

# Creative Approaches to Reuse Effort

By Eric Banford

Sustainability and art. Art and sustainability. Two of Ithaca's passions come together for Celebrate ReUse!, an innovative art exhibit curated by Finger Lakes ReUse and hosted by the Community School of Music and Arts (CSMA), 330 E. State St. in Ithaca, throughout August.

The exhibit includes works of art that incorporate materials that would otherwise end up in a landfill. Over two dozen pieces will be featured, ranging from practical to whimsical, recognizable to totally reincarnated.

According to information from exhibit organizers, "Celebrate ReUse! is meant to inspire visual artists and community members to continue shifting the paradigm and take reuse to a new level. Creative reuse enlightens and sparks imagination, demonstrating that artistic creativity and learning can take place anywhere and everywhere—and with all manner of materials—and that 'junk' has value for those who can see meaning and aesthetics beyond the discarding of things."

Artists collected materials from nature, the roadside, area dumpsters and reuse businesses such as Salvation Army, Sew Green and, of course, Finger Lakes ReUse. Materials for their works came from an incredible array of salvaged stuff: computer magnets, beach string, fishing line, lobster-trap doors, reclaimed lumber and much more. All of this makes for a fascinating exhibit.

The opening will be during First



Photo provided

"Landfill Bride" by Nora Littell is featured in Finger Lakes ReUse's August art exhibit at CSMA.

Friday Gallery Night on Aug. 2 from 5 to 8 p.m. at CSMA. There will be a wine and cheese reception with some of the artists on hand, and staff from Finger Lakes ReUse will talk with anyone interested in the world of reuse. "To us, it's a fun party and a way to meet people who have a shared interest in this type of creative endeavor," says Diane Cohen, executive director of Finger Lakes ReUse.

Cohen collaborated with CSMA's director Robin Tropper-Herbel, who also has some pieces in the exhibit, to plan this event. "Robin and I have been talking about this for a long time, and we thought this

would be good timing. We're hoping some students get inspired when they come back to town," Cohen says.

"We're delighted by this opportunity to partner with the ReUse Center on this unique show," says Tropper-Herbel. "It's a pleasure to partner with other nonprofits in the community who aren't necessarily art organizations. The goal is to showcase the vast potential of found, repurposed, reclaimed and unwanted materials that artists use in their art-making process."

"Diane and I got talking about a show to showcase art where reused materials are the focus. It helps highlight what's available at the ReUse Center and what their mission is," she adds.

Finger Lakes ReUse has been operating for five years, and this is its first foray into the world of creative reuse, according to Cohen. "As a startup, we've really had our hands full with practical reuse and figuring out the operations of a reuse center. Now felt like the time to focus on the art aspect, to raise awareness and inspire people. And we feel like we really tapped a major vein as far as interest from the community. There are a lot of people shopping at ReUse who are doing phenomenal things with the stuff they buy, so we wanted to shed light on the work they are doing."

One of Cohen's favorite pieces is "Landfill Bride" by Nora Littell, which she describes as "a kind of eerie bridal gown on a hanger." The piece is made of discarded grocery bags, with two unmatching flip-flops for feet. "It's very gothic and really makes you think," she says

with a laugh. "We have a wide variety of pieces, all with different materials made into art, which is why we cast an open, wide net hoping for all sorts of different stuff."

Paul Colucci is a local artist participating in the show who works predominately with wood. "At this show, I'm showing two sides of what I do. One is strictly artistic and whimsical. The other is reusing stuff to make functional, sculptural objects like cupboards, cabinets, tables, platters, etc. Anything you find in your home, I can make out of recycled material and make it whimsical or have an artistic flair," he says.

Having worked with Historic Ithaca for years, Victoria Romanoff brings an interesting perspective to her artwork. "When you work with an old building, you work with old materials, rather than replace them if you can help it," she says. "I never had the opulence of having a lot of new materials, so I started recycling when I started artwork some 50 years ago. I collect lots of different materials, look at them for a while, make friends with them."

"Sometimes you buy a drawer and it is a drawer for the rest of its life. But it could become a cocktail table or any number of things. When I catch something out that is lonely, I take it home to my garage, which has become a sort of gallery space. Then I take a hatchet to it and make it be obedient," she jokes.

