

## Crafted out of junk

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**Abstract:** In the words of DIY Studio, a key element of their mission is "educating students about implementing alternative approaches to creating and by diverting materials from the solid-waste stream." The boy to our right was creating an elaborate bot that featured a spring-loaded napkin dispenser and the head of a baby doll.

**Full text:** "Tell them about your class," I instructed my middle daughter.

"We made robots out of trash."

"Trash?"

"Ok, junk."

Her older sister looked at her quizzically.

"How about recycled treasures?"

Any of those work. In the words of DIY Studio, a key element of their mission is "educating students about implementing alternative approaches to creating and by diverting materials from the solid-waste stream."

It sounded good, but I was curious what that would look like.

"It's in the mall?" my daughter questioned as we tried to find a parking spot.

Now she was curious, as well. Trash, art, mall. How did it all work together?

Entering the open and inviting studio, we got our answer.

"Impressive," I said.

In one kid's words, "When you walk in, you feel like you are in 'Dr. Who.'"

The front part of the space held creations made with reused materials by local artists. And, in the few minutes we waited for the last student to arrive, we found a number of things we wanted to either buy or try to make at home.

What we didn't see were the ArtBots on display in the front window, and that's where our class began.

"A robot usually serves a purpose," the teacher and "forensic craftologist" explained as she showed us a robot, which featured a working clock along with other eclectic yet cohesive parts.

"You'll want to think about what the purpose of your robot is," she continued.

Then, our group of three parent-kid teams followed her to the classroom section of the spacious studio.

"We get to use all of that?" one of the boys asked excitedly as the teacher gave a quick tour of the table of treasures.

The boys quickly decided which gears, containers and gadgets they wanted to bring to their workspace while my daughter silently sized up the options.

"Start with a base, then think about parts you can add to make it look more human," we were instructed.

By the time my daughter decided on the different parts for her bot, the boys were already planning and experimenting with their large collections of parts.

My daughter, on-the-other hand, brought only the exact items she wanted, and she already knew how they were going to be put together. Silver canister body. A pleated mini-tart pan for a collar. A watch for a belt. And, on top of the silver strainer head, a Monopoly hat.

"The hat is my favorite part," the teacher said excitedly.

The boy to our right was creating an elaborate bot that featured a spring-loaded napkin dispenser and the head of a baby doll. The teacher drilled holes so some computer innards could be wired to the front of the metal torso. Then mother, son and teacher had to work out the logistics of having the "creepy baby head" spring up yet still be supported.

"I love that baby," our encouraging instructor said when the head and up-reached arms were glued in place. "What are you going to call it ... BabyBot?" He tried our different names that included the word "creepy," but BabyBot stuck. The boy on the other side of us had a much different approach. He worked to turn a working coffee maker into a bot. A coffee maker mounted on a large coffee can. A coffee can embellished with electronic and textural components. The drill whirred, the wires twisted, the glue stuck and the kid kept returning to the table for more inspiration. "What's the purpose of your robot?" our teacher asked. "It just makes coffee," he shrugged. That's plenty, I thought. Worn out from a busy morning and dragging from a lack of caffeine, I found myself fixating on CoffeeBot. My daughter also was getting tired and unusually quiet, but I could tell she was happy with her completed ArtBot. "Where are you going to put it?" the teacher asked, getting a shrug in response. "It's going on the mantle," I answered. "It's a work of art." Holly Hamlin lives in Salem with her husband and four children ranging from ages 4 to 16. Kid Trips appears Tuesdays in this section. Email STEFHAM@Comcast.net.

If you go

Location: Salem Center, 480 Center St. NE, Suite 238, Salem

Phone: (971) 208-5869

Hours: Noon to 6 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays

Website: diystudio.net

Classes: Check website for regularly scheduled events such as Creative Reuse Craft Nights every 4th Tuesday at the Salem Public Library and Maker Thursday for Free Art Friday every second Thursday of the month as well as one-time classes, including Storytelling through Assemblage Collage, 1 to 3 p.m. Saturday at the DIY Studio.

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