

What You Should Really Do With That Water Bottle



In Flushing, *Relight Your Recyclables* gives new meaning to the earth-unfriendly water bottle.

Lin Shih-Pao has a penchant for transforming utilitarian objects into thought-provoking public art. So far, in Japan he's made a Christmas tree out of 200,000 used pacifiers, and his "Gate of Wisdom," appearing at Expo 2005 in Aichi, incorporated 300,000 used pens. For his next project, based in Flushing, he's set his sights on the controversial plastic water bottle.

By now it's common knowledge that we should be sipping our water on-the-run from reusable BPA-free bottles whenever possible. Still, a discarded bottle of Poland Springs rolling around on a 7 train platform is unfortunately not an uncommon visual. To raise awareness of the wasteful tendencies still pervading the city, Lin is in the midst of

creating *Relight Your Recyclables* - organized and curated by the office of councilman Peter Koo, the Flushing Chinese Business Association, Crossing Art, and New Inspiration Care - a 28' tree comprised of recycled water bottles, 10,000 LED lights, and wire armature.

Taiwan-bred Lin, a Crossing Art gallery artist, is spending the rest of the month, with the assistance of students from Flushing-area schools, hunkered down in a studio at the Flushing Mall (133-31 39th Avenue) to build the public sculpture; when the tree is complete, it will be unveiled, celebrated with a festive tree-lighting ceremony, and on display throughout the hectic holiday season down the street at Queens Crossing (136-17 39th Avenue).

"We have gathered 500 bottles already," says Lin, who began tackling the installation last weekend. "We will stop when we have 5,000. The best part is that everyone can help with this; it's truly a community project."

While the bottles, refashioned into inventive ornaments, are meant to make a visual impression, they are ultimately designed to engage visitors, and challenge them to make more environmentally conscious decisions, whether saying no to a plastic bag proffered by a CVS cashier, or seeking out the recycling bin when it's time to toss out a bottle of Chardonnay.

Impending lifestyle changes aside, the easiest way to contribute to the tree, says Lin, is by dropping off empty water bottles (at Flushing Mall and Queens Crossing from 10:30 a.m. - 8 p.m., daily until November 30). On Saturdays and Sundays, stick around to catch a glimpse of Lin at work in his open studio before filling up at the mall's Asian food court.

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