

Museum Trash

Discarded items or waste from the museum provide a bountiful resource in appropriating the found objects to give them a second life. Most items are not encountered by chance, but deliberately picked out of the trash of the museum knowing that they were deemed useless for their original intent. The tactic of using museum garbage brings up questions about reconfiguring the appropriation of junk in ways that raise awareness of the nature of the objects in modern life, consumption practices, recycling, and waste. As museum budgets expand for shows and the lower employee salaries at museums stagnate the connection between waste and money at the museum indicates that the worker is not as important, nor is the wasteful behavior.

Sustainable energy and the environment are the center of political, economical and social debates. As the museum discards material, I contest their actions of waste by recycling.

By reconfiguring discarded museum display cases into greenhouses the recycled art offers an environmental perspective and new purpose that leads to a less wasteful behavior. The greenhouse display cases create a time-based art that has both physical and temporal dimensions and unfold to the viewer a new environment and a sustainable future over time.

The idea for creating greenhouses from discarded display cases came to me after the museum disallowed me from donating old and useless display cases to artists and schools. The museum deemed it not important purpose for me to give the museum's discarded display cases to poor artists or struggling schools. When the museum told me I was not allowed to donate old display cases they began to destroy the display cases when throwing them away. I then repurposed the broken pieces to make greenhouses. The greenhouses now create a year round display of beautiful plants and home for insects, amphibians, and small mammals.

The museum not only threw away display cases they discarded contemporary artist materials unused from installations.

Waste is an accessory of luxury. The museum culture thrives on the ability to create new shows. Attributing value to items creates a hierarchy of materials and products, and when the byproducts become waste they are and purposely damaged so that they cannot be reused in there original intent.

Converting waste into other useful forms by bringing objects new life is recycling. When the object becomes art, the usefulness of the final form not only has a monetary value as a cultural item, but an aesthetic value as a transformative item.

Shawn Kerns