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COTTAGE INDUSTRY

By: Jordan Gass-Poore' Photos: Ashley Haguewood

Old Garage Becomes Artistic Inspiration

When Barbara Trepagnier moved into her bungalow in San Marcos' historic district 19 years ago, people told her to demolish the dilapidated garage in the backyard.

Here, Trepagnier creates colorful mosaics and ceramics. The 74-year-old began teaching workshops on the craft in 2011, after retiring as a Texas State sociology professor.

“Okay, I know how to teach; I can teach people mosaics,” says Trepagnier on why she started the workshops the day she retired as a Texas State professor. For about two years the workshops took place in the cottage, until Trepagnier, who also used the space as her studio, found the clean-up too time consuming. Now she only focuses on her work.

Mosaic fish and crosses hang on the cottage's wall. Trepagnier says the most time intensive part of creating a mosaic is coming up with a design. From there it takes two-to-three hours to glue the tiles on the form, two days to grout and another day to finish. But she's quick to point out that it's not hard work – and that most people, like her, don't need to attend a workshop or class to learn the craft.

Trepagnier finds inspiration in common objects (and Pinterest).

**THE THIRD
ANNUAL
BARB'S COTTAGE
HOLIDAY
OPEN HOUSE
IS FROM 2-4 P.M.
SATURDAY,
NOV. 14
903 W. SAN ANTONIO**

Across from the cottage in her manicured backyard is a small greenhouse where she stores materials for her mosaic and ceramic projects.

Bits of tile are contained in Mason jars lining the sides of the greenhouse. Plates, mostly from Goodwill, lay stacked on the ground, anticipating their transformation; pieces might become pendants or part of a figure's face.

Word of mouth has helped Trepagnier find an audience for her quirky designs. “I often look up and see people in my yard,” she said of her open backyard gate policy. It's a “Secret Garden,” a place for kindred spirits to mold conversation on the porch or clay inside the cottage.

Barb's Cottage has been a transformative experience. “I've never been ‘Barb’ in my life, only until recently; I've always been ‘Barbara,’” Trepagnier says of the nickname she's been christened with as an artist.


“Barb” sells mosaics and ceramics on Etsy and jewelry at Paper Bear. She only recently started con-

sidering herself an artist.

It's been a somewhat difficult title to embrace because it just sounded pretentious, Trepagnier said. It was easier for her to call herself a teacher, a professor; those titles had a dollar amount and educational degrees attached to them. The title of artist gives her more freedom because she doesn't have to make a living at it. Or, as Trepagnier states, “Now I'm playing every day.”

Barb Trepagnier

Barbscottage.com

 [Barb's Cottage - Barb Trepagnier](#)