



posh pouches

Being eco-conscious need not mean stifling your design desires

Designer Irvan Damon and brand expert Gabriella Alberoni, the brains behind design label Carbon d'AFreeque, are on a mission. By transforming old PVC billboards – that would otherwise be clogging up landfill sites – into bright and funky laptop bags, statement-making clutches and eye-catching carry-alls, the dynamic duo aims to 'save the planet, one bag at a time'.

Designed to withstand blinding sunlight and blistering cold, and to shrug off wind, hail and rain, PVC billboards live a short life as roadside distraction before ending up on garbage dumps, where they do not biodegrade. Aside from transforming them into bold and sassy accessories for planet-friendly fashionistas, Irvan and Gabriella have worked with big-name brands like Toyota, Virgin Mobile and Tanqueray gin to create shop-fittings and marketing material out of the billboards that once advertised their own products, giving these billboard 'skins' the chance of a second life.

The dynamic duo also leads the Jo'burg arm of Green Drinks (www.greendrinks.org), a social networking group for like-minded 'greenies', and hosts 'Hybrid Living', a new local eco-lifestyle television show. With the branding options seemingly limitless, Gabriella and Irvan are brimming over with ideas. Next on the agenda is a collaborative effort with interiors expert Tanja Tomaz of Onyx Interiors, which will see design pieces like Louis chairs and ottomans upholstered in retired billboards. We've no doubt this project will give renewed impetus to the innovators' ideal, 'To make the planet a cleaner, greener place – in style'. □

Carbon d'AFreeque, 011-465-8801, www.carbonfree.co.za

Q+A WITH GABRIELLA

The best advice you've ever received?

Affirm the positive and ignore the negative.

Your favourite green product? Other

than our handbags, my solar-powered mobile phone charger.

The biggest challenge facing eco

entrepreneurs? Changing people's perceptions. Going green does not mean you have to give up the finer things in life.

Your secret green address? Although www.springwise.com is not dedicated only to green inventions and innovations, it's amazing to see how an eco-consciousness is inspiring creativity around the globe.

How are you lightening your carbon footprint? By getting my complex to sign up with Resolution Recycling (011-618-2246).

Q+A WITH IRVAN

If you could invent a green gadget?

It would be a mobile phone made almost entirely out of bamboo.

Your dream project? I would love to collaborate with Philippe Starck to create the sexiest green boutique hotel.

In your little green address book?

You'll find Marc Lottering and Helen Zille, our local eco champions.

The big green trend for 2008? There will be a change in the definition of ultimate luxury – people are aspiring to using planet-friendly products.

