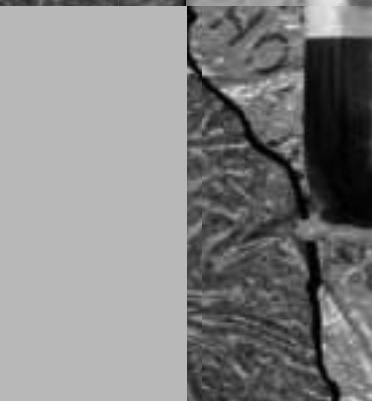


Use It Again



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The Vege Car

by Peter Stevens

Who hasn't grumbled every time they pull into a service station? The Macdonald family of Palmerston North isn't worried about the price of petrol. When their tank is empty, they just pour in vegetable oil – the kind that takeaway shops use for frying their chips. And yes, the Macdonalds can even drive their car on vegetable oil after it's been used for cooking – thanks to Dad, James nui Macdonald.





Around three years ago, James nui decided it was time to build a car that didn't need petrol. It wasn't just to save money. James wanted to protest against the war in Iraq, which he believes is partly about powerful countries like the United States wanting oil from the Middle East. James nui, who is Ngā Puhi and Ngāti Whātua, also likes the fact that his car is in keeping with traditional Māori values. These place great importance on caring for the natural world – and driving a car that doesn't put harmful gases into the air is a great start. As James nui says, “Vegetable oil is 100 percent environmentally friendly – and it's recycled!”



Harmful Gases

Driving a car that runs on petrol puts harmful gases into the air. These include carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, nitric oxide, nitrogen dioxide, and hydrocarbons.

Why are they harmful? Because they cause health problems, such as asthma and cancer, and they are responsible for climate change.

In New Zealand, about 40 percent of our carbon dioxide emissions comes from vehicles, mostly people's cars.



For now, James nui is keeping the details of his work a secret, although the idea of running a vehicle on cooking oil isn't new. In 1893, a man named Rudolf Diesel designed an engine that could run on vegetable oil – peanut oil, to be exact. Diesel engines are still around, but most now run on crude oil ... the stuff that James nui wants to avoid.



After many hours of work, James’s persistence paid off, and his family was able to drive about in what they call the “vege car”. The Macdonalds were hugely impressed with their environmentally friendly vehicle; other people weren’t so sure. “It’s great – but is it reliable?” they all wanted to know.

To prove that their vege car was as good as any other car, James had an idea. Why not drive from one end of the country to the other? That way, he could show off his car and teach people about cleaner, cheaper fuels at the same time. James also wanted to show that a car like his could be made in Aotearoa.

The Macdonald family thought James's idea was awesome. His eldest son, James iti, had one question: "Can I come, too?" James iti had been interested in the car from the start, making lots of helpful suggestions, so his dad couldn't really say no. In April 2006, the two set off from Bluff, at the very bottom of Te Waipounamu. Their mission: to reach Cape Rēinga at the tip of Te Ika-a-Māui.



The places shown in red are where the Macdonalds stayed.





The two didn't have a great start. The car was damaged while it was being transported south. "Staying up and working through the night to fix the fuel system was a real low-point," says James nui. But once they were on the road, the rest of the trip was smooth sailing ... perhaps a little too smooth. Somewhere between Christchurch and Blenheim, James nui got a speeding ticket! "I was a little bit surprised and very embarrassed," says James nui.

James iti had a slightly different opinion. "I thought it was a bit unfair, actually. Dad was only a tiny bit over the limit – and it was an important trip."





Former Green Party co-leader Jeanette Fitzsimons signs the vege car outside Parliament.

Driving over 3000 kilometres with no breakdowns is an achievement the Macdonald family is very proud of. “Dad worked for hours,” says James iti. “We lost count how many. And he tested his car over and over until he knew it would work.” The family is also proud of James iti. He helped build the engine, made arrangements for the trip, and was chief cameraman and chief navigator. “It was a great adventure,” says James iti. “I got to travel all over New Zealand. I visited places I’d never even heard of.”

So what are James iti and James nui planning next? “I’m thinking I might become an actor or a vege-car converter. I can’t decide which,” says James iti.

His dad is more definite. “A land-speed record for the fastest Māori vege car,” he says.



In the meantime, if you're ever driving around Palmerston North, watch out for the vege car. You might even smell it first. Some say the engine smells like a barbecue. Others say fish and chips. But you'll have to decide for yourself.

Car Crazy?

New Zealanders love cars. In fact, for every thousand people, we have 620 cars. That makes us the fourth-largest car-owning country in the world (after the United States, Italy, and Australia). Most family cars have big engines, which means we burn through a lot of petrol. Even worse, a third of all our car trips are to travel 2 kilometres or less.





Don't Miss It!

by Rex Eagle

It's the most unusual building in Kawakawa – perhaps in the whole of New Zealand. No one drives through town without noticing it! Tourists stop to take photos. Some even come to Kawakawa just to see it! Can you guess what the building is?

