

THE DIRT ON YARD ART DAY

by Deborah Triplett

What started out as a late night idea while staring at my monitor on Facebook grew into a citywide project — and beyond. I was inspired by a posting that I saw for artists worldwide to submit their art for an outside exhibition in Times Square. From there my mind meandered to an idea that I have always wanted to hang my own photos from tree limbs and have an outside photography show. Then the progression of my thoughts went to how I have always loved yard art and outsider art — you know those quirky things you see in people's front yards — stone statues of deer, squirrels, elves and such. And those artists known as "outsider" artists who will make art out of everything from bubble gum (yes there is a woman in Georgia who does this) to cast-offs and other's trash, like the phenomenal artist named Tressa Prisbrey who created a nationally recognized installation called "Bottle Village" (www.bottlevillage.com).

I'm just drawn to those who must create, no matter their circumstances. In fact it is my belief that as human beings, we all have this need. And because I am a gardener and a front yard culture kid... my inspiration for Yard Art Day was born.

I started the Facebook group page back in mid-April and within 48 hours over 300 people had joined. As of September, there were nearly 1600 members on Facebook. And on the Yard Art Day map, there were over 260 participating yards representing neighborhoods all over Charlotte — and even as far away as Telluride, Colorado. I must add though that Plaza Midwood lived up to its reputation and along with NoDa, we had the most yards participating.

I must mention the great support we got from The Common Market, who paid for our wonderful Yard Art Day signs. But plenty others jumped on the YAD train and helped us out with our budget — including the Arts and Sciences Council who awarded us a grant from The Quasimodo Project, as well as donations from artists and individuals too.

I did have a "dream wants" list in my head for Yard Art Day. Here are a few...

- ...that people enjoy their own front yards instead of just their backyards. I'm convinced we'd speak more to our neighbors if this happened. We'd be more mindful of our neighbors and their kids, and I'm guessing that it might even have a positive affect on crime. This is a tradition from the 1950s that was a good thing.



Yard Art Day was the idea of photographer Deborah Triplett, shown in her front yard.

In fact, I learned from this experience. You can now find me in my own front yard sitting sometimes late in the afternoon because I have opted to put out permanent chairs — not for décor, but for using. So stop and say hello if you see me there.

- ...that people remember that inner kid — the one who opened that box of crayons for the first time and drew a stick figure without any fear of judgment, but simply for the joy of creating.
- ...that this be an exhibition without any critiquing allowed. In fact, it was to be more about the process than the end result. This would be one day that everyone could be creative.
- ...that viewers of yard art would go into neighborhoods that they might not normally visit. Thus, we all would cross boundaries. Get to know one another. Open up to the concept that we all have more in common than uncommon. That art would bind us all.
- ...that I get to, along with friends, take a "dance-walk" down Matheson Avenue to celebrate YAD. And a handful even showed up in the pouring rain



Above: Various Yard Art Day expressions from throughout the Midwood/NoDa area. Photography courtesy of Deborah Triplett.

to join us. Go to YouTube for an explanation — http://youtu.be/lb3Duz_6a9M.

And my dream for the future... that Yard Art Day becomes an annual event every Labor Day. I would like to see YAD go national, maybe even global. We had folks from Germany and The Philippines ask about joining, so it's not that farfetched.

I was on a high on Yard Art Day as people drove by, waved, stopped and chatted, and for one day I felt as though I had made some small difference in our wonderful city. And I loved reading all those stories of how people had "get-togethers," did collaborative art, or how someone was inspired and for one day thought of him or herself as an artist.

My only regret was I had no time to get out and about and see the work myself. But social media saved the day. Some in our own neighborhood that were outstanding were the gorgeous fabric flowers, butterflies and a bee that Esa Weinreb created. And I loved the Merry Pranksters bus with a cutout for your own face to take a photo that Colleen Taylor and her kids and friends made. Or something as simple as a neighbor

down the street from me who put large white balloons in amidst the trunk of their large crepe myrtle.

But the truth is there were so many I loved all over the city. The incredible pyrotechnics of Day Hixon's yard art in NoDa. Theron Ross's metal-smithing created giant metal spiders. Kali Ferguson held traditional African story telling in her front yard. Ilisa Millermoon made a six foot tall goddess out of floatation material left over from pier building. The kids at Plaza Presbyterian Day School put their art on the fence. (This brought me to joyful tears after one exhausting day.) Sharon Dowell used old plastic blinds and plastic bags to create whimsical creatures for her front yard. Joanna Fadel wrapped her trees in fabric. The list of all the creativity I witnessed is endless — from political art, musicians, paintings, sculpture, and photography... all mediums were well represented.

I'm reminded of the very first song I ever learned as a toddler which says, "If everyone would light one little candle, what a bright world this would be." Yard Art Day was and is my candle.

See more Yard Art photos on next page.

More Yard Art Day photos...



View more Yard Art Day photos at <http://debtrip.zenfolio.com/yardartdayphotos/slideshow>

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Ask The Real Estate Expert

Dear Real Estate Expert: What are some affordable ideas we can use to help create curb appeal? ...*Midwood Neighbor*

Dear Midwood Neighbor:

1. Your mom was right, cleaning out and cleaning up are great starting points. Clean out the gutters, trim up bushes, trees and dead head those seasonal plants.
2. Landscaping can be the least expensive way to make an impression...plantings, pavers, large pots and flowerboxes can all add charm. Also, make a plan, many plants and bulbs take a season to perform at their best, while April showers bring May flowers, planting bulbs in the fall will bring next spring and summer's full array of colors.

3. Making your front door as welcoming as possible with a fresh coat of paint may be just the thing you need. Try an attractive accent color and adding new hardware to give it snap.
4. It's always good to be mindful of your neighbor's color schemes before you begin.
5. And if you have a little more to spend, fresh exterior paint can really bring a house to life. Three colors are generally the most you should use and the local paint store has fabulous color pallets already matched for you.

For more ideas and some before and after photos check out <http://www.exterior-home-improvement-ideas.com>

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