

ART

Everything Old is New Again

Chester County Art Association's 'Up-cycled Leather in Art' exhibit runs until Nov. 29

By Phyllis Rowan
For Digital First Media

The Chester County Art Association in West Chester is taking the recycling concept to heart in its newest exhibition. "Up-Cycled Leather in Art" has challenged CCAA artist-members to take unused leather and turn it into works of art.

In 2014, Karen Delaney, exhibits curator and former executive director of CCAA, first came in contact with Sikorsky Helicopter in Coatesville in 2014, shortly before it was purchased by Lockheed Martin. The company had earmarked funds for non-profits and donated enough to cover the annual budget for the art association's free art classes in Kennett Square.

Fast forward to 2017 and the helicopter had bolts of upholstery leather that was to be used for custom-made helicopters. "Many times a customer will want and par-

MORE INFORMATION

Chester County Art Association
100 N. Bradford Ave., West Chester,
Open Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For information, visit www.chestercounty-arts.org or call 610-696-5600



SUBMITTED PHOTO

This "Soft Geode" was created by Marsha Biderman and is made of painted blue leather, tiny glass beads sewn on the top of the leather and felt on the outside.

ticular color and then they change their mind," said Delaney. "There was roll after roll of cowhide. They didn't want to throw it away and they couldn't resell it. They thought 'Who in the world would want it and have it be worthwhile.' The (helicopter) design team reached out and said we have a bunch of leather for you if you want it."

The art association knew they could make good use of it. "As artists, we are pack rats. We pick up anything," Delaney said with a laugh. "There will always be a purpose for it ... one of these days."

Well, that day came. In November 2017, the 900 artist-members were invited to come to the association and select leather that they wanted to work with and "do something wonderful with it." Each artist was invited to contribute two pieces to the exhibit.

The one stipulation on the work was that it would not be a craft piece. "Leather lends itself to the functional things, but that's not what we were looking for," she said.

Participating artists got very creative with the cowhide.

There are acrylic and watercolor scenes painted on leather. Printmaking with images of animals is used on another piece of leather. An eye-catching work of art shows a piece of leather with writing "this looked better on the cow" behind chicken wire. While most of the pieces are hanging



SUBMITTED PHOTO

"Take a Walk" by Heather Carey will be featured at Chester County Art Association's "Up-Cycled." The work is a mixed media piece with leather, acrylic and metal. It hangs on the wall from the dog's leash.

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on the walls of the gallery, there is a leather bat with a 6-foot wingspan hanging from the ceiling. A leather "geode" is on display on one of the stands.

CCAA's November Lunch & Learn is inspired by the "Up-cycled Leather" show concept. Assemblage artist Bob Hakun and sculptor Karen Delaney lead the discussion, starting with historical references of using found objects for new purposes in art. Different artists, various artistic approaches, insights into the artists' intent, and social/cultural commentary are part of the dialogue. Hakun also shares some examples of his smaller work for an up-close view of their components and how he creates his pieces. The event will be held Nov. 14, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The discussion from



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Bob Hakun's "Refugee" is an assemblage piece featuring the donated leather, a old baseball mitt and a old boxing glove.

11 a.m. to noon will be followed by lunch. Cost is \$40 for members, \$50 or non-members. Registration required; lunch is included in the cost. "Up-cycled Leather in Art" runs through Nov. 29.