



Chester County Art Association
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Natural Disaster to Beautiful Works of Art!

West Chester, PA (*March, 2019*) – Artists are able to take marvels, and even natural disasters, and transform them into art. This reinvention, and “upcycling,” is one of their talents, using different resources that are available and creating with them. As a community art center, Chester County Art Association (CCAA) strives to encourage our artists to think outside of the box, using nontraditional materials in their practice. As a part of the art community, it is our role to also guide our artists to create opportunities to transform when they arise.

Joyce Neilan, a member of the Windon residential community in West Chester, reached out to us because a beautiful Black Walnut tree had fallen in their neighborhood during a storm in July. The Black Walnut is native to North America and rare in the walnut family in the North East. Unfortunately, this one had been identified as hazardous and was scheduled to be taken down. Joyce’s initial reaction when the tree came down was that it could be turning into something new and equally beautiful.

We were thrilled to share this opportunity with two wood artists in the area to see if they would be able to utilize the downed tree. They accepted the challenge and spoke with Joyce about what they could make. They each took logs from the fallen tree, removing them from the property and into their studios.

Within their studios, each artist used the process known as Wood Turning. Greg Teter lives in West Chester, and Robert Caltabiano also resides in Chester County. Robert pointed out that, “any wood that has a high moisture content is difficult”, so to turn the wood, it first has to dry. In the process, a wood lathe holds the wood by either screwing into it or clamping on it, and equal amounts of pressure are applied to the wood. Once it is secure, a switch is flipped, rotating the wood at various paces. While the wood is turning, the artist uses metal tools to carve and shave away (or out) the excess wood, creating the desired shape, be that a bowl, plate, vase, tray or just a decorative piece.

While both Greg and Robert used wood turning, they both had different approaches, incorporating additional materials like resin, metal and other types of wood. Greg’s piece required a stepped process, which he described as “first - the bowl is rough shaped, left fairly thick and then placed in a bag along with enough walnut wood shavings for it to be completely surrounded. That took several hours. Second - after the bowl dries for 8 to 10 weeks, it is turned again to the finished shape and size. That took several more hours which included adding brass inlay.” Greg only used the wood from the fallen Black Walnut whereas Robert created a segmented bowl that incorporated strips of the Black Walnut along with African Black Wood, and a bit of black resin. The results led to two beautiful bowls.

Through this time intensive process, our CCAA wood artists transformed the pieces of the tree into amazing pieces of artwork. Nothing can compare to the excitement of seeing first-hand how artists find beauty in everything – in this case, taking a fallen tree and making it into functional and decorative artwork. This sense of community is what we strive to bring to Chester County through the arts.

About Chester County Art Association: chestercountyarts.org

Chester County Art Association (CCAA) is a small non-profit art organization dedicated to educating, inspiring and connecting the people of Chester County to and through the arts.

Founded in 1931 by prominent artists and leaders in the community, including N.C. Wyeth, Christian Brinton and William Palmer Lear, CCAA's original group met weekly to draw together and plan exhibits. Often these exhibits included the works of Andrew Wyeth, Horace Pippin, Tom Bostelle, Barclay Rubincam, Philip Jamison, Peter Sculthorpe and Harry Dunn.

CCAA's goal is to inspire creativity and creative thinking. We believe that everyone is an artist with talents waiting to be uncovered. We help develop individual abilities and foster art appreciation along with a sense of artistic community. Our fine art/fine craft classes and workshops teach fundamental concepts as well as advanced techniques. CCAA's 50+ annual art exhibitions, along with lectures and artist talks, provide dialogue and new learning opportunities.

Our continually expanding art programs for all ages include oil painting, acrylic, watercolor, pastel, figure drawing, sculpture, ceramics, photography, digital art, printmaking, mixed media, fiber arts and jewelry.

CCAA's year-round fee-based, low-cost and free art programming is offered in West Chester, Exton, Kennett Square, West Grove, Jennersville and Coatesville, for toddlers, students K-12, adults, English Language Learners, special needs teens/adults, veterans and seniors.

Artist Information

Robert Caltabiano: <https://www.rjcwoodcreations.com/about>

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