

Homes & Real Estate

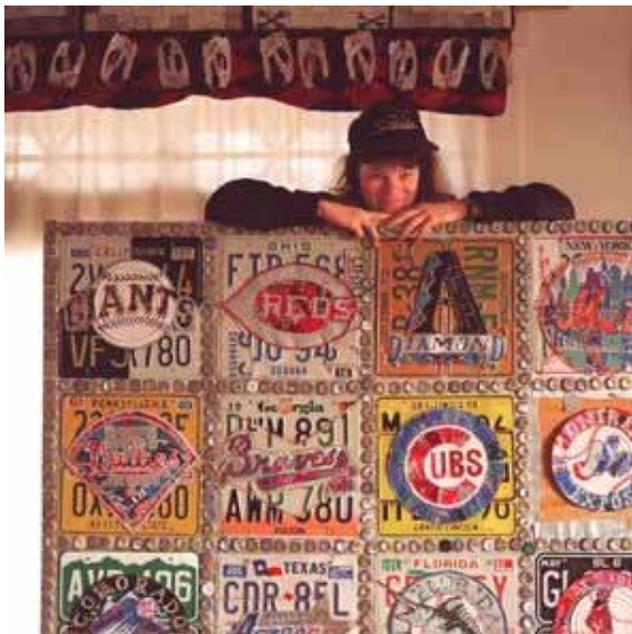
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Green art can come from unlikely sources

Art made from salvaged or otherwise green materials has gone mainstream, especially in the Northwest.

By Tom Watson

Special to NWhomes



We're filling our homes with trashy art.
We're also filling our homes with beautiful and functional art.

You guessed it — it's all the same art.
Sometimes we even make it ourselves.

Art made from salvaged or otherwise green materials has gone mainstream, especially in the Northwest. When stuff that's bound for the landfill gets turned into art for our homes, we're helping to reduce climate change and support local artists.

Art you can use

Functional or useful art made from scrap materials is a perfect fit for many homes and gardens. It includes furniture, light fixtures, planters and fences, as well as home

accessories such as bulletin boards and candle holders.

Examples include the work of Seattle artist Julia Haack (juliahaack.com), who makes fanciful benches from salvaged wood.

Another type of salvage-based art is ornamental, including paintings (on an old window, perhaps), sculptures, assemblages and wall hangings.

Local artist Ross Palmer Beecher, whose "quilts" made from old pop cans and other detritus can be seen at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and Safeco Field, helped pioneer this art.

Using less-toxic coatings or treatments such as latex paint also helps make art eco-friendly.

Since we buy art mainly because we like it, the artist's use of "green" materials or themes may be incidental to our purchase. At the other extreme, some art becomes eco-art specifically because it conveys a direct message about waste or pollution.

The evocative depictions of consumerism by Seattle photographer Chris Jordan (chrisjordan.com) fit that category.

Art on display

Art made from salvaged or waste materials — often called recycled art — can be found in nearly any gallery. Also search online on crafts marketplace websites such as etsy.com.

In recent years, more galleries and organizations have begun hosting shows or fairs dedicated to art made from scrap materials. Pieces on display usually can be purchased.

The nonprofit RE Store (re-store.org) used-building-materials shops in Seattle and Bellingham sponsor the area's longest-running recycled-art shows. This year, the RE Store show will take place April 12-May 6 at the Blowing Sands gallery in Ballard.

If you're in the Portland area June 28–29, check out the annual Recycled Arts Festival (recycledartsfestival.com) in Vancouver, Wash. It features more than 120 artists showing their work, plus other entertainment.

The deadline for artists' submissions for both the RE Store show and the Recycled Arts Festival is Feb. 15.

Art worth saving

Creating art with scrap materials may not require more talent than making regular art, but it certainly requires perseverance and dedication.

Being an accomplished scrounger helps. Artists may need 20,000 bottle caps, or a pickup full of leftover cedar shingles, or hundreds of license plates cut into pieces.

On a smaller scale, many in the region make their own art from salvaged materials, especially for the garden. Ideas are everywhere — from your neighbor's yard to online collectives like Pinterest — but try to come up with your own unique spin.

Use a material you have on hand, or ask friends or local businesses for donations. You might be surprised how many people are willing to save old wine bottles or dryer lint for your projects.

Used building materials stores offer abundant lumber and hardware for arty furniture creations.

Making art often involves taking a mundane used item and adding something. This approach was memorably satirized on the cable-TV show "Portlandia" in the comedy sketch "Put a Bird On It."

You might find salvaged art in Seattle with a bird on it — although it would probably be a Seahawk.

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