

Recycled Art



Basics of Recycled Art as a Business

With the amount of waste in our society, the possibilities for upcycling, repurposing or creating recycled art are endless. Whether it is scrap metal turned into robot piggy banks or garden art or plumbing gaskets upcycled into jewelry, recycled artists essentially transform trash into treasure; creating a new, desirable product that is also environmentally friendly and often utilizes affordable or free materials.

Making Recycled Art a Business

As a resourceful state, New Mexicans' creativity abounds in making new items out of old material. The trick is turning this creativity into a business and earning money from it. Below are a few different recycled art enterprise ideas.

- **Start Creating** – If you don't already have a product, search online for inspiration and ideas on how to repurpose items. Be sure to consider what "feed stock" you have of discarded materials. It's good to build an inventory of your product. Then you can participate in any local art fair or approach galleries, gift stores or local cafes to exhibit and sell your work. Many cafes like having local art on their walls to help decorate the space.
- **Promote Your Work** – When traveling be sure to bring samples of your products with you and approach local stores about carrying your work. Doing a bit of research before you travel is smart so you can set up meetings.
- **Hit The Road** – Art markets and fairs abound throughout the country and many artists make their living by selling their products at these markets. A good New Mexico event to investigate is Recycle Santa Fe Art Festival, held each fall in Santa Fe (www.recyclesantafe.org). When researching art markets consider booth fees and travel expenses and ask the coordinator how much foot traffic the event brings in each year. Ask around. Other artists will know if it's a well-organized and successful event or if it's less established and therefore a bit of a financial risk.
- **Launch an Online Store** – Sites such as Etsy, specialize in hand-made, one-of-a-kind items, such as recycled art.
- **Stay Positive** – rejection is part of the art world and it's important to persevere.

Potential End-Markets

- Art Fairs and Markets
- Online Sales
- Retail Shops
- Galleries
- Café Exhibits
- Friends and Family

Finding Customers

- Social Networking
- Direct Mail
- Relationship Building – You should have the contact info for anyone that's bought your work and keep them informed as to what you're up to.

“Recycled art helps to make one person's trash another person's treasure.”

Art Pricing

Pricing varies widely by location, competition and the overall market. One example on how to set pricing is outlined below. This is just one option. Contact your local Small Business Development Center for further information on setting prices (www.nmsbdc.org).

- Set an hourly studio rate for yourself
- Determine the material costs per item
- Time how long it takes you to make one item
- Calculate the base price based on the time, hourly wage and material costs
- Be sure to factor in all insurance and licensing fees
- For a great resource for additional information and to help you determine your studio rate visit <http://www.artbusiness.com/artists-how-to-price-your-art-for-sale.html>

Recycled Art Case Studies

Gilbert Candelaria came to Santa Fe from Phoenix in 2005 to be a part of the Recycle Santa Fe Art Festival, a weekend long art market featuring art made from at least 75% recycled materials. He had a blast, fell in love with the City and community and moved here with his wife, Robin in 2006.

As a trained cardiology x-ray technician that's worked in healthcare for nearly 20 years, art has always been his escape. Growing up, art was a big part of his life and recycled art sparked from his resourceful nature....he needed furniture in his early twenties so he made chairs out of old pallets. He saw a 1991 Garbology exhibit in Arizona and a toaster next to an old lightbulb caught his attention so he started turning discarded houseware items into nightlights. Now toaster or tea kettles, turned lamp is one of his staples.

Candelaria continues to work primarily with metals and in 2011 he quit his job in healthcare to pursue art fulltime. Currently he gets his art to market by attending a few art shows each year and completing custom orders. He noted that for him attending art shows, talking to potential customers and sharing his passion leads to custom orders. As Candelaria puts in, "In a word so focused on efficiency and productivity, people want relationships and community. Getting to know your artists is a great way to feel connected to one's community and the world we all live in. It's sharing a common story."

Mitch Berg has always been a collector of items with cool shapes and forms. He often brings home pieces of scrap metal found along local arroyos and riverbeds and has created a full-time business upcycling those materials with fused glass. He travels throughout the country to sell his wares at art markets and has been accepted into highly competitive venues, such as New Orleans' Jazz Festival. He has also been invited to lead studio tours to the International Folk Art Museum based in Santa Fe to show his creations to collectors.

Mitch notes that, "Being a frustrated writer, I use glass to tell stories. I fuse and slump colored glass and wire. I then combine these wired glass forms with a variety of other materials to create figurative sculpture. I incorporate lampworked glass into my sculpture, making soft glass and pyrex parts: heads, shoes, legs, hats, etc. Finally I add a plethora of found objects, thrift store finds, and natural materials to expand my unique storytelling language."

Christine Marie Davis creates recycled jewelry by repurposing cast off metal items such as knitting needles and vintage metal buttons. She smashes the metal to create unique textures and sells her jewelry and apparel at art fairs and online.

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Above: Recycled Metal Art by Gilbert Candelaria



Above: Recycled Metal & Fused Glass Art by Mitch Berg



Above: Discarded knitting needle bracelets by Christine Marie Davis