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green home

The Local Green Art Scene

By Jan Ferrigan

MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, WE DISPLAY A PARTICULAR ART PIECE IN OUR HOMES BECAUSE WE SHARE A PASSION WITH THE ARTIST. THE SAME EMOTION THAT MOLDS CLAY AND INSPIRES A BRUSH STROKE IS AWAKENED IN US IF WE APPRECIATE A WORK. SIMILARLY, IF ARTIST AND BUYER SHARE A LOVE OF THE PLANET, THEY OFTEN SHARE ENTHUSIASM FOR CREATING ART WITH EARTH-FRIENDLY MATERIALS. HERE IN CENTRAL VIRGINIA, SOME LOCAL ARTISTS TAP INTO THE ECO-CONSCIOUS MARKET BY SHAPING ART WITH RECYCLED ITEMS.

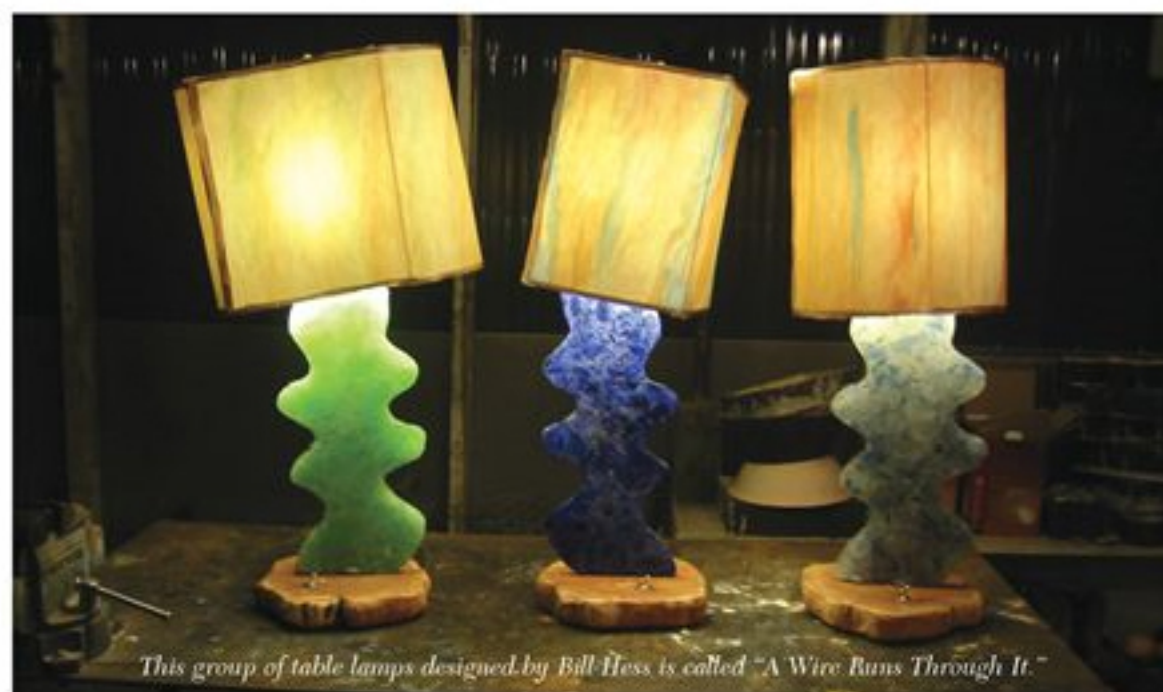
Bill Hess, an artist and engineer who uses recycled glass and metal to create sculptures in Afton, says when artists use environmentally-friendly materials, "it adds a whole other dimension to how they connect to their surroundings."

Hess sources his glass from his household, neighbors and the occasional trip to McIntire Recycling Center. He believes that knowing his materials' history adds soul to his glass tiles, sculptures and popular recycled glass lamps. Hess' view is that all of us, even non-artists "really need to have an understanding of how we fit into the big picture of everything that is related to what we touch," something that is increasingly difficult to do in our global culture.

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But, we can start with recycling. When you put out cardboard boxes on recycling day, they could end up in the workshop of Cardboard Safari, a local business that creates animal trophy heads, rhinos, whimsical boxes and wreaths from recycled cardboard. Owner Chris Jessee says they sell their creations online and in 150 retail shops worldwide. Cardboard Safari's biggest customers are hunters who like their three-dimensional deer heads. Their other items are also catching on as home décor and with people seeking recyclable packages and decorations for green events.

Other local artists who make beauty from waste include Afton's Erika Mitchell of Enchanted Elm Designs who "upcycles" bottle caps, discarded books and toys into eclectic jewelry. There's also Sugar Hollow's Fred Williamson who turns discarded wood from logging sites, roadways and wood piles into functional and artistic wood bowls, and Diana Branscome of Branscome Glass who makes unusual colorful bowls from recycled glass she collects from area restaurants.



This group of table lamps designed by Bill Hess is called "A Wire Runs Through It."

Want to pick up a piece of local green artwork?

Here is a list of online and local places where you can find the work of some of the area's environmentally-aware artists.

Bill Hess (434.996.6850) sells products and displays his portfolio at www.ideasonlegs.com.

Cardboard Safari (1.877.895.9453) sells their creations at Rock, Paper, Scissors and online at www.cardboardsafari.com.

Erika Mitchell's Enchanted Elm jewelry (434.263.5135) can be purchased at Schuyler Community Farmer's Market and online at enchantedelmjewelry.etsy.com.

Fred Williamson's bowls (434.823.1882) are available at local craft fairs and online at www.fredwilliamson.com.

Diana Branscome displays her artistic recycled glass bowls on her web site, www.branscomeglass.com.

Vivian's Art for Living (434.977.8908) on Charlottesville's downtown mall sells artwork from local artists including some items made from recycled and environmentally-friendly materials.

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