

ROCKLAND'S ARTS

# From waste to art

Artists find the beauty in refuse at Center for the Arts exhibit

By Nancy Cacioppo  
 Staff Writer

In an age of recycling and ecological awareness, literally anything — including abandoned materials, remnants, fragments, and leftovers — can become a work of art.

Discarded material and the refuse of an urban environment add new meaning and richness of detail to the sculpture assemblages and installations in the exhibit, "Discarded," opening Sunday at the Rockland Center for the Arts in West Nyack.

"I've always been interested in artists who use non-precious materials," said curator Joyce Abrams, herself an artist who uses discarded materials. "We're living in a time when so much gets thrown out. And it's amazing what these artists chose to keep. It's not junk art. It's the purity of idea and someone's thoughts that emerge."

In the recycling of humble materials, the participating artists, all of them New Yorkers, have reassessed and redefined the flotsam and jetsam of their environment.

And their approaches and motivations vary as much as the discarded materials they come across.

"I like the kinds of things people will say to me when I'm nailing my bottle caps. . . Sometimes one of them says, 'You should make art.' And I say, 'Oh, I never thought of that,'" says David Hammons, who recently received a MacArthur Foundation "Genius" award.

Some of the other artists, such as Richard Tuttle, Donald Lipski and Mel Edwards have received the recognition of major museum shows.

Tuttle was once described by a reviewer as the most human of the minimalists. "His work was always the slightest, the most quirky stuff, like art made by a small boy from odds and ends found in his pockets."

For Lipski, the small boy instinct is just one of the many expressions he seeks in the creative process.

"The weight of art history can be ballast or burden. What is learned from art schools, museums, critics, magazines and such is, however, secondary in the process of art making. What is primary is more obscure. It is concealed in the mid-brain, locked in the genetic code, grounded in childhood, and woven throughout the cloth of culture," says Lipski.

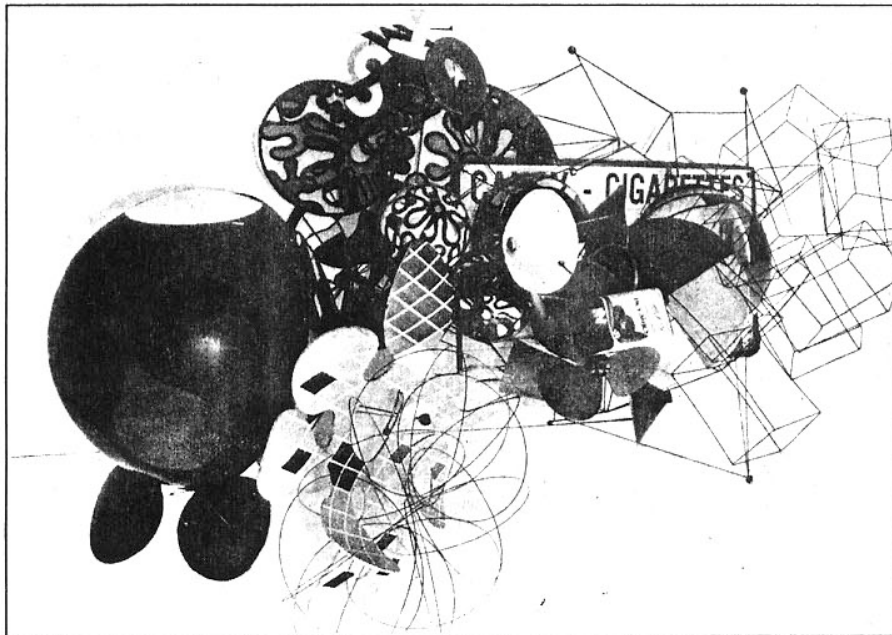
In a similar exploration, one reviewer writes that Edwards' steel reliefs "express powerful feelings of fear, violence, vigilance, sexuality and play. All these fragments seem to be faces, looking, pointing, warning, no matter how much they seem to be impaled, wedged in, enslaved."

Other featured artists, such as Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Alan Wexler and Judy Pfaff, are concentrating on new site-specific installations.

"I propose . . . the design of garbage. . . recycling facilities, transfer stations, trucks, landfills, receptacles, water treatment plants, rivers. . . be the giant clocks and thermometers of our age. . . the symbols of our survival," says Ukeles, the unsalaried artist-in-residence for the New York City Department of Sanitation.

Also featured in the exhibit are new works by Mattie Berhang, Bob Smith, Kalmia, and Ernest Acker-Gherardino.

"I use discarded elements because they are vigorous, because they excite my



'Calle Vieja' ('Old Street'), discarded art by Judy Pfaff.

Staff Photo/Robert F. Rodriguez



Artist Kalmia of New York City uses discarded rags in her piece, 'Cleo.'

Staff Photo/Robert F. Rodriguez

imagination, because they are types for resurrection and continued life, and because they are cheap," says Berhang.

Smith invited friends to be a part of

the "Barrio Los Artistas" he created.

"A photo donated by yourself will be in a window. The homes are made of cork from wine bottles and have slate

### To see the exhibit

- What:** "Discarded"
- When:** Opening reception, 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday. Exhibit hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays, and 1 to 4 p.m. weekends, through Nov. 15. Guided tours available to school and social groups by appointment.
- Where:** Rockland Center for the Arts, 27 Greenbush Road, West Nyack
- Admission:** Free
- For information:** Call 358-0877

roofs. . . It could end up being a city before I'm through."

Kalmia's purpose is simple. "I love people and nature and celebrate both in my work."

Acker-Gherardino also sees a dual role — one that raises awareness in a wasteful society and pleases the eye at the same time.

"Today we are faced, in all we choose, with junk, dressed up as shiny new products: banking services, nothing but rackets; electronic gadgetry, busted in a few months; new automobiles, ready for the mechanic two days after we buy them; shiny downtowns, overlooking destroyed ghettos. . . I give you dump works, the things themselves, true, beautiful, genuine," says Acker-Gherardino.

And to further the exhibit's educational role, the center's Arts in Education project, now in its second year, will take Nyack High School ninth grade Global Studies students on a gallery tour, accompanied by a museum educator who will teach them in a series of hands-on workshops.