

Our reader maker... Recycle and write

Reader **Almie Louis** talks us through her adventures in upcycling



See Almie's inspiring arts and crafts ideas at grandrecycler.com

Having your own book published is certainly no mean feat, but to have your publication released at the same time as setting up a website and being a mother to three children is incredibly impressive. This is what Homemaker reader Almie Louis did and the story behind her success is fascinating.

"I was brought up on a South African farm and attended boarding school. It was during the school holidays that my mother introduced me to nearly every form of craft and my love for it grew over the years." Although always creatively minded, Almie's parents encouraged her to pursue a professional grounding and so she is also a qualified lawyer, and practised until she had her first child.

RETURN TO CRAFT

It was when her third child started school that Almie found her way back to crafting. "I joined my children's fundraising committee and had to think creatively to raise money. With little school funds, I took charge of the recycling craft-markets and it was a sold-out event for four years."

It was during this process that Almie made enough project samples to put together a book and subsequently *From Drab to Fab* was born. But with so many craft shops around, what was it that made Almie choose to create a book rather than sell her pieces? She explains, "My mother and mother-in-law taught me most of the techniques without written references. They had so much to share but couldn't always recall the detailed instructions. With this in mind I decided to ensure that I put as much information I could in written form to pass on to my children."

Both *From Drab to Fab* and Almie's website, The Grand Recycler, are packed full of ideas for transforming neglected and unwanted objects into masterpieces, from upcycled coffee cups to refurbished hanging baskets. Almie says she finds inspiration wherever she goes, particularly within nature. "I appreciate all decorating styles and like to take the part I enjoy most from each and combine them, mixing the old with the new." Almie features a lot of her work in her own house and believes upcycling for the home is becoming increasingly popular. "People care about recycling and the

environment, plus there's the added bonus of being able to say they have created something beautiful from a discarded object."

FAMILY FIRST

Publishing a book and running a website can take up a lot of time, but by allocating accordingly Almie makes it work. "My first priority is my family, but I always make sure to update my online pages and am constantly jotting down ideas. I find I feel energised when I make or plan something creative. The website especially takes up a lot of time but my advice is to just do it and not think too much about what can go wrong – learn as you walk." From making and photographing her projects to approaching publishers and signing contracts, Almie's book was two years in the making and proved to be a roaring success after the publishers sold more than half of the copies in the first quarter. And Almie's not stopping there, hoping that 2015 will bring two more book contracts with European publishers. We'll be keeping our eyes peeled!

Download Almie's book, *From Drab to Fab* (Struik Random House, Penguin), on your Kindle at amazon.co.uk



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