

John Morehead of the Fish Factory
photos & words: Ellen Gurley

Sometimes when fishing around for local artists, you get a bite from across the pond. That's what happened in my case, when someone caught my eye from Salisbury. I saw a fin sticking out in the middle of Cheerwine country and it belonged to one John Morehead. Social media showed me a picture of a fish made completely out of the caps from this local, iconic soft drink. I thought it was amazing and as soon as I told him so, he said not one but three Cheerwine fish had just swam away before he could even hang them up.



Lucky for me, he had other fun, finned friends to show me. I drove up one afternoon from Charlotte and played marco polo with over thirty pieces on display in Pottery 101. There are fish fashioned from old Brownie cameras, clock parts, table saw pieces and even musical instruments.

Assuring me he was not cray, I doubted him as the sculptures he created show the work of a mad man. He says he has been "doing this" since as far back as he could remember. And just where does he find his little metal pieces that he throws together into beautiful art? That's right, he fishes around for them sometimes finding himself dumpster diving and often tossing his net into boxes at flea markets. Not a day goes by that he isn't reeling in more. (These fish puns are kraken me up.)



Having not yet hung the "gone fishing" sign on his 9 to 5, he is still living very much like a light-hearted, hobby-hungry retired person who is having a whale of a time. He plays the guitar, the mandolin, the occasional banjo and is even in a play here and there. Morehead doesn't see an end in sight for his little wave of art. Having recently gotten his hands on a boatload of vintage Cheerwine caps, he assures me that another school of pop art fishes will be served up very soon. If you're ever in Salisbury, check out his commissioned sculpture attached to the side of the Norvell Theatre on (get this) Fisher Street. Keep up the good work, John.

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