

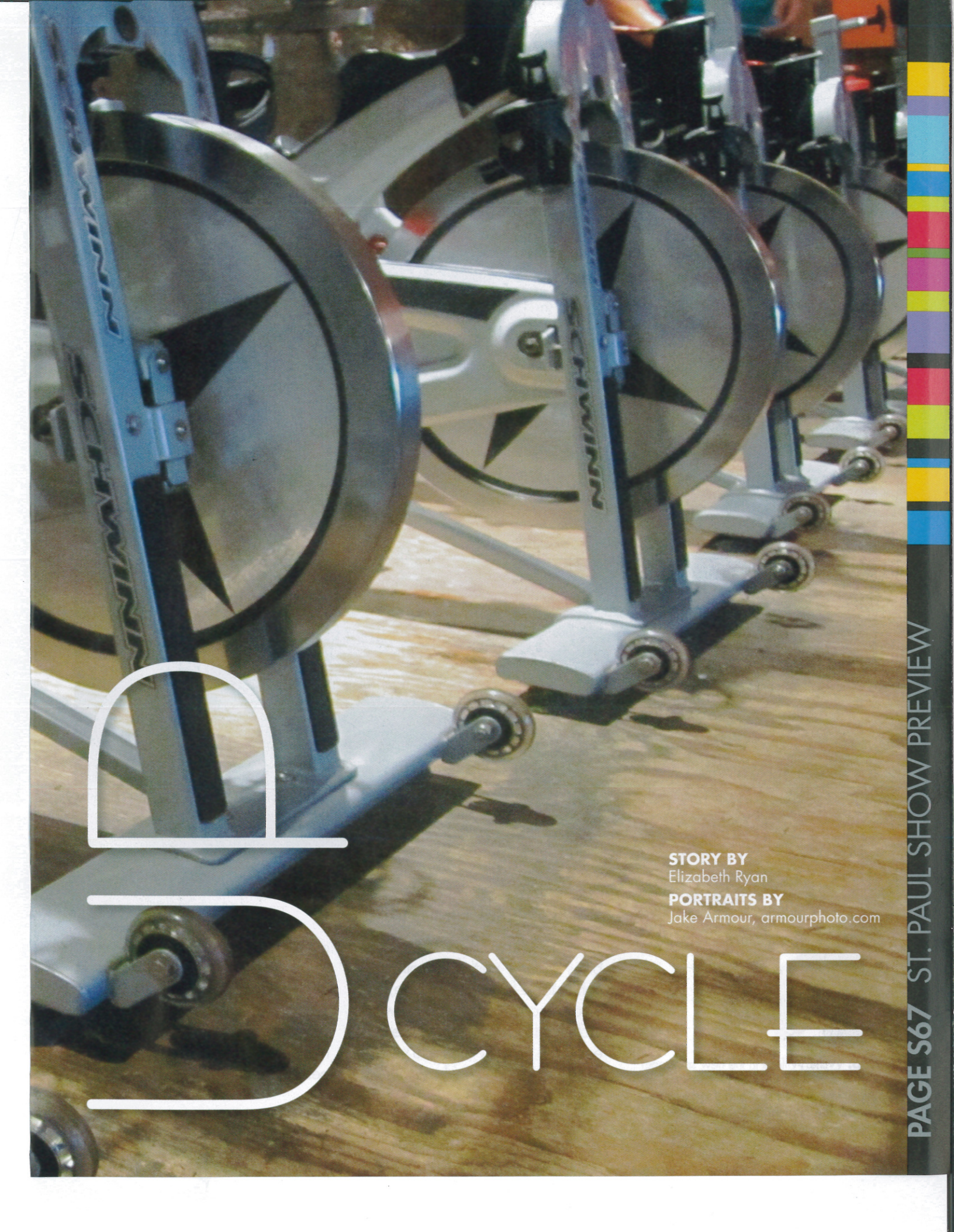
Picture yourself on a spin bike. Your thoughts drift, your cares seem to slip away, your body moves to a meditative beat as the wheel spins around and around. Now picture that same wheel, otherwise headed for a landfill, finding a second-life as part of a sleek cedar coffee table.

That transformation has already occurred as part of Project Upcycle. The American Craft Council recently invited seven Twin Cities-area artists to participate in our challenge to convert discarded materials into stunning craft. We partnered with The Firm, a workout facility in Minneapolis, which recently built and equipped a brand-new space, and donated a treasure trove of materials for the challenge.

In *The New Artisans*, Olivier Dupon defines upcycling as found objects that "are re-worked so that they gain an improved style and function but usually retain a memory of what they were." We put Devon Driscoll, Scott McGlasson, Erica Spitzer Rasmussen and Nancy MacKenzie, Alonso Sierralta, Willie Willette, and Nancy Golden to the test to see what they could create from the 25-year inventory of equipment and raw materials at The Firm – and the results were simply remarkable.

To put this all in context, we headed to The Firm's new space and co-opted a few of their instructors. Here's a look at the artists' completed pieces and the materials they infused with new life.

