



Edgar found his niche when he needed to create something to wear to a Panthers game party.

# Trash into Treasure

Environmentally conscious artist makes good on recycling

## Sea for Yourself

David Edgar's fanciful marine creatures are made from recyclable high-density polyethylene. Right now, his "Plastiquarium" is on view at the Hickory Museum of Art through July 8. For details, visit [www.hickorymuseumofart.org](http://www.hickorymuseumofart.org). And in conjunction with the Mecklenburg County Earth Day celebration, Edgar will be giving demonstrations of his artistry at Ray's Splash Planet, 215 North Sycamore Street, on April 21, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information on his work or to purchase pieces, visit [www.plastiquarium.com](http://www.plastiquarium.com).

**David Edgar's den** is a fisherman's showcase. Large fish are mounted proudly on every wall; lobsters and crabs huddle on table tops. But, while Edgar does fish—a photo from 1992 shows him in Key West, Florida with a forty-eight-pound catch—he didn't snag these trophies with a hook or a net. Edgar is an artist. The grand "Red-tailed Cascader" and his companions are all products of his fertile imagination and his neighbors' recycling bins.

The native Floridian, who moved here in 2003 to teach in the art department at UNC-Charlotte, worked for thirty years with fabricated steel, carving and molding sculptures both abstract and representational, including a mammoth metal fishhook that could lay Moby Dick low. Shortly after arriving in Charlotte, Edgar and his wife were invited to a Super Bowl party to watch the Panthers play. Alas, they had no spirit wear, so he grabbed a large detergent bottle that was Panthers blue and, in an hour or so, fashioned a go-team mask. Before long, Edgar had abandoned dark, weighty steel in favor of candy-colored plastics and was creating his marine menagerie.

The garage of Edgar's home looks like a miniature recycling center. Trays overflow with bottle caps of all

sizes and colors. Empty detergent jugs are heaped into rainbow piles. "I'm an obsessive-compulsive collector of stuff," says Edgar, fifty-three.

He scours the neighborhood on garbage day looking for the right materials. He cuts the containers, then uses a heat gun to soften the plastic so that he can bend and stretch it into the shapes he needs. Since February 2004, he has created nearly 700 works and participated in more than thirty exhibitions in fifteen states. "I've been somewhat surprised by the response," he says. An artist affiliate at McColl Center for Visual Art in the summer of 2005, Edgar recently received a \$3,600 grant from the Arts & Science Council to work in collaboration to create an installation at the Metrolina Recycling Center.

That exhibition, on display next fall, will feature Edgar's "Plastiquarium," from his glowing, translucent jellyfish to a seven-foot eel made out of twelve juice bottles, hinged together and filled with brightly colored plastic lids and rings.

"Making marine creatures out of plastic—it's all about the environment. It's like new species are evolving in the form of the packaging that spreads pollutants. But I'm not trying to be in your face politically. I'm trying to make a subtle statement."

—Meg Freeman Whalen