



Artist Karl Unnasch made this stained glass combine for a Wisconsin festival, replacing cab windows and other surfaces with stained glass panels showing different scenes.



A total of 32 panels were installed on the sides, back and front of the combine, including the header snouts. Lights behind the panels illuminate them at night.

Stained Glass Artist Turned Combine Into Art

Artist Karl Unnasch has a farm background, so it's probably not surprising that he looks at farm equipment differently than most artists. Unnasch made his stained glass combine for a festival in Reedsburg, Wis.

Unnasch calls his combine The Grand Masticator. He replaced cab windows and other surfaces with stained glass panels depicting a variety of scenes. A total of 32 panels were installed in the sides, back and front, including on the individual header snouts. Lights behind the panels illuminate them at night.

"The Deere 6600 was a little larger than the one my dad first used," explains Unnasch. "It was provided courtesy of Manthey Salvage in Mauston, Wis. and still ran when we got it."

Panels include the face of a mustached man chewing a cob of corn, a scene of Batman and Robin in a World War II Victory Garden, a take-off on American Gothic with earthworms, and more. Other panels emphasize the idea of chewing, such as one of a termite.

"Part of the stipulation for taking part as an

artist at the festival was that the art be placed in a farm field," recalls Unnasch. "I thought a combine was the best 3-D object I could think of."

Unnasch worked on the combine for several months. It went on display in the Reedsburg area field for the festival in early October 2013. Meant to be temporary, it remained in the field by popular demand until March 2014. It is being prepared for permanent display in Reedsburg, though sponsorships are still being sought.

A nationally renowned artist, Unnasch

maintains his studio, Pilot Mount Design, near his home farm in southeastern Minnesota. The art tour was sponsored and organized by the Wormfarm Institute of Reedsburg, a non-profit dedicated to connecting people with food, agriculture and art (www.wormfarminstitute.org).

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Old Combine Cab Turned Into Playground

John Strauch admits that he was emotionally attached to his 1979 Deere 6620 SideHill combine – so attached that when it finally gave out he converted the combine's cab into a playground for kids.

"Now the combine I used for most of my farming career can stay on the farm for future generations to enjoy. Our grandchildren have a lot of fun playing on it," says Strauch, of Westboro, Mo.

He stripped the combine down to the cab and threshing unit under it, then made angle iron brackets and bolted the entire unit onto a concrete slab in his backyard. There was a hole where the engine had been, so he used treated lumber to build a deck over it, and extended the deck behind the cab. Then he bolted a plastic "turbo slide" onto the deck. The original ladder to climb into the cab is still there.

He also cut out a section of sheet metal from the combine that says "SideHill 6620", and mounted it on the deck railing.

"The cab still has the original steering wheel as well as the gearshift and hydraulic control levers. It's a lot of fun to sit there and watch kids play with them," says Strauch.

The 6620 Sidehill combine has a long history on his hilly farm. "My dad and I bought it used in the fall of 1980 with low hours, and used it to harvest many bumper crops. I decided to keep using it as long as I could. But in 2010, during the first day of soybean harvest, a wiring fire in the engine compartment ended its life as a working combine. My combine and I had spent 30 seasons and 6,000 long hours working together.

"For a couple of years the combine sat

parked at a farm away from our home, rusting away. My grandchildren would play on it, and that's how we got the idea to convert it into a playground. My wife wanted it in our backyard, but not the whole combine."

He spent about \$350 on the concrete slab and another \$350 for the slide.

"Friends and relatives have asked me to make combine playgrounds for them. However, I tell them they couldn't afford what I'd have to charge," he chuckles.

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"Our grandchildren have a lot of fun playing here," says John Strauch, who converted the cab on his Deere 6620 SideHill combine into a playground.

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