

Just how important is sustainability? We, as humans, are the only species on the planet that take mass quantities of precious resources from the Earth's crust, and rarely put them back in a useable form. Our natural resources are closer to depletion than we all think; and our environment is more severely polluted than we think. Just because we don't see its impending impacts, doesn't mean that it's not taking place.

At the beginning of this sustainable lighting fixture project, I started thinking about what material I should use in order to have the least impact on the environment. I first thought about using scrap plastic, since they can be very easily obtained, and they are also very versatile, very easily manipulated. But after further inspection, I gave up plastic for this project. Why? First of all, during the production of plastic, numerous toxic additives were added, for example, UV stabilizers, plasticizers, flame retardants... etc. These toxins and carcinogens can be easily released into the environment and into human body when heated. How can it be sustainable, when it is actually harmful? Second, plastics are synthetic products which will never decompose. If not disposed of properly, these plastic will stay on the surface of Earth forever, while releasing particles of toxins and carcinogens through wear and tear. Plastics will release toxins and carcinogens, even during the recycling process.

Finally, I chose to work with post-consumer glass and reclaimed, vintage, distressed wood. Although glass is less maneuverable than plastic, it poses no threat to the environment and to the health of human body. It is clean; it contains no toxins. After this light fixture reaches its end of life, glass can be safely recycled and repurposed for further use. It can be safely grounded into particles, going into concrete, road pavement, and even recycled glass tiles. With plenty of empty glass bottles lying around my apartment, they are the perfect material for this project. Same goes with wood; it is a renewable resource. Once the light fixture reaches its end, these pieces of wood can either be reclaimed again for other uses, or they can be tossed away since they are biodegradable.

This chandelier is composed of two glass bottles in the center, with a couple dozen pieces of glass strips surrounding them. The two centerpieces give a good repetition in form, while maintaining a good balance. The bottle closer to the top is darker in color (more visual weight), but shorter in length; while the bottle on the bottom is lighter in color (lighter in visual weight), but longer in length. The outer layer of glass pieces has a good rhythm, and their texture really give the fixture personality. Because glass is either translucent or clear, it creates a lot of fun effects with light.

I've designed this chandelier with our previous condo remodel client, William, in mind. This chandelier is especially designed to be placed in the dining area of his newly remodeled modern rustic condo. Since both of us are single males who work in the architectural/design field, with this repurposed glass chandelier, I hope it can be an inspiration to him and to everyone else to be more considerate to Earth and our environment.



“CLEARLY RUGGED”

A dining room chandelier by Victor Lee