

# Editor's Letter

What exactly does it mean to be "green" these days? Using only sustainable resources? Leaving a smaller carbon footprint? Conserving resources and energy? Reusing and repurposing materials? Dumpster diving and scrutinizing items left out on the curb? As Kermit the Frog sings, "it's not that easy bein' green."

Yet art teachers have been "green" for some time (often out of necessity), leading the way as incredibly resourceful reusers and recyclers. Besides inventing uses for materials and supplies with which to make art, art teachers also have a wealth of "green" artists to share with their students.

Introducing students to art made from recycled, reused, or repurposed materials provides an engaging exploration of contemporary artists whose work is often simultaneously humorous and thought-provoking.

To me, there is a wonderful moment when you simultaneously recognize the objects of which an artwork is made and what they have become. I was recently reminded of this at two different exhibitions in Washington, DC, where I enjoyed watching the reaction of visitors to artworks made from unexpected, but ordinary, materials.

One was a permanent installation hanging at the Washington, DC Convention Center, part of the largest public art collection in the capital, valued at over \$4 million. *Five Easy Pieces*, by Donald Lipski, is a collection of giant mobiles made from everyday objects like tennis rackets, kayaks, guitars, bar stools, and bicycles.

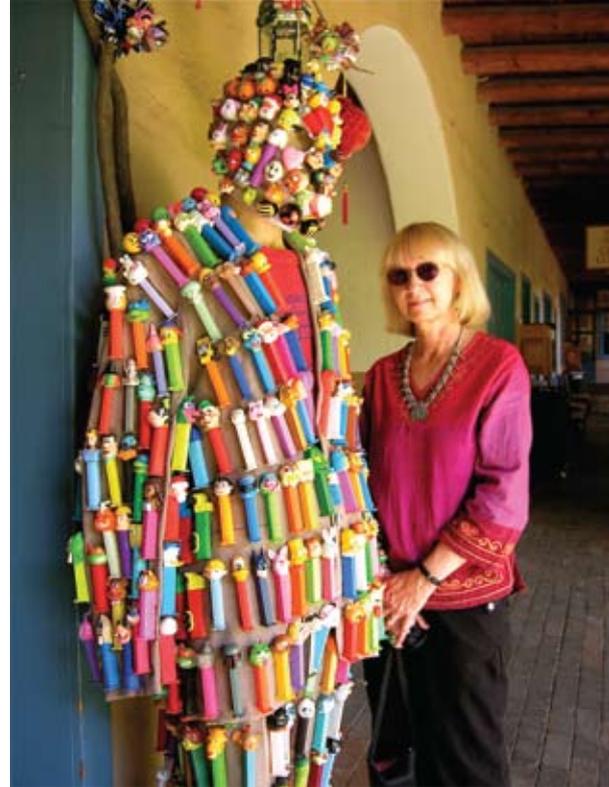
The other was *Strange Comfort*, an exhibition by Brian Jungen at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) on the National Mall. Jungen uses mass-produced ordinary objects such as shoes, golf bags, and plastic chairs to make sculptures that are charged with layers of meaning.

Thanks to the wonders of the Internet, you can share both *Five Easy Pieces* and *Strange Comfort* with your students online. And, if you happen to be in Washington, DC, *Five Easy Pieces* is a permanent exhibit and *Strange Comfort* will be on view at the NMAI until August 8, 2010.

I think Kermit would enjoy these two exhibitions. After all, the prototype Kermit was made from a discarded green ladies' coat and two ping pong balls. And I agree, as I think you will, too, with his final thoughts on being green: "it's what I want to be."

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*Nancy Walkup*



*An engaging repurposing of Pez dispensers at a candy store in Santa Fe, New Mexico.*



*Crux (as seen from those who sleep on the surface of the earth under the night sky), 2009. Steel, new and used suitcases, and wooden rowboat. Approximately 26'2" x 19'8" x 16'4". National Museum of the American Indian 26/7253. Photo by Katherine Fogden. ©Brian Jungen.*



*Donald Lipski, Five Easy Pieces, Washington, DC Convention Center.*