This amazing construction was designed by the world-famous Austrian architect Friedrich Hundertwasser (Hoon-dert-vuss-a). He came to live in the Kawakawa area in the late 1970s, and he had some very unusual ideas about what buildings should look like and what they should be made of.

Some of the materials in the Kawakawa building are on their second life. The bricks on the floor and the bottles that make up the “windows” are all recycled. Students from the local schools helped make some of the tiles.

Friedrich Hundertwasser also designed motorway restaurants, churches, shopping malls, day care centres, schools, and boats. He designed book covers, postage stamps, and phonecards for many European countries. In 1984, Italy’s president presented him with a medal for designing the world’s most beautiful postage stamp. Hundertwasser even designed flags, including one proposed for New Zealand that features a koru.





Straight lines were something that Hundertwasser didn't enjoy in architecture. He thought people used too many rulers and T-squares when it came to planning buildings. He liked designing buildings with trees growing on them, with uneven floor surfaces, or with roofs of grass for animals to graze on. He believed that everyone should be able to build their houses from whatever materials they liked. He drew his ideas for this belief from the slums of the world, where the poor live in whatever shelter they can construct from whatever cast-off materials they can find.

Most strangely of all, Friedrich Hundertwasser believed that if someone was having a building constructed for them, they should live on the site before it was begun. He also wanted future occupiers to play a part in the construction by building parts of it for themselves.

Perhaps you're still wondering what this Kawakawa building is used for. This very unusual construction is ... the Kawakawa public toilets!



Plastic Fantastic?

by Philippa Werry

What's the Problem?

Do you remember the days of shopping at the corner store, when bread and other groceries were wrapped in paper or put in paper bags? Today we take plastic bags for granted. But is this a problem? They're so light and flimsy, and they make up less than 1 percent of the waste sent to landfills ... surely there are bigger environmental issues to worry about?

Some people think plastic bags are a symbol of our "throwaway society". They're made from petroleum, which is a non-renewable resource – and this means that every plastic bag thrown away is a waste not only of the bag itself but also of the resources used to make it.



And there's more to think about. Most plastic bags are only used for a few hours, sometimes even minutes, but they stay in the environment for much, much longer. Plastic bags are waterproof, so they don't rot away – they're not biodegradable. They can't be burned safely because that causes poisonous gases and pollution.

Instead, plastic bags are photodegradable, which means they slowly break down into smaller pieces with the help of sunlight. This process takes hundreds of years, and the small pieces can still pollute soil and water and get into the food chain, where they poison birds, fish, and animals.



The Facts

- * New Zealanders use around three million plastic bags a day. (That's over a billion bags each year.)



- * The average New Zealand family has collected sixty bags after just four trips to the supermarket.



- * Up to 100 000 marine animals, mostly whales, seals, and turtles, die each year around the world after eating or becoming tangled in plastic bags.

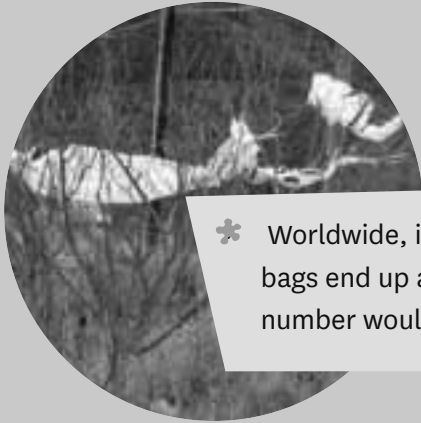


- * At least half of the litter blown from landfills is some kind of plastic, mostly bags.





* Plastic bags are difficult to recycle into other products. This is because there are so many different kinds of plastic, and bags are often contaminated by paper and food scraps.



* Worldwide, it's estimated that about four billion plastic bags end up as litter each year. Tied together, that number would circle Earth sixty-three times.

* The petroleum used to make one plastic bag is enough to drive a car 115 metres.



* The average plastic bag takes five hundred years to break down.

What Are Other Countries Doing ?

Ireland

In 2002, the government introduced the PlasTax. Shoppers now pay 15 cents for each plastic bag they use. The number of bags used has dropped by 90 percent, and the PlasTax has raised millions of dollars for environmental projects.

Norway

Seventy-five percent of Norwegian towns now use starch-based bags (made from potatoes) to collect household rubbish.

South Africa

In South Africa, where plastic bags are often called the country's "national flower", the government has banned very thin plastic bags. Shopkeepers caught using them face a fine and even jail.

Although the new, stronger plastic bags are much easier and more profitable to recycle, not everyone supports the new law. Some people make money by turning plastic bags into useful items, such as baskets, hats, mats, and scrubbing brushes.



Bangladesh

Bangladesh has many floods, a problem made worse by plastic bags blocking the storm drains. In 2002, plastic bags were completely banned – and now anyone caught using one is fined on the spot.

Taiwan

In 2001, Taiwan banned not just plastic bags but all plastic utensils, such as cutlery and plates. The ban applies to supermarkets, fast-food outlets, department stores, schools, government departments, and street stalls.

