

# You can do it

## Channel your creativity with these recession-proof projects

BY LINDA M. CASTELLITTO

DIY has never been hotter. Thanks to the rise of hipster culture and the fall of the economy, crafting is uber-cool. Really, why pay for a pricey photo album, lamp or tote bag when a handmade one is personalized—and priceless? This sextet of new books offers inspiration, instructions and ideas aplenty. Craft on!

### A new perspective on paper

In her introduction to **Home, Paper, Scissors: Decorative Paper Accessories for the Home** (Potter Craft, \$19.95, 144 pages, ISBN 9780307452825), Patricia Zapata confesses to a strong affinity for paper. So strong, in fact, that she collects all manner of colors, textures and types, but can't bring herself to write on any of the precious pages. She can, however, create with them, and her book offers projects suitable for a wide range of tastes and skill-levels. How-tos (including photos, materials lists, patterns, and time-estimates) cover Decorating, Entertaining and Gifting, from a Fluttering Mobile to Mosaic Place Mats to a Pocket Photo Album. This lovely book is perfect for crafters looking to explore an inexpensive new medium.



### A bevy of bags

By now, thanks to increased eco-awareness, most of us have purchased a few canvas totes—and maybe even remember to use them at the grocery store. With **Sew What! Bags: 18 Pattern-Free Projects You Can Customize to Fit Your Needs** (Storey, \$16.95, 151 pages, ISBN 9781603420921), crafting veterans and amateurs alike can go a step further by designing and making their own totes, plus 17 other bag-esque projects. Author Lexie Barnes puts her experience as a handbags and accessories designer to work in this great guide, which includes detailed instructions, inspiring photos and plenty of you-can-do-it encouragement. Spot-on tips for hemming, choosing fabric and breaking out of the pattern mold help ensure this book is a crafter's delight.



### Dress up your dorm room

If Theresa Gonzalez and Nicole Smith have anything to say about it, dorm rooms will no longer be drab. Rather than view a 200-square-foot space as a bland box, they urge, "Think of it as a creative challenge." And instead of fighting the arrival of the inevitable concrete block, view it as a bed-booster and a "cute bookend that you adapt into a cinderblock cozy." While **Dorm Decor: Remake Your Space with**

**More Than 35 Projects** (Chronicle, \$19.95, 132 pages, ISBN 9780811863476) mainly uses the feminine pronoun when addressing readers, guys would do well to check out the book as well; the sleek, Jonathan Adler-esque Stone's Throw Pillow; the witty Oh Dear, Deer Head; and the ever-useful Laundry Day Backpack are just a few examples of projects that will appear to dorm-dwellers of either sex. The book (spiral-bound, with full-color photos) is organized by function, such as sleep, dress and hang out. This is one book enterprising crafters won't mind studying.

### Making the past present, through linens

EllynAnne Geisel knows her vintage linens. In **The Kitchen Linens Book: Using, Sharing, and Cherishing the Fabric of Our Daily Lives** (Andrews McMeel, \$19.99, 152 pages, ISBN 978074077763-9) she writes and rhapsodizes about tablecloths, hot pads, towels and more. A devoted fabric collector, she writes, "My vintage kitchen linens, like my aprons, speak of past generations, but they also inspire me to think of future gatherings." To that end, Geisel provides instructions for fabric care, embellishing linens, packing a picnic and making a proper pot of tea. She also shares other linen aficionados' touching stories and remembrances. There are recipes, too, and a vintage Butterick transfer pattern is tucked in the back. The author's knowledge of and love for fabric artifacts is evident—and infectious—in this enjoyable read, which surely will inspire readers to look at linens from bygone days with renewed respect and appreciation.



### Delicious creativity

From biscotti to fudge to preserves to spiced olives, **Christ-**

**mas Gifts from the Kitchen** (Oxmoor House, \$18.95, 112 pages, ISBN 9780848732950) is just the book for creative types who like to bestow delicious homemade presents on family and friends. Traditional recipes—kugelhupf (a fruit-and-nut cake), gingerbread and macaroons—mingle with more unusual ones, including Pine Nut Brittle, Candied Grapefruit Peel and Lemon Spice Olives. Foodwriter and farmer Georgeann Brennan provides gift-packaging ideas as well, such as glittery cones to hold candy, a teacup-as-cookie-holder and a bread board as the foundation for packaging a cake. Readers likely will want to dive into these recipes—and begin taste-testing—right away.

### T-shirt transformation redux

When it comes to t-shirts, Megan Nicolay is a seemingly tireless innovator. In her follow-up to the popular *Generation T: 108 Ways to Transform a T-shirt*, the author has come up with ideas for scarves, oven mitts, dresses, baby booties—and of course, a selection of t-shirts with a twist. In **Generation T: Beyond Fashion: 120 New Ways to Transform a T-shirt** (Workman, \$15.95, 244 pages, ISBN 9780761154105), witty titles (Pom-Pom Circumstance for a toddler's hat, Love it or Weave It for a crisscross tank top) share space with step-by-step instructions, line drawings, variations and photos of people and pets wearing the creations. Projects such as a

wine cozy, pet bed, plant hanger and car floor mats up the DIY ante, but tutorials on tying, stitching and laundering—plus no-sew options—will boost beginners' confidence. Thanks to the projects' low-cost raw materials (t-shirts the crafter is already hoarding, scissors and a needle and thread) they offer crafters a recession-proof way to perk up a wardrobe, add some oomph to household décor or give thoughtful and personalized gifts. *Generation T: Beyond Fashion* is a t-shirt-transformation sourcebook that crafters will refer to again and again. ♡

Linda M. Castellitto has plans for her stack of concert t-shirts.



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