

EVERYTHING OL



The idea of gathering cast-off items from one's environment and placing them together in new and interesting combinations—what we now call found art—dates back eons. These days, the materials used are most likely to be pulled from the bits and pieces of the modern industrial age or even the post-industrial computer age. With modern sensibilities, “found art” becomes “recycled art,” and frequently one of the goals of the artist is to evoke a certain sense of nostalgia for earlier times, along with of course creating a new piece with a life force of its own.

In the following overview, we look at six Northwest artisans—two from Washington and four from Oregon—whose work represents a range of approaches to creating found art.



D IS NEW AGAIN

By Bob Bruce

Greg Congleton
"Spring Loaded" Detail
28" x 10"



Above: Bonnie Meltzer
"Recording Memory Totem"
78" x 49" x 3"

Far Left: Dan Klennert
"Hound Dog"
40' x 54" x 24"

Left: Chris Giffin
"For Now"
16" x 6" x 5.5"



Greg Congleton
"Coyote"
32" H x 36" L



Greg Congleton
Bend, Oregon

Greg Congleton grew up on a ranch in Eastern Oregon, and his larger-than-life size steel sculptures definitely feel as though they were made to inhabit a landscape of grand vistas. For example, a recently-acquired load of about 1700 pounds of scrap steel represented enough raw material for "about four different projects"—a little over 400 pounds for each.

Unlike other artists who wait for the objects to suggest a subject, Congleton is comfortable conceiving of an object and then finding the right objects to help implement that vision. "Occasionally I'll find a part or two that just kind of triggers the sculpture," he says, "but more often than not, I'm deciding what I want to build, or having the client tell me what they want me to build, and

"When you're dealing with found objects, it's pretty much creative overload all the time."

then figuring out what will work."

He and his brothers had to learn how to repair and maintain the farm equipment as a matter of

necessity. As an adult, he spent 28 years working as a carpenter and builder. In all those experiences, he had to be able to not only attach one thing to another, but do so in a way that was structurally sound. He brings the same sensibilities to his work as a sculptor.

"When I'm building a 2.8 times life size eagle for example, I will have worked out my sketches and done a drawing of what the skeleton of that creature would be so I know I'm looking for a femur that's 36 inches long, or a radius 18 inches long for example. But that doesn't mean I feel boxed in creatively. When you're dealing with found objects, it's pretty much creative overload all the time."

Greg suggests that the best way to "look over the fence" to see what he's doing, is to visit his website, www.gregcongleton.com. You'll find galleries that carry his work, shows where he is exhibiting, and periodic news updates, along with a nice photo gallery. He'll also be displaying his work at the Bend Oregon Summer Festival, July 8 – 10.

Chris Giffin
Seattle, Washington

Chris admits that she is an obsessive collector, and has been all her life.

"I create objects from materials that capture my eye, and that can be recycled materials or found objects. I make functional and sculptural and jewelry objects out of these materials that I collect. I try to take things that have had a past life and then give them a new life."

Much of Giffin's work involves metaphor, specifically concepts having to do with measurement, or man-made divisions applied to natural forms. "Time for me is a real metaphor, so I do make a lot of clocks, and I have a lot of measurement objects in them.

Because time is a measurement, and of course tape measures and rulers and protractors—all that kind of stuff—to me is just the way we have chosen to decipher our need to organize our daily lives."

While Giffin admits that her use of old objects evokes a certain feeling of nostalgia, that's not why she uses them. "I'm not as much trying to bring attention to the age or the vintage of the materials as I'm trying to just use them as the materials for something contemporary."



Joe Pogan
"Bird"
10" x 3" x 5.5"

In recent years, Chris has displayed her work extensively at art festivals around the country. This year, she has scaled back her on-the-road activities and will be attending only a few of the larger shows, including Portland's Art in the Pearl on Labor Day weekend. She welcomes visitors to her studio by appointment and can be reached by phone at 360-428-0923, or via email at giffin@cnw.com.

“I try to take things that have had a past life and then give them a new life.”

**Dan Klennert
Elbe, Washington**

As a child living in Seattle, Dan always got a kick out of “scrounging” around for cast-off pieces of interesting-looking machinery so he could take them home and tinker with them. In school, his favorite class was art. Then, in his early 20s while working as a mechanic, he learned how to weld. Finally he was able to combine his two passions—art



*Dan Klennert
“Charlie”
12' x 14'*



*Larry Peacock
“Destination Space”
18" x 14" x 9.5"*

and scrounging—by making metal sculpture from found objects. That was over 30 years ago.

