

NEWS

Circuit boards, leather and the artist's perception

By Trevor Ruben
Special to the Sentinel

Ask the question, what should one take away from an artistic series called "Wasteland"? The answer, like Eric Celarier's intent behind his work, is appropriately ambiguous.

Celarier's Wasteland series is currently being shown at the BlackRock Center for the Arts in Gaithersburg, Md. Each piece, simply named "Wasteland", followed by a number or Roman numeral, is a splattering of the metallic, initially cold components of computer circuit boards stitched together which create something of a grated tapestry.

Celarier welcomes open interpretation on his artistic expression. His statement of intent, which is meant to accompany any of the pieces, is far from narrow.

"The Wasteland Series' reminds us of the inherent beauty, the shortened lifespan, and complicated disposal process involved with a circuit board. By displaying these materials, which otherwise might go unnoticed, Celarier hopes to illuminate the aesthetic and dangerous qualities of our mundane surroundings."

Celarier cut pieces of circuit boards found in disposed computers, stitched the rectangular pieces together and framed the sum total with handcrafted leather binding. He de-

scribed the result as quilt-like, both in aesthetic quality and the process used, though he embraced other common interpretations.

Some people see aerial views of cityscapes, he said, while others leaned to the opposite end of the spectrum where microbial images lay. Where one person might see the inset of leather between circuit boards as a city gridlock, another sees a cellular divide.

"All good artwork rarely can be looked at in one way, and if I impose my own views on them I think it makes it difficult in the post-modern world to really consume the artwork," he said. He described the current artistic landscape as not just aesthetically driven, but conceptually too.

The practical implications of using old circuit boards as building blocks, while not widespread, played a part in Celarier's guarded interpretation.

"I'm keeping [circuit boards] out of landfills when I do my work, but more importantly I think that I'm demonstrating that there's a lot of waste that we have that goes unnoticed...there's a certain amount of obsolescence built right into the piece," he said.

Celarier worked with computers as a graphic designer in the past, but with an Art Education degree from the University of Maryland, he

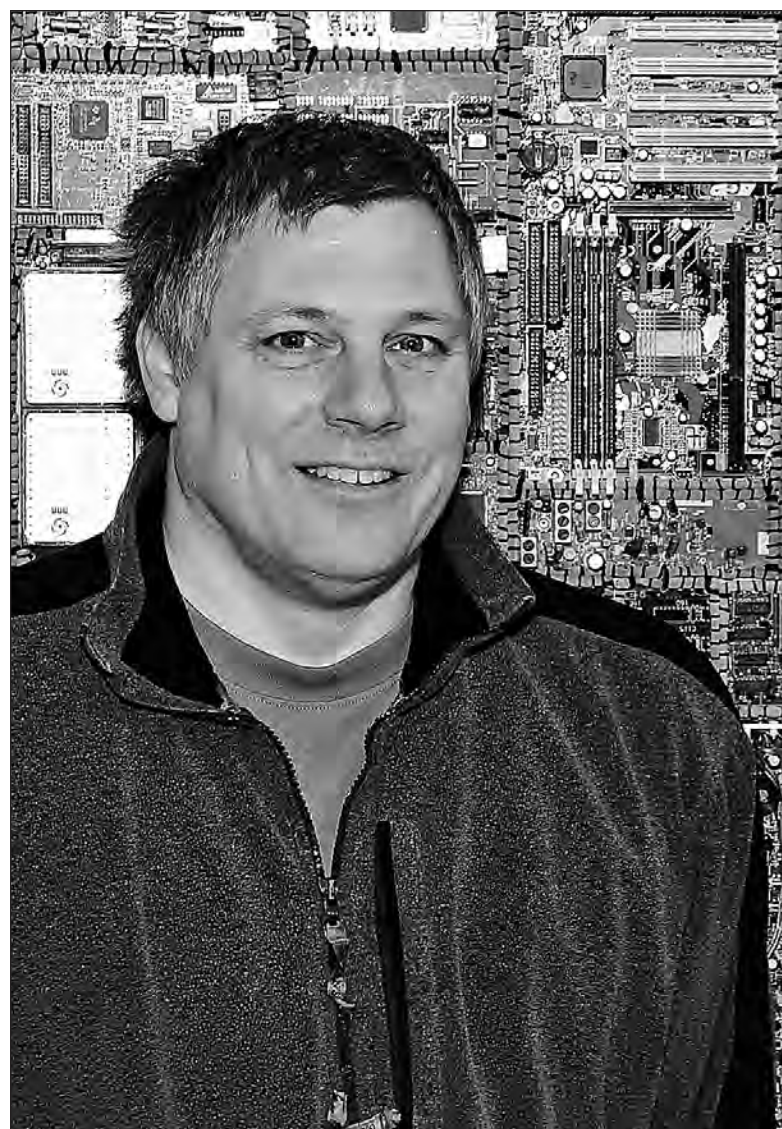
switched to teaching in Montgomery County schools. The open summers allow him more time to pursue his work, he said.

During the school year, though, he tries not to pinhole his kids into one way of thinking. "One of the things that I think is important to me is that the kids not see one discipline to another discipline in such a hard boundary," he said. The concepts they learn about, those from math or social studies, shouldn't be exclusive from one another, he said, artistically or otherwise.

Celarier's Wasteland is a proponent of such diversity in art. From the initial concept, using technology driven scrap to emulate the similar aesthetic quality of a quilt, to any of his pieces' defiance of scale, any interpretation can be contradictory to another. He refrained from making an all-out declaration of purpose.

"What I believe good artwork is about is creating a piece that has the viewer reevaluate themselves and the world around them in relation to that piece," he said. "And if you can get people to stop long enough and look at your work and say, hey I've never thought about that particular thing in that particular way, even if it's their own thought, it becomes a thought provoking device."

An artist reception for Celarier will be held at the BlackRock Center for the Arts on June 11.



PHOTOS BY JACQUI SOUTH

Eric Celarier, above right stands in front of one of his creations. His entire display, The "Wasteland Series" directly above, is on display at the BlackRock Center for the Arts.