Title: *Cultural Residue—Remnants Reinvented*

This course is about transforming—and developing new ways of understanding—objects and materials that have served a prior function. The mythical phoenix, reborn from its own ashes, suggests the promise of reuse as means of reinvention. In this course, objects and materials with well-known histories will form the vocabulary through which students can practice techniques for finding and expressing their own voices. Two examples of artwork that embrace this idea are Xu Bing's Phoenix Project, a public art project made predominantly of debris remaining from the construction of the building in which it is displayed; and Timothy Hawkinson's Bird, a two-inch-high skeletal creature made of fingernail clippings and superglue. Where others may have seen little or no value whatsoever, both these artists were able to perceive an uncommon potential uniquely suited to their chosen materials. Similarly, students in this course will be encouraged to create sculptural objects and installations by modifying or rearranging recycled materials in which they perceive distinctive value, and for which they can envision some innovative new use.

Though industrial recycling has been practiced for many years, it is a relatively recent development that the municipal recycling of everyday household items has become a standard—thus increasing not only the availability but also the variety of recycled material. As sculptural media, the accessibility and cost make many recycled materials expedient. With the practice of recycling now so deeply engrained in public consciousness, abundant cultural associations can spring from the artwork formed (reborn) out of these salvaged materials. Thus, recontextualizing offers great potential for the emergence of artwork with real cultural significance.

Class sessions will be spent working on and discussing student projects. Other activities will include watching presentations on relevant artists as well as demonstrating and discussing techniques for deconstructing, transforming, and reconfiguring a variety of objects and materials. Sources for acquiring materials will be researched and the class will take field trips to local industrial, residential, and architectural recycle facilities. Also, students will be encouraged to search out uncommon materials that when transformed take on personally meaningful and original new forms.

Michael Scheiner, 2011