Klennert now lives in Elbe, and his sculptures—which he calls collectively Spirits of Iron—have been displayed and purchased all across North America. Created from pieces of old farm equipment, vehicles, and industrial machines, Klennert's sculptures are larger-than-life creatures that combine anatomically correct proportions and relationships with volumetric spaces that are sometimes described with only minimal intrusions of metal bar or steel plating.

One of Klennert's life-long dreams was to have a place large enough to display all his sculpture “children.” He now has that space—a four-acre sculpture park that he calls Ex-Nihilo (or roughly “some-



Bonnie Meltzer
"Reflection Vessel"
 45" x 28" x 7"
 Crocheted wire, found objects

thing from nothing") alongside State Route 706 outside the west entrance to Mount Rainier National Park. "I look at that as my canvas. I love having my pieces out there for people to view."

The sculpture park is open pretty much year-round, and there is a small gallery on the grounds that is open most of the time from May through October. Entrance is free. Dan's work is also at www.danielkennert.com.

Bonnie Meltzer, Portland, Oregon

Bonnie calls her work "extreme multimedia," which is her attempt to put a label on found object creations that combine such diverse elements as floppy disks, pencils, CD platters, nylon mounting screws from motherboards, thermal-transfer digital photographs, and crocheted hook-up wire.

"In the 70s I would go to Tektronix and buy things at their country store because they were beautiful, but I had no idea what computers did." The more she learned about computers, however, the more interested she became with the idea of memory—something that has turned into a continuing theme for her.

"I have been caught up in the use of the word 'memory', because so

much of what a computer does is preserve memory. We also forget that a pencil is really a memory tool. We think that computers are absolutely different from all these tools that we already know, but it's only a different way of collecting."

A good introduction to the wide scope of her efforts is on display at her website, www.bonniemeltzer.com. She welcomes tours of her studio by appointment, 503-285-3131.

Joe Pogan, Aloha, Oregon

What do you do if you have a couple thousand nuts and bolts, spoons and forks, butter knives and soup ladles, clockworks, keys, washers, lock strikes, and other assorted bits and pieces and parts of metallic jetsam? If you are Joe Pogan you painstakingly weld them together to create a wide-mouth bass getting ready to gulp a worm, or a hovering hummingbird taking a sip from a wind-bent tulip.

Pogan is a welder by trade, and he says he got started as a sculptor just because he wanted to have some fun. "I had a whole bunch of old tools and stuff and I just started playing around. I made a great big



Joe Pogan
"Fish on Gear"
 16" x 10" x 23"



*Chris Giffin
"BirdBrooch"
2.5" x 3.25" x .25"*

Peacock's work inhabits the world of a future that might have been. His creations are inspired heavily by the Buck Rogers anything-is-possible optimism of 1940s science fiction. They reflect the exuberance of big tail fins, the confidence of Disney's Tomorrowland, and the whimsy of the Jetsons.

"I love Robbie the Robot and classic 30s through 50s science equipment. I try to make objects that people look at and go 'That kind of looks like it came out of a lab-

oratory in 1935.' My background is in mechanical design and engineering, and the aesthetic appeals to me."

Unlike many artists who emphasize or feature the patina of age, he shines and polishes his constructions until they look like they just came off the assembly line. "I guess maybe it's from my years and years of designing products that were going to be manufactured and used. I got very comfortable with the look and feel of a newer product."

Larry's work appears in various art shows, and a couple of his newest pieces were recently installed at Art & Sole on North Interstate in Portland. Visitors are always welcome by appointment to visit his workshop and see what new project he is working on. His phone is 503-356-5520.

