

A journey to carbon-neutral coffee

Capsule collections: the artist making magic with used coffee pods

From earrings to sculptures, Evelyn Jacob's designs capitalise on the iconic jewel-tones of empty coffee capsules

by Arusa Qureshi

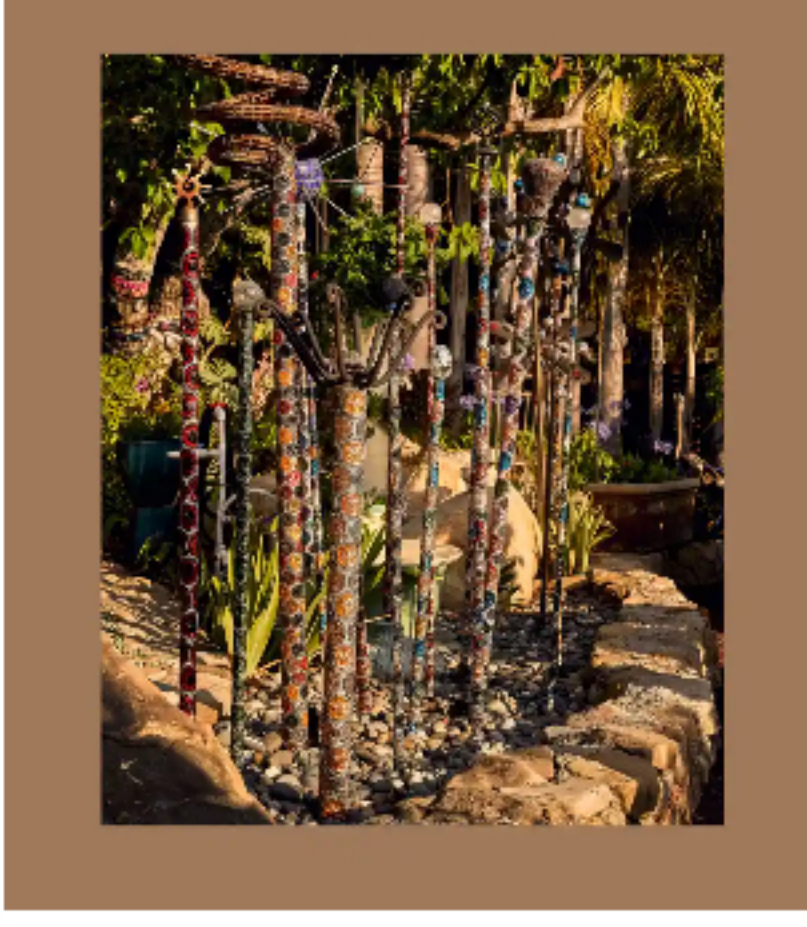
The cross-industry Podback recycling scheme, co-founded by Nespresso, is an easy and eco-friendly way to dispose of old coffee capsules rather than just discarding them in the bin. But for some, these capsules have never really been trash. "I just couldn't throw them away," California-based artist Evelyn Jacob says. "I thought, there's got to be something that we can do with them."

Jacob has been working with Nespresso capsules since 2011, and in that time has created everything from jewellery and clothing to sculptures and homeware, transforming the unexpectedly versatile material for her art. "The thing I love about the capsules is that yes, there are a lot of colours, but it's a limited palette too. I also paint and do watercolours, and you could mix up 1,000 blues. Here, I'm limited to four blues but there is freedom in that restriction."

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Jacob's pod-based artistic journey began when she placed ads in her local online newspaper asking people to donate their used capsules. This was prior to the launch of Nespresso's own recycling scheme, which has now been up and running for more than 10 years, so artists were often the go-to for people who were looking to breathe new life into their old capsules.



"I got so many responses," she says. "And every week, people would send me a note, and I would go to their homes and pick up their capsules. In return, I would drop off a little pair of thank-you earrings made of the capsules."

Capsule collection

Nespresso capsules are infinitely recyclable. Made with aluminium, the metal retains all its qualities during the recycling process, unlike plastics, meaning its lifecycle is functionally infinite. The aluminium capsules keep your coffee fresh, locking in the aromas and protecting it from light, air and humidity.

There are a number of simple ways to give your used Nespresso capsules a second life:

Podback

Launched this year, Podback is an industry scheme co-founded by Nespresso that allows you to drop your used pods off at more than 5,000 CollectPlus locations. Some local authorities offer kerbside collection through Podback. This means you can now recycle your used capsules by simply leaving them out to be picked up alongside your other waste and recycling.

Nespresso direct

Nespresso still offers its own methods for recycling, too, as it has for the past decade. You can request a doorstep collection, or drop your used capsules off at one of the UK and Ireland's Nespresso Boutiques, where they will be sent for processing into new products such as drinks cans, while spent grounds are transformed into biogas and soil improver.

