

Rubbish Sink

Rub-a-Dub-Dub

Recycled tires near the tub.

BY KRYSZYNA LAGOWSKI

Would anyone believe that the same properties that make rubber ideal for tires also make it great for a bathroom sink?

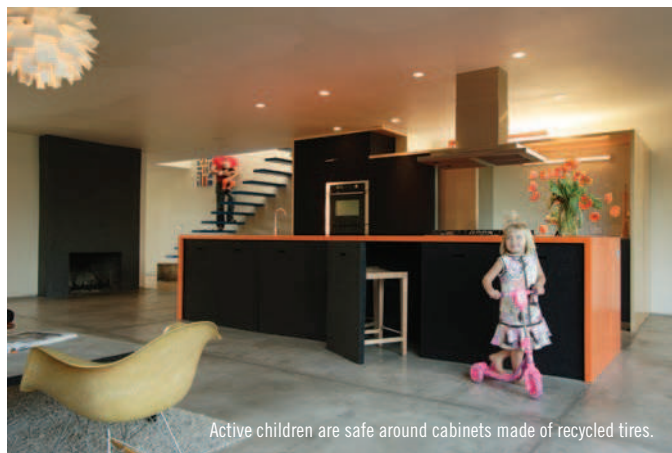
But that's exactly why architects Erla Dögg Ingjaldsdóttir and Tryggvi Thorsteinsson decided to transform recycled tires into a sleek and stylish bathroom sink, which they've dubbed the "Rubbish Sink."

"Today, we're not washing our clothes in the bathroom sink," notes Ingjaldsdóttir. "It's just for brushing your teeth and washing your hands. It doesn't have to be big, it can be shallow, and you can have more surface area. Rubber doesn't splash, and it's flexible."

Respecting the environment

Once the rubber from the tires is melted and cleaned, it is made into a sheet. The sheet of recycled rubber is stretched over a base frame, which can be made of wood, metal or any other material that's conducive to bathroom furniture, and anchored by the drain collar. Voila! A gently sloping surface where water can quietly disappear down the drain. The on-trend minimalistic profile is due to the amount of material used – less than one pound of recycled rubber.

The Rubbish Sink is popular with people who are "open-minded and ready to do something new, plus help the world at the same time," says Ingjaldsdóttir. She and her husband are native Icelanders, which has impacted their deep respect for the environment. Their Santa Monica-based architectural firm, Minarc, has been recognized with many awards for its environmentally conscious approach to design.



Active children are safe around cabinets made of recycled tires.



"Rubber doesn't splash, and it's flexible."

Architect, Erla Dögg Ingjaldsdóttir of Minarc

"We're very motivated to find new and different ways to use materials," says Ingjaldsdóttir. "There was a program on television that said rubber decomposes in 2,000 years. But that was in 2005. So how can anyone really prove that?" She and her husband found a company that was using recycled rubber from tires. "I thought if we could use recycled rubber in some different ways, it would show people that you can still use it. If we can't get rid of it, we can figure out different ways to use it."

Award-winning design

The Rubbish Sink is one of Minarc's more popular products, and is used in hotels, and various types of residences. It's even won a 2010 R&D award from the prestigious Architect magazine.

Currently, it's available in two different sizes – a single sink at 36 inches wide, and a double basin that's five feet across. Depending on the size requested by the client, the cost of the sink can be about \$200 to \$400 USD per square foot.

And Ingjaldsdóttir isn't stopping with sinks. She and her husband have used recycled rubber for kitchen cabinets and stools, even in their own home. The inspiration came from having three young active children running around. Since the spongy material is about ¼ inch thick, similar to safety matting in school playgrounds, they found it ideal for providing peace of mind.

To date, no one else is using recycled rubber from tires to make bathroom sinks or kitchen furniture. "No one else does this," asserts Ingjaldsdóttir. "But I hope they will start." 