

Houston artists go green in a big way



By Nancy Wozny
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Making art out of plants holds a certain excitement for any green-leaning girl, so I just had to pop over to the [Art League of Houston](#) to see what Divya Murthy and [Nicola Parente](#) were up to with their living sculptures.

Parente and Murthy were off getting supplies, so I visited with Linda Phenix, former choreographer and now Art League's development director. During her dance-making years, Phenix, and her dance partner, Chris Lidvall, investigated Germany's deep ecology movement to create *Green Pieces* way back in 1991. Vintage dance fans remember that quirky Coke can dress and the bubble wrap bride.

“That Coke can dress was fabulous, but dangerous,” recalls Phenix, who looks pleased to see Parente and Murthy taking up the cause.

I finally found Murthy and Parente unloading their art supplies for *Natural Recyclers and Wasted Resolve*, which in this case consisted of a 20 bags of dirt. The eco art team was finishing a set of giant mushroom sculptures that will soon be covered with native, non-native and edible plants. The stems will be covered with a moss milkshake (beer, sugar and moss in a blender).

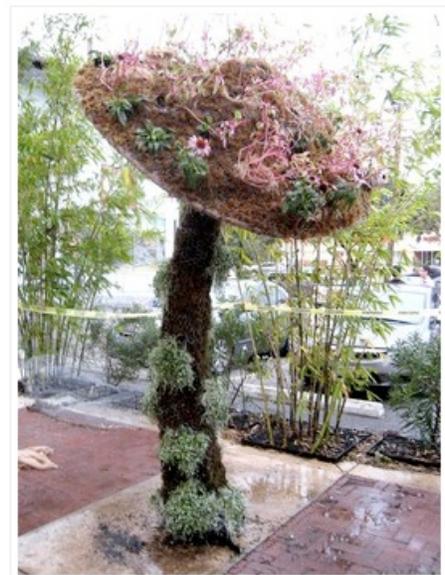
“I like working with living media,” says Murthy. Both hark from farming families, Parente in Mola di Bari, Italy and Murthy in Bangalore, India.

Natural Recyclers will be up for eight months, possibly longer, and will go through its own evolution.

“If the plants die, they die,” Murthy insists. “That's the life cycle.”



Giant mushrooms in Nicola Parente and Divya Murthy's outdoor installation, "Natural Recycler"
Photo by Aaron Courtland

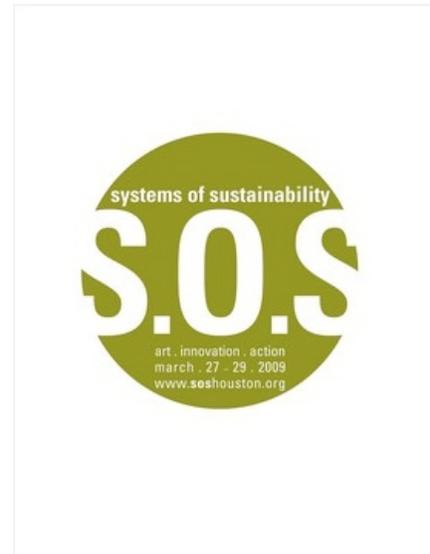


One of the three completed 10-foot-tall mushrooms in Nicola Parente and Divya Murthy's outdoor installation, "Natural Recycler"
Photo by Nicola Parente

“We recycle, and provide the public with opportunities to bring their recycling here on Saturdays,” This says.

Houston's greenest choreographer, Travesty director Karen Stokes, chose the sustainable park last season to show off her own designed for the great outdoors dance, *Green*. Following in Phenix's footsteps, Stokes has taken up the green mantle once again in her recent show, *The Recycle Club*, a combination concert, party and educational event. Stokes' approach encompasses recycling at every level, from the costumes to the dancers (old timers Farrell Dyde and Roberta Stokes). She even used her old choreography for the show.

Why make up new stuff when you have perfectly good old stuff?



Logo for Houston's SOS organization, Systems of Sustainability