

THE GIVING TREE

The first abandonment challenge occurred in July 2012. It was called The Giving Tree—named after the popular children's book by Shel Silverstein. Here's how the challenge was worded on Facebook:

ART CHALLENGE

Okay here is your challenge Abandoneers! July—The Giving Tree Your mission (if you choose to undertake it): Create a tree that bears artistic fruit. Abandon a few artistic creations and tie to the limbs of a tree for "finders to discover." This could be really cool if a number of artists teamed up. Also you probably want to be sensitive to the tree and not use super heavy art pieces . . . so bronze sculptures might not be the best for this challenge. Make sure you document it and share your adventure with us. Have fun!

Needless to say we had a number of willing participants who filled local trees with some very strange fruit indeed. In fact, Andrea and I were teaching at Valley Ridge Art Studio in Wisconsin over Fourth of July weekend. We decided to have a little abandoning field trip with the students. We were headed to the little town of Boscobel to watch fireworks, so we figured we'd adorn a tree while we were at it. All the workshop attendees made various items, which we put in little bags so we would be able to hang them from a tree. Most of us had never been to this place before, so we weren't certain that there would be a good tree on which to hang artistic goodies, but I knew we'd find something.

It was a Fourth of July zoo—holy Toledo. There were tons of folks out to watch the fireworks. Our gang wandered past some trees in front yards, and it occurred to us that one of these yards might be a possibility, but we didn't want someone to call the cops on us. So we continued on our quest for the perfect non-lawbreaking tree. And then we saw it . . . the holy grail of art giving trees.

The tree had low-hanging limbs, was in a public location (a school yard) and had high visibility. We grabbed our art and our string and got to work tying up our bags like little ornaments. With so many folks milling about on the holiday, we had more than a few strange looks, but that is just part of the abandonment process.

After the tree was fully loaded with booty, we continued on to go and watch the pyrotechnics.

Two or so hours later we wandered back to the cars and back past the tree. We could not resist taking a peek to see if any of our offerings had been taken. Casually and inconspicuously we sauntered by . . . and *what?* Not a single piece of art had been taken!

We did notice more than a few people cautiously approaching the dangling artwork and then wandering away. Everyone was a bit disheartened until a few days later when we received this in our Mail Call:

My daughter and I came across your art in a tree by the high school. We loved it and think that it is wonderful for someone to do that. The small bound book is beautiful and the perfect size for my ATCs and my daughter loves the fuse box man.

It made us want to come home and get creative. My daughter now wants to search the town for more art trees:)

Thank You!



Photo by Molly Pearce

Abandoneers on the Facebook group went to town (and forests).

Tess Verneys *My first art abandonment and my first challenge. Took my 5yr old granddaughter with and we had so much fun trying to hang them on the tree in a hurry and then we ran away so we wouldn't get caught. She giggled the whole time. So fun. I can't wait to put out more and for more challenges. :)*