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Recycle, artist urges with gentle strokes

By **CHRISTINE BOUSH**, Staff Writer

Samuel Jameson, 6, gazed in wonder at the life-size fabric cows hanging from the ceiling at The Showroom's new environmental art exhibit, "The Green Show."

"It's kind of weird," Samuel said as he gently batted at one of the shapes.

His mother, Marsha, was more tactful.

"I don't know what I think," she said. "I'm intrigued."

The display, titled "Cows," was created by artist Sayaka Suzuki out of recycled fabric. Like all of the art on display, it conveys a subtle message of conservation and preservation through its use of discarded materials.

Stephen Long, director of The Showroom, said the exhibit was timed to coincide with Earth Day, with the purpose of bringing more attention to environmental concerns such as recycling in Spartanburg.

"Art is a way to get a message across without getting in someone's face," Long said. "When you view this exhibit, you wouldn't automatically think about the environment or recycling until you start reading. You enjoy the art, and then read the materials and it sinks in."

Leah Brown, an artist in residence at Hub-Bub, said she wanted to take advantage of the wealth of disposable items available in the United States in her exhibit. She created a landscape, using gloves dyed green for grass, blue jeans for the sky, plastic cups for fluffy clouds and panty hose and plastic bags for a tree. Even Brown's attire for the opening night gala Saturday was recycled - her colorful dress was sewn out of a panorama of men's ties.

"It's incredible we live in an age where even clothing is disposable," Brown said. "There is so much useful trash - if artists aren't taking advantage of it, I think they are missing out."

Angela Viney, executive director of the Upstate Forever Spartanburg office, said she felt the art projected the urgency of the need to recycle and conserve. She pointed at a statistic in the front of the exhibit program citing that only 20 percent of Spartanburg residents recycle.

"Leah Brown has taken all these discarded, disposable things and made it into a creation that will hopefully make people realize we need to do better," Viney said. "Only 20 percent recycle? That's astounding."

Part of the funding for the show came from the state Department of Health and Environmental Control to help raise awareness about recycling.

Susan Schneider, director of communications and marketing for the city of Spartanburg, said they procured close to \$10,000 in funding from DHEC for the initiative.

"Something grassroots like this really gets people involved," Schneider said.

The exhibit will run through May 18 and features work from six artists.

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