

Museum of Craft and Design

PLASTIC BAG FUSION



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Museum visitors and staff alike have been intrigued by a video of Tomas Saraceno's [Becoming Aerosolar](#) (2014), included in [Survival Architecture and the Art of Resilience](#). The work is described as "a flying museum," as new bags are added to the work in each city it travels to. [The artist](#) imagines the piece as a visualization of "a scalable process to re-pattern atmospheric dwelling and politics, through an open-source ecology of practices, models and data assembly."

Use the delivery bags you have piling up alongside simple household materials and tools to experiment with creating fused plastic fabric to be used in everything from a coin purse, to jacket patches, or a kite!



RECOMMENDED AGE/SKILL LEVEL:

Recommended for ages 12 and up. Adult supervision required for ironing.

MATERIALS

- Number 2 plastic bags (find this number with a bag's recycling symbol. Number 2 bags will be quite thin) in whatever color you have. Brown or opaque white bags work well.
- Iron and ironing board
- Parchment paper (2 sheets)
- Scissors
- *Optional:* ruler



PLASTIC BAG FUSION

INSTRUCTIONS

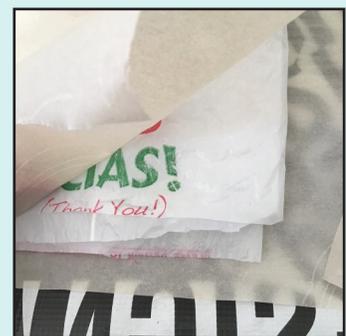
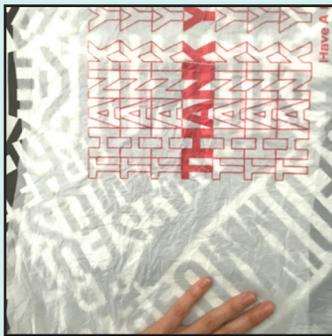
- Collect at least 4 plastic bags with a number 2 symbol. The sky's the limit—if you'd like to make complex or large art with your bags, keep going!

Note: Clear plastic bags aren't recommended, but will work.

- Clean bags, removing any dirt or crumbs.
 - Trim off the bottom and handles of bags.
- No need to be exact - you will be trimming more later.



- Beginning with one bag, smooth it flat. Then fold the bag in half.
- Repeat above step with a second bag.
- Layer the two bags on top of one another; they will be fused together.
- Make sure that any blank surface, pictures, or text you'd like on the outside is visible, adjusting as needed.



- Heat your iron to the linen setting. You will not need steam.
- Place one sheet of parchment paper on your ironing board, then stack your plastic bags on top. Finish with the second sheet of parchment paper on top, sandwiching the bags together.

PLASTIC BAG FUSION

- Make sure that no plastic is sticking out the edges of the parchment paper, trimming as needed. You don't want the plastic to stick to your surface or iron.
- **Check that you are in a well-ventilated area near windows or a fan**, to avoid any inhalation of heated plastic.



- Starting in the middle of where your bags are placed, move the heated iron fairly quickly and evenly over the entire bag surface. It should start to shrink and distort very quickly - just keep trying to apply heat evenly all over.
- Don't set the iron in one place for too long.
- When you can see that the bag has stopped shrinking, flip over the entire packet of parchment paper and bags.
- Apply the iron evenly to the opposite side of the bag, again moving quickly over the full surface.
- When the bag appears flat and no longer shrinking, turn off your iron and let the project cool for at least 3 minutes. **Be careful not to touch the hot plastic or parchment too soon.** The parchment paper will start to separate from the bag.
- Remove your fused plastic and check out the results! You may find small holes and will certainly see new folds and texture in your bag.



PLASTIC BAG FUSION

- Cut your material into shapes of your choice, decorating with a sharpie for a card, ornament, or bookmark, or keep going to produce more fused plastic to be used in larger sewing projects (sewing instructions below).



SAMPLE PROJECT: CARD OR COIN PURSE

- Repeat the fusing process with two more bags. You can reuse your parchment paper.
- One you have two fused layers, use a ruler to measure equal sizes, and cut them into equally sized shapes.
- For design inspiration, think of jean pockets, coin purses, and more!
- Tape or clip the two sides together to hold them still while you're sewing.

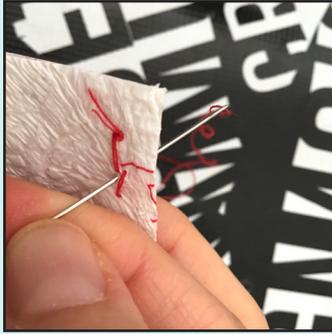


- Thread a small, sharp needle with standard thread in a color of your choice.
- Sew around the outer layer of your purse. We used a sturdy [backstitch](#). You can find additional stitch options [here](#).
- For simple corners as shown, reinforce your stitches by overlaying them more closely and following the edge of the bag.
- Tie a knot as you finish the thread. You may also make a double backstitch at the ends for extra strength.

Once you've stitched the perimeter of the sides and bottom of your bag, you're done!

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PLASTIC BAG FUSION



- Optional handles ideas:
 - Cut three long strips of plastic from another plastic bag. Braid these to create a handle, cutting and braiding in new strips as needed. If desired, wrap embroidery floss around the braid for extra color or to strengthen it.
 - Fuse two more bags and cut out two small handles, one for each side of the purse.
- Sew on your handles in any stitch you choose. Have fun with the stitches - they will be very visible! Alternately, hot glue your handles on.



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