

Artist creates works from cast-away objects and nature's litter

By Brian Lockhart

While some people may see a discarded medical mask on the side of the road as litter, Hockley Valley artist Miles Cohen views it as a potential object that he can use in his artwork.

Miles routinely gathers such material as well as nature's cast-offs like leaves and bark and reuses them in his work.

A psychiatrist by profession, Miles retired and moved permanently to his home in Hockley Valley, where he is inspired by the hills and nature surrounding him.

While he dabbled in art previously, it was his retirement that allowed him to pursue his artistic passion at his leisure.

Miles describes the style of his work as 'multi-media abstract,' and he uses a reduce, reuse, and recycle philosophy.

He can use almost any type of discarded item in his work which he shapes to create form, then colours it with acrylic paint.

'I originally started using natural materials, like sweepings from the deck and lawn cuttings and things like that. It made some interesting abstracts,' Miles explained. 'I then became focused on things that had been discarded or thrown out, and how you can use stuff like that to make interesting art pieces. It's a combination of natural and the man-made world.'

Finding his source of materials in many places, Miles will see something that he thinks will work well in one of his projects, even though someone else may have decided to toss it away.

'I can use things like Styrofoam and plastic bags,' he explained of his source materials. 'I attach them to a canvas and then use acrylics over top. The main recurring theme in my work is how you can take items that have been cast off and how you can use that to create art.'

His practice of reusing discarded items, both from nature and man-made, provides the opportunity to experiment with different textures, forms, and themes when creating his art.

He describes his work as coming from 'an interest in the abstract with a deep environmental sensitivity, making use of the discards and castoffs from both the natural and manufactured worlds,' adding, 'Anything from Saran Wrap, plastics, and store receipts to lawn cuttings and plant seeds,' can be used in his art.

The result is a three-dimensional type of work on canvas that not only provides a stunning visual, it can leap out from the canvas in a variety of textures and colours. His work is dynamic and thought-provoking.

Miles uses acrylic paints 'appreciating their ease of use, quick drying time, and vibrant colours that can be mixed. He uses different methods to apply the acrylic paint to his work in progress.

Living in Hockley Valley provides an opportunity to be both inspired by the surrounding landscape and explore the area to find new materials for his work.

A member of the South Simcoe Arts Council, Miles' work can be seen at the FortyOne Local Art Market in Alliston and will also be on display at the public library in September.

To see some of Miles' work, you can visit online at Instagram and search for milescohenartwork.