



# SQUARE SPACE

An annual exhibition tasks artists with thinking inside the box.

By Katie Vaughn

**EACH JANUARY**, two blue walls at Hatch Art House become the site of one of the city's most eclectic art exhibitions. Landscapes form over book pages and scrap fabrics. Tin cans take on the human form. A papier-mâché dinosaur has even been known to emerge from a frame.

It's all thanks to EcoSquared, an annual juried exhibition of up to 25 artists that Tammy Schreiter launched in 2012,

just over a year after opening the Willy Street gallery.

Interestingly, this incredibly creative show starts with some rules: All artwork must be square and small—12 inches by 12 inches or less. It must be made by a Wisconsin artist, sell for less than \$200 and incorporate upcycled materials, which are items used in a new way instead of being thrown away.

"EcoSquared is focused

around what Hatch stands for," Schreiter says. "Every year, I'm surprised by the creativity people come up with."

Jolene Frechette was just

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beginning to incorporate found materials in her artwork when she heard about the exhibition, and it sparked inspiration.

"It really lit a fire under me to fine-tune the marriage of material and subject matter that I had been playing around with," she says, adding that she's shown paintings and drawings made on old album covers and plans to feature embroidered pieces this time around.

Nicci Martin, who creates humor-infused assemblages for the exhibition, appreciates how EcoSquared offers a departure from the canvas painting she normally makes. "There is really a level of freedom in doing this show," she says, "and for me that is the most fun part."

Schreiter, who always participates in the exhibition, agrees. "It feels like I can just have fun with it," she says. "This whole show is really about mixed media."

For Jay Solwold, EcoSquared couldn't have come around at a better time. He was close to retiring from teaching art when his wife showed him a flyer for the inaugural upcycled art show. He's participated every year, using scrap lumber, discarded hardware, feathers, old photos and other elements in collages, as well as works depicting birds.

While he's not sure exactly what he'll show this year, he knows where to begin. "Lately I've been using some old maps, so I may continue that idea," he says. "Whatever I make, it will all start with a square."

Katie Vaughn writes the monthly "Artscape blog" for Madison Magazine. @katiev

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