

ORIGINALS SHOW • A PROFILE

Resin lady

A Montreal artist is dazzling collectors with wild, wonderful resin jars and unique furniture. She's in Ottawa this weekend, writes **Jadranka Bacic**.

Julia Asimakopulos never thought she would make a living as an artist, but two years after studying environmental design in Montreal she is dazzling collectors with wild and wonderful resin.

The Montreal artist, who is in Ottawa this weekend at the Originals Show at Lansdowne Park, manipulates polyester resin into original decorative jars and innovative furniture.

The designer has always had a unique focus and it was her parents who encouraged her creativity and continue to influence her designs.

"I still visit my mother to get her opinion on pieces."

The talented artist studied fine arts at Montreal's Concordia University and received her bachelor's degree in 1991.

"I never thought I could make a serious living as an artist."

She worked with children at a woman's shelter before realizing she was burning out and needed to return to her creative roots. "I really loved working with kids, but I decided that I needed to stimulate my artistic side."

An interest in urban design and architecture led her in a new direction where she could play with physical textures and raw materials to produce unusual, but functional objects.

Her love affair with resin began during her second year in the environmental design program at the Université du Québec à Montréal. She graduated in 2001.

"I always tried to find an unusual design, texture, or

material to use in my projects and I was encouraged by my teacher to pursue that artistic side of myself."

She became inspired by the boundless possibilities of working with polyester resin.

Resin is a contemporary material that is lighter and more durable than glass. It can be dyed in its liquid form and moulded once a chemical hardener is added.

It isn't the resin alone that provokes her artistic process. She rarely uses it alone, and prefers to wrap textured materials, including rusted metal, slate, birch bark, paper and wood in the resin.

"The combination produces an effect that is rich in contrasts and complexity," says Ms. Asimakopulos.

"It evokes the fragile and ephemeral nature of human life."

The passage of time is a theme the artist revisits in many of her pieces.

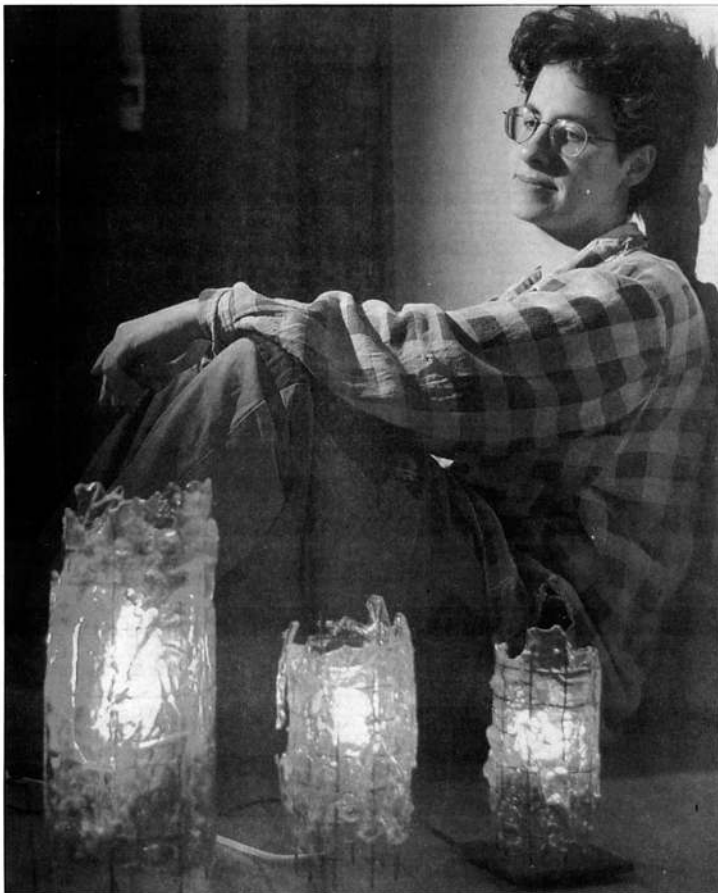
"I have always been fascinated by the element of time in life. I like to explore natural processes of change like aging, birth and death."

Items from her collection include lamps, tables, shelves, sculptures, CD racks and mirrors.

"I often get my inspiration from nature," says Ms. Asimakopulos.

"I see textures and patterns in nature and ask myself how I can recreate that effect."

She has introduced acrylic paints, concrete and amber to some of her pieces as she looks for new dimensions in materi-



CHRISTINNE MUSCHI, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Julia Asimakopulos sits by the glow of her resin lamps in her Montreal studio. The artist manipulates polyester resin, adding colour and different materials of nature in the wild and wonderful home accessories and functional furniture. She is at the Originals Show at Lansdowne Park this weekend.



als, forms and textures.

"I'm still exploring where I fit in as an artist," says Ms. Asimakopulos. "Is it in design, art, or crafts?"

While she recognizes most of her money is made from selling decorative crafts, such as candleholders and vases, she

derives the greatest satisfaction from larger pieces, including tables and shelves.

"It satisfies the manual side of my brain wishing to find function in art, but still allows me to express artistic themes and create innovative designs."

Her mirrors are an example of mixing utility and artistry.

She uses resin to trap aging paper and pieces of ash, and transforms a traditional home furnishing into a work of art.

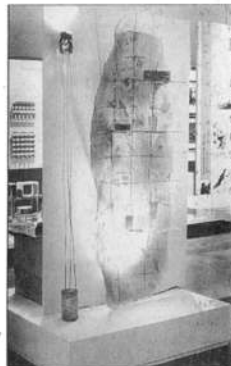
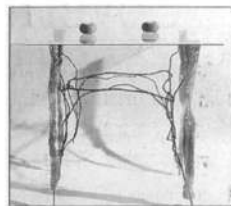
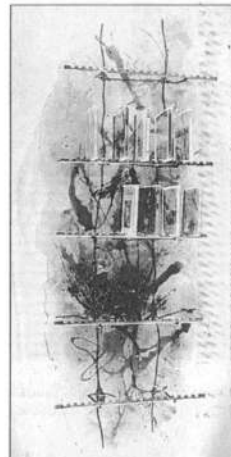
"It represents time gone by with age. The materials embedded with resin are a subtle reminder of things past and how those things form part of who you were and who you have become."

Ms. Asimakopulos has brought pieces from her collection to the 17th annual Originals Spring Craft Sale this weekend.

Items from her resin collection are also available at the Boutique des métiers d'art in Montréal.

Prices range from \$15 for smaller, decorative objects to \$1,600 for more elaborate furniture pieces.

The Originals Spring Craft Sale showcases works from more than 175 Canadian artisans, designers and artists in mediums including wood, metal, glass, stone and leather. The show will feature art, sculptures, home and garden acces-



sories, clothing, jewelry, body-care products and gourmet food.

The show continues this weekend at Lansdowne Park between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.