

# ***Anne Savageau***

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## ***Bags Across the Globe: Bagging the Waste for a Sustainable Future***

Today we face unprecedented threats to our environment. One of these threats comes from the wholesale use of plastic shopping bags around the world: it is estimated that 500 billion to one trillion plastic bags are used and discarded each year. These bags do not biodegrade; many end up in waterways and oceans where they injure or kill untold numbers of wildlife. A second environmental threat is the vast quantity of textiles discarded each year. It is estimated that 2.5 billion pounds of post-consumer textiles are discarded each year in the United States alone.

To address these two issues I have launched BAG, short for Bags Across the Globe. This project is conceived as a global collaborative piece, or what contemporary artist-activists call an "intervention", in which the artist carries out an action in the public sphere. As a global exchange of useful shopping bags, BAG serves as both a conceptual and functional work.

The goals of BAG are to involve people in many countries in a global dialogue, in order to raise awareness of these issues, and to promote the use of reusable cloth bags. BAG is thus part of the global effort to reduce, re-use and recycle.

BAG takes a stand against the excesses of consumer culture and the glorification of high-priced luxury items such as designer bags. BAG proclaims that stylish, one-of-a-kind bags are accessible to anyone, regardless of income. These bags will be exchanged as free gifts, reflecting traditional cultures' practice of exchanging gifts to cement relationships. BAG is more about an exchange of energy and information than about an exchange of objects: the bags function as vehicles for this exchange. It will encourage other people to take up this effort, create their own bags out of local waste materials, and share them with others.

BAG has involved Design student interns from its inception. They have helped create the blog, bags, postcard and fact sheets. Their involvement is an important part of this project and has raised their awareness of their role as designers in addressing environmental issues.

Each bag contains a postcard made out of recycled paper with the logo BAG and space for the recipients to write a message and a sheet with facts about the environmental damage caused by plastic bags and textile waste. Recipients will use one bag for shopping. They will in turn send the second bag to a friend in another country, to do the same, so the bag project will leapfrog across the globe. All recipients will send me their postcards with a message, and a photo of themselves holding the bag. The link on my website ([annsavageau.com](http://annsavageau.com)) that will grow and develop as participants return their cards and photos.

The BAG project will be shown as a gallery installation when the process is complete. I plan for the installation to travel to several countries and involve people in each venue in workshops to create shopping bags out of locally available materials.