

Artist molds career out of resin

MAKES UNUSUAL BUT FUNCTIONAL OBJECTS

'I never thought I could make a living as an artist,' Montrealer Julia Asimakopulos says

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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 manipulates polyester resin into original decorative jars and innovative furniture. She 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."

Asimakopulos studied fine arts at Concordia University and received her bachelor's degree in 1991. "I never thought I could make a serious living as an artist," she says.

She worked with children at a women'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."

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

It isn't the resin alone that pro-

vokes Asimakopulos's 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," she says.

Items from her collection include lamps, tables, shelves, sculptures, CD racks and mirrors. "I see textures and patterns in nature and ask myself how I can recreate that effect," Asimakopulos says.

She has introduced acrylic paints, concrete and amber to some of her pieces as she looks for new dimensions in materials, forms and textures. "I'm still exploring where I fit in as an artist," she says. "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."

Items from her collection are available at Boutique des métiers d'art de la table in Marché Bonsecours, 350 St. Paul St. E.

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