When asked about Ithaca's passion for both sustainability and art, Romanoff feels that the CSMA exhibition is the perfect marriage of the two. "This is the perfect com-

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## Fresh Air

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the time. They play capture the flag and forest sports. We teach them how to make shelters and what they can and cannot eat as well as other basic survival skills. It's fun for the kids and for the counselors, too."

According to Towner, "We don't have to have a lot of infrastructure in place to make use of this property. We're bringing ten groups of youngsters up here every summer, with about 40 to 60 in a group. The kids and the counselors all have a great time. We also come rain or shine, unless the weather is really bad. If it's just a little wet, we bring a tarp, and the kids don't mind. They still have a great time. A number of groups use this space at various times: Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Primitive Pursuits, New Roots School, Cayuga Addiction Recovery and D.A.P. to name a few."

State Senate bill 3921 essentially repeats the language of the Assembly legislation. Both bills can be read in full at [assembly.state.ny.us](http://assembly.state.ny.us) or at [nysenate.gov](http://nysenate.gov). Neither bill purports to have fiscal implications for the state.

## Shoppers

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of summer, Rosie will also be available at the Cortland P&C location.

Retailers pay Rosie \$1,500 to integrate their point-of-sale system and \$99 per month to use the system. In addition, they're charged a small referral fee to cover credit-card transaction costs. As soon as the retailers' items are in the Rosie system and joint marketing materials have been developed, they handle



Frank Towner of the YMCA, with State Senator Michael Nozzolio and Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton.

transactions from Rosie, customers pay Rosie and Rosie pays the retailer.

Today the Rosie team comprises four full-time employees and graduate students at Cornell, one full-time employee from Columbia University and 10 undergraduate interns from Cornell, Columbia and Wellesley. In addition to full-timers Nickitas and Ambrose, there are Mike Ryzewic, CTO; Junho Kim, head of product; and Matthew Ford, vice president of execution.

The energetic group, which has spent the previous 10 months together (since Rosie launched during Startup Weekend at Cornell in 2012), is divided into three teams: development, product and business. Ambrose says that what makes this an effective team is that everyone is up to speed on the latest technology developments and is included in every strategic decision.

"One of the trends for startups is

stand-up meetings," says Ambrose. "Every day at 11 a.m. we have 15-minute stand-up meetings at our current location, the third floor of 409 College Ave., which belongs to the Student Agencies eLab for Cornell entrepreneurs. We're a very enthusiastic group committed to building a new model for grocery stores, and everyone's input matters."

Equally enthusiastic are the Cornell professors who have supported the Rosie team as members juggle the demands of school and business. Nickitas and Ambrose, who say their mentors love helping entrepreneurs like them, listed Dan Cohen, Zach Shulman, Thomas Schryver, Steven Gal and Rhett Weiss.

"It's not common for students to launch a company while attending a university. I take classes at Cornell that directly support what I need to do with Rosie," Nickitas

says. "This way I can directly apply the lessons in the classroom with my real-life business."

For more information, visit [www.rosieapp.com](http://www.rosieapp.com).

## Creative

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munity for it. People are responsive to these sorts of ideas, and there are a lot of creative people here. Much more could be done, so I'm glad Diane has decided to do something like this," she says.

For more information, go to <http://www.fingerlakesreuse.org/>.

## Hearing Set on Power Plant Plans

The New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) has scheduled a Public Information Forum and Public Statement Hearing as part of their effort to examine options to address local electricity reliability issues presented by the proposed mothballing of the coal burning power plant on Cayuga Lake owned by Cayuga Operating Company, the successor to AES/Cayuga.

The forum and hearing will be held Monday, July 29, beginning at 6 p.m. in the Lansing Middle School auditorium, 6 Ludlowville Road, Lansing.

Two options are being examined by the PSC. One is the conversion from coal to gas (repowering) by the Cayuga Operating Company. The other involves NYSEG building transmission reinforcements.

Public comments may be submitted electronically to Hon. Jeffrey C. Cohen, acting secretary, at [secretary@dps.ny.gov](mailto:secretary@dps.ny.gov).

Photo by Patricia Brhel



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