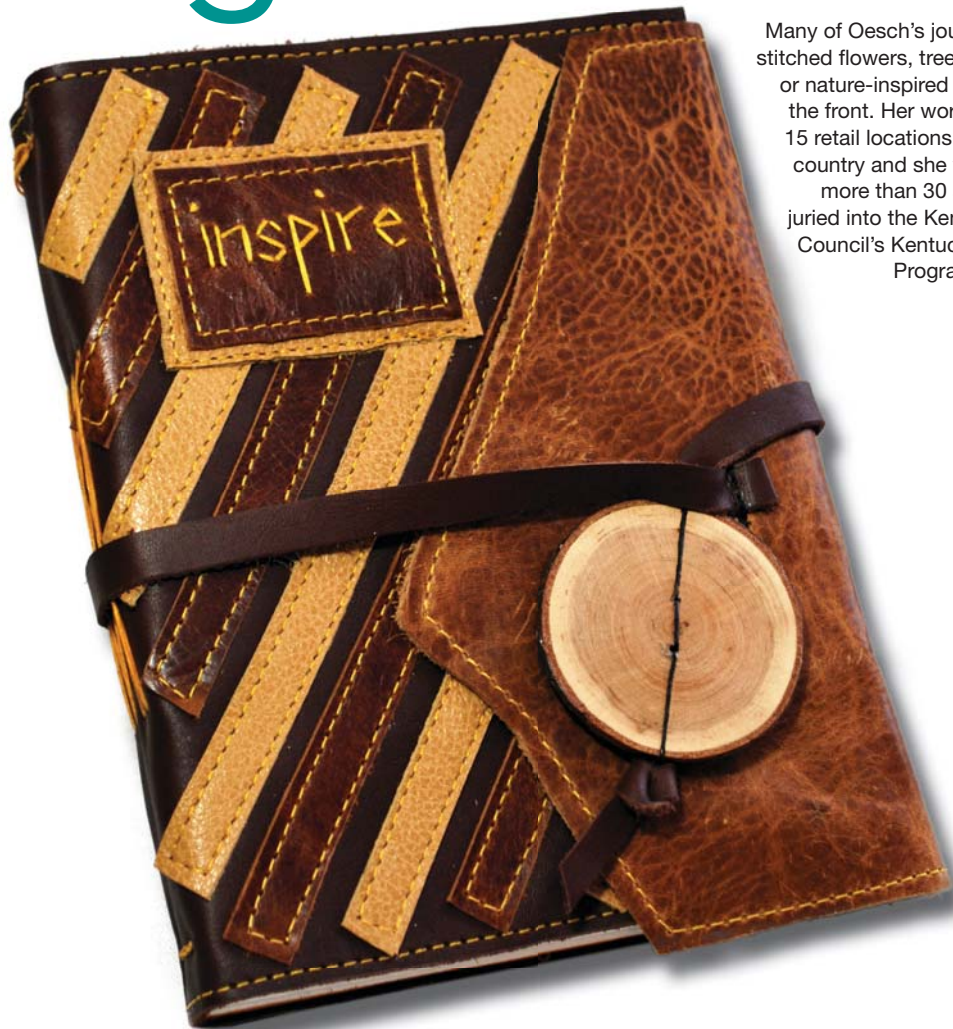


# Bluegrass State



Many of Oesch's journals have stitched flowers, trees, animals, or nature-inspired sayings on the front. Her work is sold in 15 retail locations across the country and she was one of more than 30 artists who juried into the Kentucky Arts Council's Kentucky Crafted Program in 2012.

## GOES GREEN

Eco-friendly Artists Poised for 2013 Kentucky Crafted: The Market

Text and photos by Emily B. Moses, Kentucky Arts Council

**T**he words are different but the meaning is the same – upcycle, recycle, repurpose, re-imagine. Artists who work with materials discarded by others are creating items of usefulness and beauty now

more than ever. Equally important to two Kentucky artists is the principle of reducing waste and extending the life of materials that might otherwise be carelessly tossed away after fulfilling their original purpose.

## “Scrap” booking—redefined

Melissa Oesch identifies herself as an eco-friendly artist dedicated to working with salvaged and repurposed materials. The 29-year-old creates one-of-a-kind hand bound journals for her business, ReImagined by Luna ([www.reimaginedonline.com](http://www.reimaginedonline.com)). “When I began to realize how much we waste and are not conscious of, it became important to me to use repurposed materials,” said Oesch.

The covers of her journals (or “books” as she refers to them) are created from one of three main materials – leather, vintage book covers, or coffee sacks. Oesch previously worked at a local coffee house where she now gets most of her burlap coffee bags. The leather she uses is procured mostly from textile manufacturers, boot makers, and auto manufacturers that have closed. The book covers come from libraries, churches, and book stores. A result of acquiring books for her work was that Oesch found herself taking on a role previously filled by recycling centers. “Many recycling centers have had to cut their book cutter positions, so entire books are being thrown away,” she said. Previously, the pages of the book would be cut and recycled and only the covers made available for her purposes.

Visit [www.reimaginedonline.com](http://www.reimaginedonline.com) to see more of Oesch’s work.



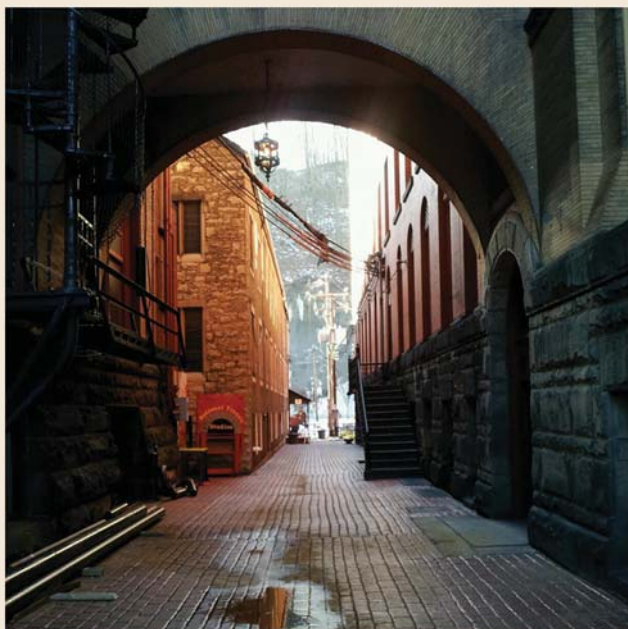
**Above:** Melissa Oesch surrounded by the tools of her trade – boxes of leather scraps, vintage book covers, coffee sacks, colorful spools of heavyweight thread, a paper cutter, and a menagerie of shiny tools.



**Inset:** In addition to her journals, Oesch also makes miniature journal necklaces and holiday ornaments. Whether making large or small items, her intent is always to use every last piece of the materials she works with.

*“We too often don’t recognize the potential within something and write it off as trash,” she said. “My tendency is to see potential in places where others might overlook it.”*

*—Melissa Oesch*



Mary Morgan’s Photos

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