

PHOTOS BY CARL GLASSMAN



Maria Reidelbach collects trash on Beach Street (below) and walks home with a fake tree she found on Greenwich Street (right), to use in the renovation of Pier 25's mini-golf course (above).



BY RONALD DRENGER

On her way home one Friday evening last month, Maria Reidelbach stopped at a pile of trash on the sidewalk near the corner of Beach and Greenwich streets. She stooped to inspect a clear plastic bag filled with recyclables.

"Ah, here we go!"

Ignoring the quizzical looks from businessmen in suits marching past, she untied the bag, rummaged through an assortment of bottles and cans, and pulled out three plastic laundry detergent jugs.

"Nice shade of blue on this Palmolive," she declared. "And a nice orange Tide. The really rare ones are red or violet."

Reidelbach, a self-described "real dumpster diver," strapped the bottles with a bungee cord to the back of her green 1963 Raleigh bicycle (found by friends at a yard sale) and continued her hunt.

A few blocks north, the sidewalk gave up even greater riches.

"Look! Someone threw out a whole tree!" she exclaimed, grabbing hold of the eight-foot-tall specimen. "Is it artificial? It is! Man, this is great! And the leaves are plastic, not silk, so they're waterproof. This is a major find."

She pulled the tree from its pot, laid it across the back of her bike and carefully maneuvered her oversize load the last couple of blocks to her Greenwich Street loft, where she stripped the branches from the tree.

The next day, Reidelbach, who teaches in a Manhattan Youth afterschool program, was on Pier 25 helping kids, and a few adults, turn her scavenged treasures into artwork that is being used to redecorate the pier's miniature golf course.

Reidelbach, the co-author of a book on the history of miniature golf, and Ken Brown, a Tribeca artist who has made documentary films on mini-golf, designed the plan to transform the course into an enchanted garden, using trash, recycled materials and lots of community help.

At a picnic table, 8-year-old Jesse Litvin cut star and flower shapes out of pieces of a Tide bottle. With wire and buttons, he turned them into ornaments.

Mari Manuel, 6, shyly approached the table. "I

Putt Putt Green Up

A mini-golf lover and her helpers are turning Tribeca's course on Pier 25 into a dreamy place to play—all with local trash and other found treasures.



Left: Merica Suga and Janera Chung decorate the golf shack. Right: Morgan Witt and Isabella Smith make a mosaic. Below: Rendering of finished shack.

want to make a flower," she said.

Reidelbach picked up a strip of blue plastic, cut from a Ralph's Discount City bag, and demonstrated how to turn it into a carnation. "You open it way up like this, fold it in half, then fold it like an accordion."

A few minutes later, Manuel proudly held up her handiwork. "There's my flower!" she said with a big smile.

At another table, Morgan Witt, 4, and Isabella Smith, 6, were creating a mosaic, focusing intently as they put pieces of broken dishes into a layer of sticky blue goop spread on a piece of plywood.

The new mini-golf dream world will feature a 12-foot-tall gnome and other creatures made out of artificial leaves and flowers, which will inhabit planters decorated with the broken-dish mosaics. The course's equipment shack is being festooned with fake rose leaves and the colorful handmade



ornaments. "We're turning a caddy shack into a wacky-shack," Reidelbach said.

She has collected broken dishes from stores and restaurants, and found a trove of free objects at Materials for the Arts in Long Island City. She picked up artificial evergreen branches—to be woven into the pier's chain-link fence—for half-price at a Christmas tree factory in Newburgh, NY.

Her workshops on the pier, held on three weekends last month, will take place again on May 16, 17, 24 and 25.

Scott Myers, another Tribecan, is attaching a generator to the miniature golf course's windmill to create energy—maybe enough to light a bulb in the model lighthouse.

"This will add a nice surreal touch to the neighborhood," Ken Brown said. "The pier is one of the last outposts of funk factor in Lower Manhattan."