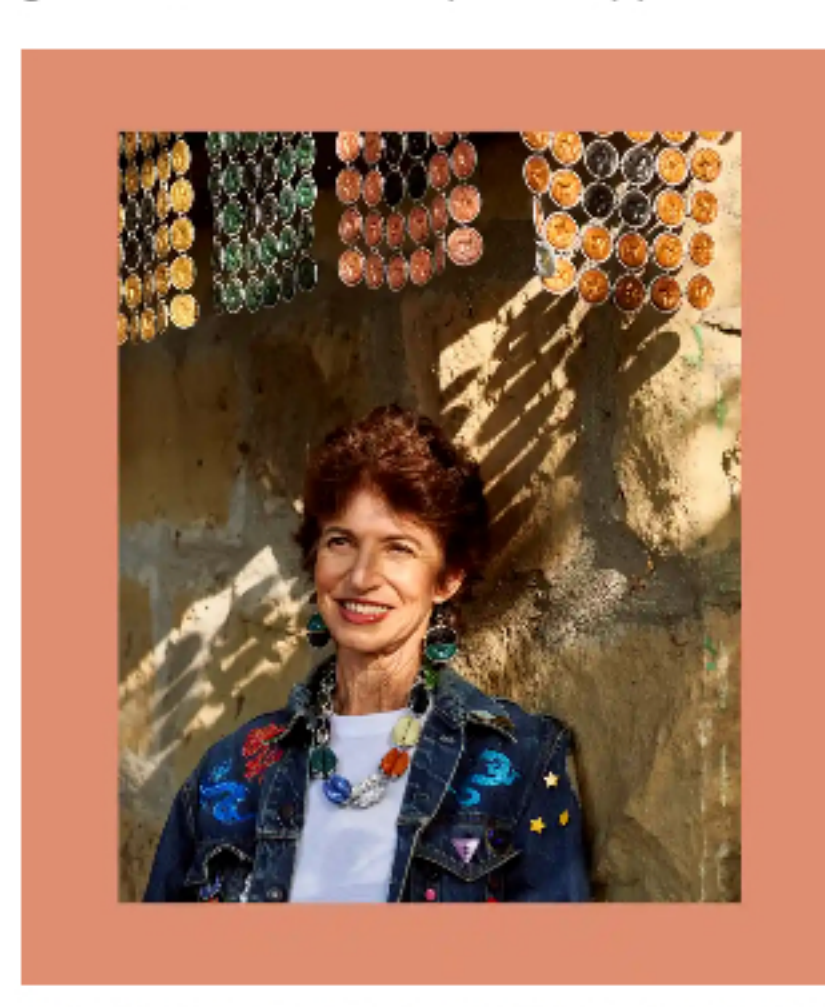
Her obsession, as she describes it, has led her to create some intricate and stunning pieces of work, all of which centre on reusing aluminium from Nespresso capsules. "When I wear earrings that are made out of capsules," Jacob says, "I get so many comments from people. You see their expressions change and their mouths drop open."

"They say: 'What are those made of? Are those coins? Are those bottle tops?' They cannot figure it out. And if you gave them 100 guesses, they would never know because they don't recognise the capsules when they've been transformed. It just shows you that so much of this is about thinking outside of the box."

Over the years, Jacob's partner Mindo has crafted some useful tools, including a reworked tortilla press and some 3D-printed utensils, to help Jacob manipulate, fold and crush the capsules with ease. This has contributed to her expanding portfolio, which features impressive, charming creations such as metallic, ceramic and glass fish, and large-scale elaborate pieces that include a chainmail quilt, alluring wizard poles and lifelike colourful snakes.

"We used an irrigation pipe for the body," she says of the snakes, "and we would form it in the shape that we wanted. I had to get a drill and individually drill every capsule to the snake. Then Mindo did the mosaic of the head and the tail. They were big; they took on their own life and there are now four of them outside."

Jacob's Santa Barbara garden is known in the community for the creativity, vibrancy and many wonderful surprises on display, having become a canvas for her art. While she admits that she finds inspiration in everything around her, Jacob is particularly drawn to nature and colour, which shine throughout her garden, where the capsules appear in unusual and extraordinary ways.



Her work here also serves as a reminder of the environmental benefits of recycling and reusing. As Jacob says: "This benefits me, it benefits us, it benefits our community and shows people that there is a way that you can make art with items that you might just throw away."

While Jacob is pleased that the new, simpler Podback scheme exists, she doesn't see herself ever giving up on using Nespresso capsules as a material. "It's always exciting to me when they come out with a new flavour because it's a different capsule and a new colour," she says. "I thoroughly love what I'm doing and I can't imagine ever being done. There's certainly no shortage of ideas."

Discover what's next for Nespresso's journey to carbon-neutral coffee [here](#)



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