktion?

I have a degree in architecture and during my years studying I asked myself if this is exactly what I would like to do. After graduating I spend some time in architecture firms and used this time to form a clearer understanding of what it is that I like and enjoy doing, and where it is I'd like to go next.

I founded Junktion in 2008. Since then I've been working, wondering and growing with it and hope to do so for years to come.



Gas canisters upcycled into baskets by Junktion

Where do the ideas come from? For example, do you find an old item and then wonder how it could be re-purposed?

The idea for a new design always comes from the raw material: junk. When I see or find a new object – well, old, usually, but new to me – that I like or find interesting I immediately start asking myself: what does it want to be /become, what can this object be now that it has been thrown away? How can I give it a second life?

I never just get an idea without it being connected to an object; they are tied together.

Sometimes I know as soon as I see the object and sometimes it can take weeks, months and even years in some cases before I get the one idea I know is right for that specific object.



Giant Wine Cork Stool made from 100% cork

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Has any piece been more challenging to make than you had first thought? If so, explain.

Yes, absolutely. I can never really know how much work a specific design will take to complete until it's done. I have already learnt that there is no real way to anticipate it but this still keeps surprising me. Some designs seem very simple and quick to manufacture but while working on them I encounter problems and challenges I did not foresee. On the other hand, I am sometimes surprised by how easy or simple it was to work on other designs. For some designs I need months of inner processing until they reach an operational stage and with others it is a matter of just seeing the object and I already know.



How cute! A barrel crib with paper bird mobile

Explain how sustainability and re-use is important to you and how you work.

These notions are very important to me and are the foundations to my work. As I said, my work begins with an object that has finished its first role, or life, and has been thrown away. Without this object there is no idea, no learning process, no design. I must admit that sustainability and re-use are in fact a result or an outcome of my working processes and not their main goal. It so happened that I am drawn to these kinds of aesthetics. I am, of course, pleased that my designs also serve a bigger purpose than just being.

What inspires you?

It's hard for me to define exactly. It is a very big word 'inspiration' and I'm not sure that it is only an external thing. I do need an outer trigger (like junk) to get me started. Another thing that I always find fascinating and fulfilling is watching craftsmen work.

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When you're not re-purposing, re-designing, upcycling what do you like to do?

Ah ... tough questions. Most probably wandering around flea markets around the world looking for old items that are no longer needed and thinking what they can now become.

Have you ever had a 'who'd have thought?' moment?

Actually I think this is one of the basics of my way of thinking and looking at things.

I look at objects and think from this angle. How can I take this object out of its original context and look at it and make you look at it and use it in a whole new way. I am trying to maintain the object's original form so that it is still familiar and recognisable, but at the same time is transformed into something else. I hear this reaction from visitors coming to the studio quite often: 'Wow, who would have thought ...'







Double bicycle table and chairs

Thanks Gurit! And please pop on over to [Junktion](#) to see more of what she creates – it's amazing!



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