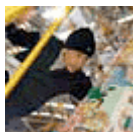


[Print This Article](#)**SAN FRANCISCO****[Artist reminds us: Junk mail grows from trees](#)  
[Credit card offers, ads form sculpture for recycling center](#)**- [Steve Rubenstein, Chronicle Staff Writer](#)

Friday, January 27, 2006



There is so much junk mail clogging Bay Area mailboxes these days that one man built a monument out of it, 17 feet high.

It could be the only thing that junk mail has ever been good for, said sculptor Hector Dio Mendoza.

"It's overwhelming, the amount of junk in mailboxes," Mendoza said Wednesday as he put the finishing touches on his creation, a giant tree made entirely out of junk mail.

The trunk was a collage of drug ads, the branches were credit card pitches, and the leaves were shredded catalogs.

"People are bombarded by this stuff," he said. "The credit card offers are the most annoying. They just keep coming."

The people in charge of Bay Area recycling paid \$2,200 to Mendoza, a 37-year-old San Jose artist, to create his masterpiece. Mendoza asked five friends to save the unwanted contents of their mailboxes and, within two weeks, he had 50 pounds of junk mail, enough to satisfy his artistic vision with plenty left over to stuff back into the blue bin.

The junk mail tree was dedicated Thursday at the Recycle Center plant, the giant building at San Francisco's Pier 96 where the contents of all blue trash bins go to get shoveled around, sorted and reborn on the secondary paper and plastics market.

The idea behind the tree is to remind people that Americans get 42 billion pieces of junk mail a year, as if they needed reminding. According to the Bay Area Recycling Outreach Coalition, a group of public trash agencies, more than 100 million trees a year are cut down in the name of junk mail. Techniques for getting off junk mail lists are available from the coalition at [www.stopjunkmail.org](http://www.stopjunkmail.org) or by calling (877) 786-7927. People at the plant were delighted by the art in their messy midst, even though if the campaign succeeds there will be less precious trash for trash collectors to collect. They will be sorry to see it hit the road, beginning next week -- the junk mail tree is off on a grand tour of the Bay Area, gracing the lobbies of trash agencies and city halls.

Mendoza's project is an example of what tricky stuff junk is. In its raw form, the junk mail Mendoza was using for his art was entirely recyclable. But by the time the artist had gotten through gluing it, wrapping it in wires and attaching it to large plastic pipes, it had become composite trash -- and no longer recyclable. It will have to go to the landfill when its days as art are done.

"I guess that's kind of ironic," said Mendoza, holding a tree branch that offered a platinum credit card with

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a 0 percent introductory interest rate. "I suppose it would defeat the whole purpose if all this ends up in the dump."

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