

DIY crafts: Never underestimate the power of googly eyes or the potential of hidden treasures in home cleanups

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Fragile beauty out of Japanese paper

Terri Wong, 65, Sunset District

I recently cleaned out my studio and â??foundâ?• a stash of sheets of Washi (Japanese paper) that my daughter and I collected over the years to make origami boxes. I also found dried leaves my daughterâ??s grandmother sent her 30 years ago.

Inspired by fiber artist and weaver Kay Sekimachi, I decided to make washi paper bowls. Sekimachin is known for her three-dimensional woven monofilament hangings and intricate baskets and bowls. She also created baskets of linen warp ends and rice paper.

(Traditional Washi is fine paper made from fibers of the Gampi Tree, the Misumata Shrub, the Mulberry bush, Bamboo, Hemp, Rice and other natural materials. The fibers, bark, flower petals and other inclusions provide great texture and character.)

I looked around my house to see what I could use as molds. I started with porcelain bowls that a friend made me, then a gorgeous glass bowl my stepson gave me, and ended with my Dadâ??s favorite soup bowl.

I even used skeleton leaves to form a translucent candle holder. Each time I unmold a piece, I am in awe of how translucent and fragile they are.

EDITORâ??S NOTE: See our profile on textile artist Terri Wong here.


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â??Feel-goodâ?? wearables out of craft novelty items

Sue Nichols, 65, Potrero Hill

Feel-good stuff. Thatâ??s what I decided to call all the earring and pins â?? some homemade â?? I started to wear at work. I had been a waitress at the legendary Buena Vista Cafe, home of the Irish Coffee, for five to 10 years when on my way to work one day I stopped into a novelty store at Ghiradelli Square.

I saw these red plastic, maraschino cherry earrings hanging on a stand and they just made me smile. They looked so realistic, I thought it would be fun to wear them while serving customers their Whiskey Sours or Manhattans.

But they hung in my locker for almost a year, I bet. I must have been more self-conscious than I realized; in retrospect, they seemed silly. But one Friday afternoon rooting through my overstuffed locker, I came upon then and thought, â??Why havenâ??t I worn those? Theyâ??re so fun.â?? So I put them on, thinking â??letâ??s hit the floor and get the party started.â??

I instantly got such a positive reaction and so many comments, I knew I was on to something. Next up was a â??No Whiningâ?? pin. Nobody likes a whiner and it was quickly confirmed by all who saw it. I was immediately offered money for the pin.

So, I ordered more and quickly let the bidding begin. People with a drink or two in them and an audience to cheer them on will outbid each other for the prize. People wanted them for their co-workers, wives, kids.

The payoff was the laughs

The laugh, it turns out, is what I craved â?? as much as the tip. Then I was motivated to look for things I could wear that would make me smile, knowing it would do the same for others. I saw some small disco balls in a craft store and made them into earrings. You never know what will appeal to whoever. Little boys and kids were fascinated by them, not to mention anyone who came of age or participated in the dancing of that era.

Holidays and sporting events are naturals for feel-good stuff. I began scouring craft stores for lightweight items that I could turn into earrings. I put googly eyes on plastic pumpkins. I put them on little felt rabbits. I put them on small plastic easter eggs. One of my biggest sellers were tiny St. Patrickâ??s Day hats made of styrofoam and covered with green glitter â?? and googly eyes. I put googly eyes and Giants stickers on plastic baseballs. Put googly eyes on just about anything and you can get a laugh.

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I also made pins, barrettes, pins and necklaces. During 49ers games I strung footballs from red and gold streamers.

Iâ??d wear all these at various times at work, and people would ask if I had more. I did: a stash in my apron. Sometimes I put a selection on the table and let people look them over. I always sold out.

Teachers were big consumers. Corporate businessmen, in town for one conference or another, would buy them for their wives and kids. My sister, who works for a big company, said sheâ??d use them to boost morale among her team. The name of these items was born when I blurted out in describing them to her, â??You know, feel-good stuff.â?•

But apparently there was one audience I was missing out on. One night, a gay customer asked if I had any clip-ons. When I said â??no,â?? he said â??Honey, youâ??re missing out on a huge market.â?•

It was a market I didnâ??t have the chance to exploit. Covid-19 came along and Iâ??m exploring other ways to feel good.

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