

Creative Alchemy - Esthetic Recycling at The Fuller Museum, Art New England, Dec/Jan 2006

- D'Lynne Plummer

One person's trash is another person's treasure, as the cliché goes. Or, in some cases, one person's trash becomes another's objet d'art. While New England thrift and frugality is legendary, so is its wealth of artists, and the combination of its creative thrift and artistic skill has recently resulted in beautiful fits of highly esthetic recycling.

This summer, the Fuller Craft Museum in Brockton, Massachusetts, tackled the trash trend on a regional scale with 112 East Coast artists in Trashformations East, featuring everything from lingerie made from soda cans to bracelets composed of expired coupons-how's that for parsimony? For a nation that throws away more than 160 million tons of solid waste each year, we as a society have a lot to learn from these artists who see a universe of possibility in the world of detritus....

... In similar fashion, both Robert Rovenolt and Patricia Onorato create small boxes with hallowed interiors. Onorato's Sanctuary implies Occidental faiths, while Rovenolt's Looking East contains a small framed image of Buddha. Breaking out of the box entirely and standing over 5 feet tall, The Spirits by Bob Rizzo alludes to a more animistic religion and recalls African Lega figurines or some similar African totem used to ward off evil spirits. Constructed from and festooned with hundreds of found objects, there is something about the tactile quality of familiar objects that invokes the spiritual world. Gwendolyn L. Frye's Talisman includes a Moorish doorway coated with El Ahram newspaper. All spiritual practices seem conjured up by the task of creative reuse, as if the found objects that have withstood the test of time have done so by the grace of the gods....

(Excerpt for larger article)