



NATION & WORLD / A4 OPEN DOORS

Massive crowd turns out for first service at Charleston church since massacre



LIFE / A6 ART'S PARTS

Montecito artist's pieces are crafted from a variety of discarded items



WEATHER



Mostly sunny
Coast: 74/56
Inland: 85/53
COMPLETE
FORECAST A8

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75¢

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STYLE & Salon



HELENA DAY BREESE / NEWS-PRESS PHOTOS

Whimsical snakes made from old bottle caps are among the pieces of art Ellen Lehrer Orlando, a Montecito artist, designs from objects she finds at charity shops, garage sales, the street, the beach and antique shops. Top left, some of the pieces are named, like "Heart Attack," a 6-inch-tall papier-mâché heart with hundreds of sharp nails jutting out from its exterior. Top middle, Mrs. Orlando made this small colorful bowl from strips of paper from a Santa Barbara Museum of Art catalog. At right, "Nest Shrine" was inspired by a bird's nest that Mrs. Orlando's mother found on her property.



'Blank canvas is a scary process'

ART

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figurine, for example.

Smaller versions are created from Morton Salt containers.

Some of the pieces are named, like "Heart Attack," a 6-inch-tall papier-mâché heart with hundreds of sharp nails jutting from its exterior.

"Nest Shrine" was inspired by a bird's nest that Mrs. Orlando's mother found on her property.

"I put the nest in a plain brown box, added a ceramic bird and a tiny booklet that says 'Notes for bird watching.' The top has an arch made from an old picture frame," Mrs. Orlando said.

Inspired by a Caesar salad, she used the empty tin from the anchovy ingredient to make a wall hanging she calls "Keeping an Eye on My Head."

"I recycled the head of a small statue that was broken by my cat, Darla," said Mrs. Orlando, who makes amusing snakes out of old bottle caps.

She finds that the "blank canvas is a scary process, not knowing what a piece will become. Sometimes the work has a mind of its own and can organically grow into something that bears no resemblance to the original idea. When this happens, I feel I must respect the current creation and let it take me where it wants to go."

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HELENA DAY BREESE / NEWS-PRESS

A Scotch whisky container, at right, sits beside another that has been transformed into decorative art.

Discard designs

Throwaways turned into pieces of art

By MARILYN MCMAHON
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

Old bottle caps, abandoned bird nests, empty anchovy tins and Morton Salt containers are transformed into exquisite, whimsical and provocative pieces of art by Ellen Lehrer Orlando, a Montecito artist who upcycles, reinvents and repurposes objects she finds at charity shops, garage sales, the street, the beach and antique shops.

"Nothing gets thrown out," said Mrs. Orlando, 62, during an interview in the living room of the spectacular two-story home she shares with her husband, Tom Orlando.

There are panoramic views from every room in the architecturally distinctive structure on an acre and a half.

On the lower level, down a winding staircase, is her studio, where she creates her ELO Designs that include wall art, boxes and tins, collage plates, frames, jewelry and "adorings," which are beaded and decorated good luck charms for door handles, knobs and hooks.

"I use sea glass, driftwood and other treasures found on my many beach walks in some of my artwork. I never know where the next supply will come from. Almost anything can be used to create something," said Mrs. Orlando, picking up a small colorful bowl that she made from a Santa Barbara Museum of Art catalog.

After cutting the pages into strips about an inch and a half wide, she trifolded them and rolled them up to form the bowl shape, which was then glued with Mod Podge, an acid-free brand of glue.

An exquisite six-sided box was once "an ugly brown paper box" that Mrs. Orlando covered with decoupage on the sides and cover and added clear marbles for the base and handle, from which a gold chain was draped.

Her major focus is assemblage art, using discarded items to create not only a thing of beauty but also a statement.

"I believe assemblage art can be just as beautiful as other art forms, such as painting or sculpture. Assemblage, like painting, uses color, light, form, technique and conveys meaning. I handpick items, subject matter, colors and composition in the same way a painter does. I get the majority of my inspiration when going about my daily life," said Mrs. Orlando, who studied art and art history at Los Angeles City College and graduated from Cal State Northridge with a bachelor's degree in food science.

After six "frustrating" months working for a food brokerage company, she became office manager for her father's machine manufacturing company.

"When my parents retired and moved to Montecito in 1991, my husband and I took over the business and continued to run it when we moved here in 1998. We sold it in 2007 but remain involved in property management," said Mrs. Orlando, the mother of a son and grandmother of 5-year-old twins.

Although she has never had formal training in art, other than several Adult Ed classes, art is "imbedded" in her roots.

"In his later years, my father began creating and is now a prolific metal sculpture artist, who also uses found objects to make huge creations. Two of his uncles were oil painters and sculptors. My sister, Karen Lehrer, is a painter who lives in town," said Mrs. Orlando, whose parents are Seymour and Shirley Lehrer.

Among the amazing pieces Mrs. Orlando designs are the ones that emerge from the round cardboard boxes that contain the bottles of Scotch her husband buys at Trader Joe's.

Doors are cut in one side. The interior is covered with decoupage. Colorful gift wrap is applied to the exterior and ornate metal pieces are added to the base and top.

Each has a different item hanging inside — a large crystal from a chandelier or small

FYI

For more information about ELO Designs, call 565-9559 or visit www.elodesignstudio.com.

Please see ART on A7