PROJECT

A photograph of a row of Schwinn exercise bikes in a gym. The bikes are white with large flywheels and are arranged in a line on a wooden floor. The Schwinn logo is visible on the frame of each bike.

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PORTRAITS BY
Jake Armour, armourphoto.com

CYCLE



Top: Willie Willette in the new spin room with Kristin "Kiki" Regnier, personal trainer, circuit trainer, and spin and yoga instructor.

Inset: The original cedar sauna boards Willette repurposed.

Willie Willette, furniture maker

The wheels from discarded spin bikes became part of this rolling coffee table by Willie Willette, who has a history of working with reclaimed wood. The new use came easily, he says: "When you've got wood and four nice wheels, it's not

a stretch to say 'Gee, what are we gonna make?'" He paired the wood with cedar boards from the women's sauna and burned some of them for visual effect – also a Japanese technique that makes the piece fire- and pest-resistant.



Alonso Sierralta, sculptor

Alonso Sierralta's vision was to create a form that reflected the beauty of a woman's hourglass figure. He took boards from the reception desk, plastic laminate that covered ductwork, and an old rubber mat to create a piece that

evokes movement and the essence of the gym. Sierralta stresses the importance of recycled materials in his work. Speaking of the process, he observes, "You have to basically make it work — kind of like Tim Gunn says. This is very *Project Runway*."

Above: Yoga instructor Jessica "Guru" Rosenberg demonstrates her skills alongside Alonso Sierralta and his sculpture *Samothrace*.



Scott McGlasson, furniture maker

Flooring from the aerobic studio found its way into the hands of ACC artist Scott McGlasson, who favors working with hardwoods. He converted the grooved surfaces filled with "crystallized sweat and dirt" into a contemporary bench. "The beautiful thing about wood," he says, "is you can always remove a layer and you just get it back down to its pristine state – and it's as good as new."

Above: Scott McGlasson relaxes on his new bench as Rebecca "Kitten" Abroe works the Pilates machine. She teaches Pilates and spin classes and is also a personal trainer.

Right: Devon Driscoll models her new jewelry piece.



Devon Driscoll, jewelry artist

ACC artist Devon Driscoll often incorporates found objects into the jewelry she creates, so for this project she diced up the plastic beads from a jump rope and created an arm cuff, with accents from found copper and brass tubing. "I think any opportunity to get the creative process moving in other directions than what you're comfortable with is a great idea," Driscoll says.





Nancy Golden, jewelry artist

Interior designer Nancy Golden incorporated a sparkly gold spin-cycle seat into one of her stunning collars she makes with recycled leather and found objects. "Since all my pieces are recycled leather, I was excited to participate in this project," says Golden, a former HGTV and DIY host. "When I found out the bike seat was vinyl and not leather, it dictated my design. Leather is so malleable, while vinyl is really stiff. My one-snap collar design enables me to use the glittery vinyl as an accent and does double-duty to help keep the collar flat."



Erica Spitzer Rasmussen and Nancy MacKenzie, fiber artists

This mother-daughter collaboration produced a sheath dress and jacket from vinyl blackout window shades and an origami-esque collar made from 203 paper cups. Both enjoy finding new purposes for items; MacKenzie already makes garments from materials like reused vegetable bag netting. The duo likened working with the unruly vinyl to "wrestling a rhinoceros," but the final garment is one that fits Rasmussen like a glove.



Above: Nancy MacKenzie (left) surveys her work with Erica Spitzer Rasmussen, who models their collaborative pieces *Conical Collar* (neckpiece) and *Shades of Black* (dress and jacket); meanwhile, step and yoga instructor Doug "Diva" Melroe works out. The collar was made from 203 of these paper cups.

Right: Michelle Collins, a client at The Firm, spins with Nancy Golden's bike-seat collar. The collar in detail, and the original gold bike seat are shown below.





Our intrepid group of Project Upcycle artists (from left to right): Devon Driscoll, Willie Willette, Alonso Sierralta, Erica Spitzer Rasmussen, Scott McGlasson, and Nancy MacKenzie. Not pictured: Nancy Golden.

Join us April 20-22 for the Project Upcycle exhibition

These pieces will be on display at St. Paul's RiverCentre April 20-22 at the American Craft Council Show. The exhibition will also feature upcycled works from artists selected by our Project Upcycle partners in Greater Minnesota (see below). For more information visit: craftcouncil.org/stpaul

Rochester Art Center
Duluth Art Institute
Paradise Center for the Arts, Faribault
Paramount Visual Arts Center, St. Cloud
Crossing Arts Alliance, Brainerd
ArtReach St. Croix, Stillwater
Twin Rivers Council for the Arts, Mankato
Kaddatz Galleries, Fergus Falls
MacRostie Art Center, Grand Rapids

Devon Driscoll, Devon Jewelry
devondriscoll.com

Nancy Golden, Goldenwear
goldenwearonline.com

Nancy MacKenzie
651-777-4979

Scott McGlasson, Woodsport
woodsport.net

Alonso Sierralta
alonsosierralta.com

Erica Spitzer Rasmussen
ericaspitzerrasmussen.com

Willie Willette, Willie Willette Works
williewilletteworks.com

The Firm
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