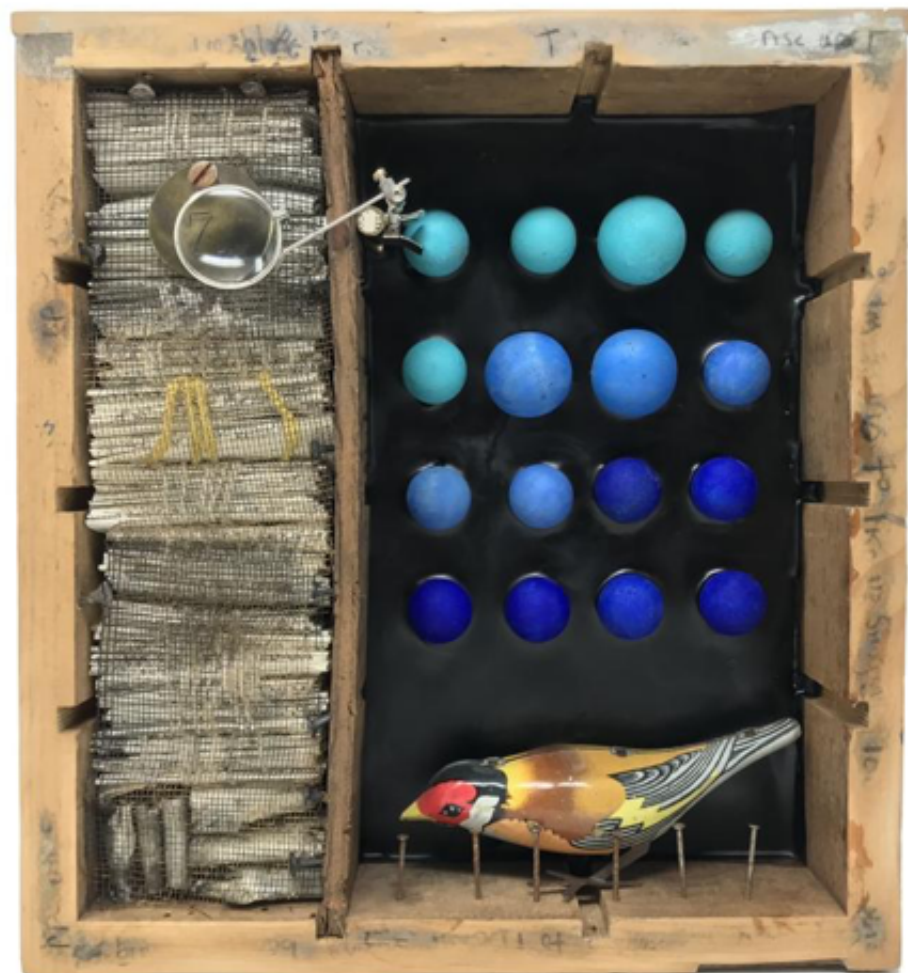


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Robin Howard's assemblage works transform ordinary objects into art

BY SCOTT D. ELINGBURG SPECIAL TO THE POST AND COURIER

1 HR AGO



"Songs of Freedom 5" by Robin Howard

PROVIDED

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Robin Howard and I are discussing the digestion habits of owls. And dissected animals.

“I have a policy against using bones,” she says with a laugh.

It’s not as macabre as you might think. It’s all part of a larger conversation about Howard’s her process and the found items she won’t be using in her three-dimensional assemblage p

Because Howard’s art, scenes displayed in boxes layered with black encaustic wax, can be deliberately celebratory. She is not out to plumb the depths of darkness, but she is capable of capturing deep emotions in her work: darkness and light, together. But now, she’s attuned to joy and happiness. Defiantly so.

“I’m bound and determined that we are going to reclaim happiness,” she says. “I think if I weren’t a defiant person, I wouldn’t be where I am. Because I had to defy everything I was taught to believe in order to become myself. Now, I’m just defiant about being joyful.”



“Songs of Freedom 3” by Robin Howard
PROVIDED

And becoming herself was no easy task, either. Howard grew up in a small town under wat parents. That meant no movies and no **books** that weren’t church-approved.

“I wanted to read something besides the Bible so badly,” Howard says. “As soon as I could tr someone into teaching me to read, I did.”

Then one day the bookmobile arrived, and Howard discovered a host of new realms and n worlds to explore. Science fiction and fantasy appealed to her, especially J.R.R. Tolkien’s “L of the Rings” trilogy.

“That was it for me,” she says. “It was everything all at once.”

Couple that with an accidental Christmas gift from her mother, and Howard discovered a path of creativity, analysis and exploration.

“My mom accidentally gave me a roll of Scotch tape when I was little. She wrapped it up in my Christmas present,” Howard says. “And I was so excited about the tape because now two things can go together that didn’t go together before.”

Which may explain her attraction to social and material sciences such as anthropology and chemistry, both fields that Howard worked in. Add in mathematics and almost all facets of science and art are represented in her assemblage pieces.

“Assemblage means something to me as an archaeologist because of the things that cultures leave behind. Even if you make them up, there are whole stories there,” she says.

But when it comes to telling stories with art, Howard would rather proffer a starting point for a viewer than impose her own narrative. For her, that’s not what makes art “come alive.”

“If you see something and it brings up an emotion within you, that’s the alchemy of art,” she



“Songs of Freedom 4” by Robin Howard
PROVIDED

Alchemy is a fitting descriptor for what Howard does. It's the transformation of seemingly ordinary objects into exquisite new creations. And it is some combination of magical, mysterious processes that feeds imagination for all parties involved. It's the culmination of all the different elements — science fiction, psychology, archaeology, mathematics and more — that Howard combines to create new worlds.

“If I just had to give over my story to people, I don't know that it's all that interesting,” she says. “I don't really make art as a social commentary. Maybe if you look closely, but it's more about this intimate dance with the viewer. I'm only 50 percent of the process, the other 50 percent is the reaction the viewer has.”

That means that now it's time for you to go and help complete the story.

Robin Howard's art can be seen in several galleries, including her exhibit, “Songs of Freedom,” in the Miller Gallery.

She is online at www.robinhowardart.com.



“Charleston Box 30” by Robin Howard
PROVIDED



“The Sweetest Heaven” by Robin Howard

PROVIDED