Australia

Coles Bay in Tasmania became Australia's first plastic-bag-free town in April 2003. Today, at least nine Australian towns have banned plastic bags.

Note: This collage artwork was created using plastic bags, and the outline of countries is not exact.

What about New Zealand?

Like anywhere else in New Zealand, the small town of Collingwood has a litter problem. One day after the annual beach clean-up, some of the helpers realised just how much of the rubbish they'd collected was plastic bags. They were determined to do something about it. After many community meetings, it was decided that the answer was cloth bags. A sponsor was found, and every household in Collingwood was given their own cloth bag for free.

On 4 October 2005, Collingwood became New Zealand's first plastic-bag-free town. Shops now provide boxes, newspaper, or paper bags instead of plastic bags, and of course shoppers can use their own cloth bags.



What YOU Can Do

1. Take your own cloth bags when you go shopping – or reuse a cardboard box.
2. Say “no” to plastic bags at the checkout if you’re only buying a few things. (Keep the receipt so you can prove you’ve paid.)
3. Make sure your family keeps a stash of old plastic bags or cloth bags, a box, or even a laundry basket in the car for unexpected purchases.
4. If you have to accept plastic bags, use as few as possible by making sure they’re well packed (without breaking the bag or your arms).
5. If a shop says it’s company policy for their customers to use a plastic bag, write to the manager to suggest their rules could be more environmentally friendly.
6. If you do end up with plastic bags, try to reuse them as bin liners or for anything else useful you can think of.

From Corned Beef to Captain Cook:

The Art of Michel Tuffery

by Iona McNaughton



Imagine a bull made out of three hundred empty corned beef tins. Now imagine ten of them – all the size of real bulls that you see in paddocks. That's a lot of tins.

Michel Tuffery is the artist who made the bulls. Once he even made two bulls with motors inside them. The bulls paraded through the streets of Christchurch, and at the end of the parade there was a bullfight. Flames and fireworks shot from their mouths and lit up the night. Everyone clapped and cheered.

Michel got the idea for his fighting bulls from stories his mother had told him about celebrating Christmas in Sāmoa with faga'ofe (home-made fireworks). "I decided to make a New Zealand version of faga'ofe," he says.

Michel has also made giant fish out of squashed tuna tins and life-size baby turtles out of herring tins. Like the bulls, the turtles had motors inside them. He made them for the Sydney Olympic Games held in 2000, and Michel's daughter, Tiare, remembers riding on the back of one of the turtles when she was four.





Tiare loves the bright colours that her father uses in his work. “A lot of the things that Dad makes are about his culture and his family. He also talks about how important it is to look after the sea and the earth. I like the way Dad uses painting to explain things that people usually write about.”

Michel reckons that being an artist is like being a journalist. First, he does some research. He talks to people and asks a lot of questions. Then he makes a painting or a sculpture or a video that includes some of the answers to his questions. That’s what a journalist does with words in a newspaper, on the radio, or on television.

Michel says that art was his first language. It was the way he told stories. When he was six, he couldn’t read, spell, or write. He drew instead – and he knew he was much better at drawing than he was at writing.

“I remember sitting at my desk at school. My book had all these pages with lines on them. I didn’t know what the lines were for, and so I did drawings on the pages instead of writing words.”

At weekends, his mum and dad often took the family to the museum. Michel still remembers gazing up at the giant, life-size moa on display in the museum. “Wow,” he thought. “That’s so cool.” That memory helped to inspire him to make his bulls the same size as they are in real life.





By the time he was eight, Michel still wasn't very good at spelling, reading, and writing. The teachers discovered he had dyslexia. Some people with dyslexia see letters of the alphabet differently from other people, and this makes it hard for them to learn to read and write.

Michel started going to special reading classes. And that's when he discovered art galleries. Wandering through the city, he saw buildings where there were paintings in the windows. He went inside, and there were also paintings on the walls.

Michel, who loves rugby just about as much as he loves art, started going to as many art galleries as he could. "I think some kids thought I was a bit odd because on the days I wasn't playing rugby, I was going to art galleries.





“I was obsessed with art and with rugby. I still am.”

These days, he’s also obsessed with reading. He says he’s making up for all the books he couldn’t read as a child. He’s especially interested in reading books about New Zealand and the Pacific.

History, he says, has a lot of great stories. And it’s these stories that he’s telling in his paintings, sculptures, and video works. Take the famous explorer Captain James Cook, for instance. When a teacher took nine-year-old Michel and his classmates to an exhibition about Cook’s death in Hawai’i, Michel felt sorry for “Cookie” and hated the people who had killed him. As he grew older, however, he realised that there is usually more than one side to a story.

“I’m glad I saw that exhibition. Now I’m looking at other parts of the story. Cook travelled around New Zealand with some amazing people, including a portrait artist and a man called Tupaia, who was a Tahitian translator and navigator.

“What about *their* stories? That’s what really fascinates me.”



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