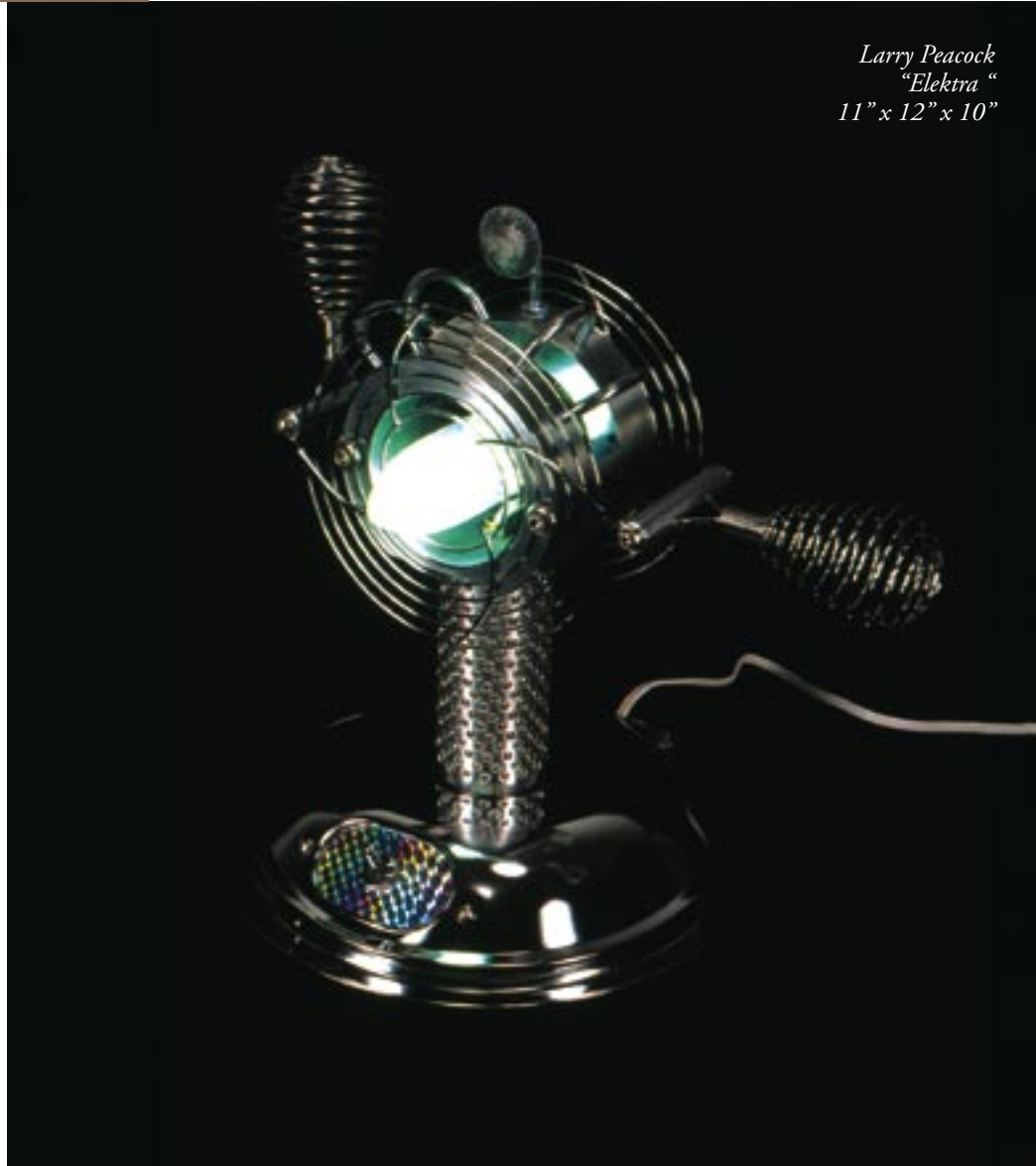
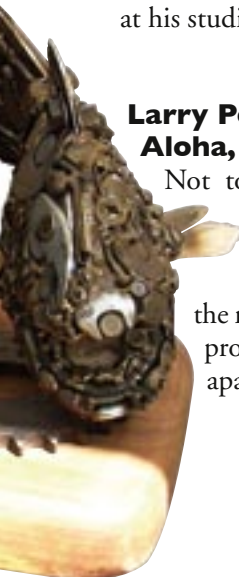
old pig, only it didn't look very much like a pig, so I got a picture of a pig and took some measurements and made another one, and it turned out pretty good. Then it just went from there, making what I enjoy making."

Fish and birds are his main subjects. The average subject might require 100 little pieces and almost as many hours to complete the shape, but he also crafts the occasional larger eagle or owl, and "I'd hate to even try to count the number of pieces in those."

Joe's goal is to have fun with his art, and create a sense of fun in his audience. He even calls his website www.myfunart.com. He displays his work at art shows and festivals, but there is always a good selection at his twin brother's shop, Pogan Gallery, in Lake Tahoe. Or, you can make an appointment to visit him at his studio: 503-642-3165.

**Larry Peacock,
Aloha, Oregon**

Not too far from Joe's studio is another found objects artist who also works in metal— Larry Peacock. But despite the medium and their geographic proximity, their work is worlds apart.



*Larry Peacock
"Elektra"
11" x 12" x 10"*