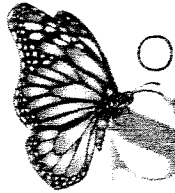


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OUR TOWN - OUR PEOPLE

Spirit of PG

Sculpture by Kris Cowen Set For Last Chance Mercantile

A piece of sculpture by Kris Cowen, fashioned from objects others have thrown away, has been selected for permanent display outside the Last Chance Mercantile at the Monterey Regional Waste Management District (MRWMD) site just north of Marina.

Cowen, a third-generation member of a well-known Pacific Grove family that includes many craftspeople, began doing sculptures only four years ago, when he created a small clock from a vehicle timing chain. He is also an auto mechanic, and many of his pieces, which he describes as abstract sculpture, come from leftover car parts.

Cowen developed the piece that will be placed at the MRWMD by collecting materials at its Last Chance Mercantile and the Material Recovery Facility.

Cowen, who is self-taught, describes the sculpture as "abstract and very open." It is about 6 1/2 feet tall and 4 1/2 to 5 feet wide and is composed of wood, concrete, porcelain and two types of steel – a piece of a bed frame and industrial shelving.

"I grabbed things that I thought I might be interested in working with," says Cowen, who is 37.

Elizabeth O'Malley, executive director of Fine Art Base in Sand City, which



space and support, describes the unnamed work as "super contemporary and very whimsical and sort of like Kris' personality. It is made out of very rugged building materials. It is beautifully balanced . . . and it interacts with the environment and has a winglike steel background. . . . He's a great artist. He's so excited about it."

The MRWMD is no stranger to linking otherwise discarded materials with art.

William Merry, general manager of the MRWMD, says, "Sponsoring an artist to create a sculpture with salvaged materials is an elegant way to demonstrate reuse. We have sponsored art competitions in the past, and today visitors to the District can see artworks made from found objects around our site."

The MRWMD's commitment to reuse is represented by the Last Chance Mercantile, a "reuse store" stocking an ever-changing array of donated and salvaged items, and its motto of "Re-

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duce, Reuse, Recycle."

Fine Art Base is a non-profit organization for emerging artists that was created this year and operates out of a 2,000-square-foot loft in Sand City, says O'Malley, who co-founded it with David Wilkinson.

Along with the MRWMD, Fine Art Base receives support from the Arts Council for Monterey County, Esmeralda Distillery, and Fractured Atlas, which O'Malley describes as a non-profit arts service organization based in New York City.

O'Malley said she appreciates the connection with the MRWMD because "part of our vision is to inspire ecological awareness through the fine arts, and also to encourage artists to use less toxic processes . . . The Regional Waste Management District has a wonderful history of supporting the arts through the Last Chance Mercantile."

O'Malley also expressed appreciation for a "really supportive Sand City Council and Arts Committee."

Fine Art Base will open an exhibit on Saturday, August 22, for Sand City's

West End Celebration. It will consist of found object sculptures, trash art, assemblage collage and recycled materials art. The works will remain on display for about a month at Fine Art Base's loft at 652 Redwood Avenue in Sand City. Cowen's piece will be in a special booth. He was selected earlier to do a sculpture for the MRWMD, and it will be installed outside the Last Chance Mercantile following the West End Celebration.

About being a sculptor, Cowen says, "I know that the piece is working out when I'm not thinking about anything. I have to be very, very present. My goal is not to make work that sells, but to make work that I want to make and that is joyous."

Cowen is a 1991 graduate of Pacific Grove High, where he played football in the stadium named after his grandfather, Howard Cowen, who moved to Pacific Grove as a young boy and has been active in the community ever since.

Artwork at the West End show will be auctioned, with 50 percent going to the artist and 50 percent going to Fine Art Base, says O'Malley.

More information is available at www.fineartbase.org or by calling O'Malley at 917-455-2844.