

Art concepts from found objects

By HEIDI DESCH
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Mary Conway takes the saying one person's trash is another's treasure — or in her case, art — quite literally.

She collects thrift store finds, garage sale grabs and roadside cast-offs, which she has turned into a collection of artwork created almost entirely from recycled materials.

Conway created "Nocturne," a large canvass with collage sheet music and 1890s piano keys and hammers. She entered the piece in an art show in Arizona that required the work to be made of recycled materials.

That first piece launched her into inspiration to create more with the same theme of recycled materials. She takes the items — a tea set, a tree root or a potato planter — and turns them from their original purpose into sculpture or wall art.

"I collect objects that I'm attracted to and put the stuff in bins," she explained from her home on Whitefish Lake Golf Course. "Then things start talking to me and I begin building layers of art."

Conway spent more than 20 years as a corporate art



Heidi Desch / Whitefish Pilot

Mary Conway in her home studio surrounded by art from her upcoming show "Art of Re-Cycle: Tracking Time."

external and internal journey we all travel through our time on Earth."

Her piece "Footsteps" includes hand carved wooden shoe molds surrounded by old fashioned wooden board games. Hanging from one of the molds with metal wire is a tiny light bulb. She describes the piece as "one step at a time is how we navigate through the game

friend's practice painting with vivid fall colors with the intention of framing it, but she never did until recently she put it in an ornate recycled frame and then layered on metal scrap pieces from yet another artist.

"Gone Fishin'" came after her granddaughter went searching for golf balls in the nearby golf course pond

use it becomes art," she said. "There is art out of creating something out of a need."

While her art work — handmade paper, collages and paintings — is typically vibrant with color the pieces in the recycle collection have a decidedly muted color tone. Hints of light blues, purples, greens and oranges make an appearance in the pieces, but most materials are natural

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consultant in Denver, where she bridged the gap between the art world and the business community facilitating private and public art displays. She also facilitated adult art education programs with the Denver Art Museum.

During those years while working and raising a family, she didn't have the time to create her own art. However, working with artists and admiring their work created what Conway says in is a "reservoir" in her mind.

"It's all in here," she says pointing to herself. "And it's starting to come out."

Conway's show "Art of Re-cycle: Tracking Time" will be on display during the month of October at The Walking Man Gallery. After completing 18 pieces over the last five months, Conway saw a theme emerge — time.

Conway said North America and Europe use a linear approach to time and Asia and native cultures use time in cyclical systems, but all time is based upon the Earth revolving around the sun.

"I have chosen to represent these concepts by using objects found at garage sales, thrift shops, by the roadside or just about anywhere," she said. "Recycling them honors their past and presents a contemporary reflection on how I can use them as metaphors for the

of life."

She said the light bulb represents that there is always a little light in life.

"There's whimsy added to the serious quality," she said. "I try to strike an elegant balance between profound meaning and joy."

"Layers" came about as recycling from her own home to create layers like an archaeological dig moves through time. For many years Conway had saved a

and found two old wooden fish-shaped tee markers. She took the fish and put them together with two small wooden rocking chairs signifying time spent day dreaming on the porch.

"Spoon" is simply a wooden spoon mounted on a wooden box with the idea that throughout time humans have invented tools to improve their lives.

"If you isolate the object and take it out of its utilitarian

coming almost entirely from wood or paper.

"The palette is earthy and natural," she said. "I was drawn to woods, wicker or paper. I'm obviously not afraid of color. What I really love is that this work is pared down and simple."

The show opens at The Walking Man Gallery on Oct. 1 with a reception from 6-9 p.m., and runs through the end of the month.