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**Transition:** Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.

**Promo:** *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org) and is distributed by NPR.

**Music:** “Huddle Formation” from the album *Thunder, Lightning, Strike* by The Go! Team—a fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.

**Jesse Thorn:** It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. If my next guest, Mary Randolph Carter, has one credo, it's this: junk gets a bad rap. Junk like—I don't know—a weird, little statue of a cat that you put on a shelf, or a painting of a big tractor, or a bumblebee, or a vase that looks nice, but you don't really have anything... to put in it.

Carter, as she prefers to be called, has written books and books on junk: *The Joy of Junk*, *Garden Junk*, *American Junk*. She considers junking a verb. It's the act of acquiring said junk. Does collecting junk make for clutter? Maybe you could call it that. But if you do a quick internet search of what Carter's homes look like, well, I think you'd feel otherwise. They're beautiful. Cozy, warm, and captivating. She's written a brand-new book called *Live With the Things You Love and You'll Live Happily Ever After*. In it, Carter explores the homes and junking habits of antique dealers, stylists, boutique shop owners, artists, and more—homes that are like Carter's: beautiful, cozy, warm, and captivating. Plus, also, full to the brim.

For *Bullseye*, we asked Carter if there was one piece of junk that she acquired over the years that stuck with her so much—lived inside her head, rent free, for so long—that she wishes she had made it. Now, when you ask somebody who has as much stuff and has had as much stuff as Carter, that's a tough question. She thought about it; she thought about it some more; and then she landed on an object that is not beautiful, not warm, not particularly cozy either. It's a clock and it's covered with— You know what? I'm gonna let Carter describe it. Here she is.

**Mary Randolph Carter:** My name is Mary Randolph Carter, but you can call me Carter. And I wish I'd made a hideous Jello rock clock.

**Music:** Playful synth interwoven with clicky, clunky, tactile noises.

**Mary Randolph Carter:** This clock looks like cherry Jello—that someone took a mold of a mantle peace clock and poured in cherry Jello, and then poured in a bag of those pebbles that you see in the bottom of an aquarium. And you know—and there in the center is it what looks like a Five & Dime clock face. And then it's transparent, and it's pink. Not my favorite color, but it's pink. And I'm looking through it, and I see what either looks like candy—it sort of looks like candy corn in a way! It's been bleached. But it's all these pebbles. It's truly a work of art, I must say.

**Music:** Sophisticated orchestral music.

**Mary Randolph Carter:** It's not my style, because my style is more, uh—I would say primitive country Americana. And this clock, when I look at it, it's sort of very ornate, and it feels like it might've been in Marie Antoinette's bedroom. It has kind of a French style to it. I actually looked it up on eBay. I actually found some more in different colors. I can get a blue one, if I so wish, for like \$135. By the way, mine cost \$12. But when I found this clock, I just—I don't know, it had me at the first glance. I have to have this ugly, ugly clock. And it worked! It also was functioning at that time. Oh my gosh! I'm going back in time. This was like 1993, I think.

I was on a junkers hunt with my mother, Pat, and we were on the outer banks of North Carolina. But I know the name of the shop was the Merry-Go-Round Thrift Shop, one of my all-time favorite places to go to. Every summer we'd go down to the outer banks—my whole family—for the last couple of weeks of August. And part of the excitement of that vacation was to go junking.

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Particularly with my mother, who was just like—had the best eye and always went into the best places. But I do remember when we found this clock, she said, “Perhaps you should reconsider this purchase.” (*Chuckles.*)

**Music:** Percussive, plucky orchestral music.

**Mary Randolph Carter:** This store was like an old Five & Dime crossed with a hardware store. And you had to like turn sideways to walk through it, because there was so much stuff—which is what a true junker loves. I mean, it's like the exploration. It was like *Indiana Jones*, you know? I was gonna find the holy grail in this place. And I just had to keep looking. And it was also very dark. And I remember the aroma wasn't (*chuckles*) the finest. But junkers, we're heavy duty, and we're used to certain environments when we're looking for something like the Jello rock clock.

(*A resonant grandfather clock chime.*)

I do like clocks, okay? You know, I've collected—I think I really love the most basic alarm—I love alarm clocks.

(*A digital, buzzy alarm.*)

And actually, I have some pretty unusual like grandfather clocks, that kind of thing. So, I have had a lot of clocks in my life. But this clock, oh my gosh. I said, “I will never see another clock like this.” As hideous as it was, there was something kind of ingenious about it. Just like, I love to collect paintings, thrift shop paintings—I call them junk masters—I had to stop to think who would create something as despicable as this clock? Really defaming. I mean, clock makers would've just gone into mourning when they saw this. Who would've created it? And the bigger question was: who would ever buy such a thing and put it on their mantelpiece?! I mean, I was just kind of overtaken by these questions.

*(Chuckling nostalgically.)* Oh!

**Music:** Bright, otherworldly music.

**Mary Randolph Carter:** I really have been thinking about how I might make this clock. First of all, a few boxes of cherry Jello—the red powder. I think you boil water and pour that in, and mix it up, and put it in the fridge to gel. But I know that it's going to be transient, because I'm not going to put it in Lucite or resin. I'm going to make this big bowl of red Jello. I'm going to go to the pet shop in the neighborhood and buy a big bag of pebbles that would go into the aquarium that I don't have. And so, I'm trying to put all the ingredients together.

So, I have the Jello; now I have the rocks, the pebbles. But how am I gonna make the form of this clock? I need help. I'm not sure. I think—would I be able to go into a hardware store or a kitchen store and find an unusual mold? You know, like that you'd do a bunt cake in or something like that.

**Clip:**

**Music:** Breezy music.

**Infomercial Narrator:** It's the most exciting thing you can do with the inside of a cake!

*(Fantastical chimes.)*

Introducing the Betty Crocker Bake N' Fill! A delightful new pan that lets you prepare a cake with all kinds of delicious fillings. Imagine the look on your child's face when you cut into the cake and there's his favorite flavor of ice cream, or her favorite gelatin!

*(Clip fades out.)*

**Mary Randolph Carter:** I'm not gonna find the exact mold. So, I'm doing an original design here, of a Jello rock clock by Carter. So, then I make my Jello; I pour it into the mold; I pour in the pebbles.

*(Liquid pouring followed by tiny clinking.)*

I have to leave a space for the clock face. I guess you may begin to understand that I don't have this totally resolved. But then I guess I'll put like a cup or a glass or something in the center that would leave me a space to put the clock in. And then of course, I have to put it in the refrigerator. I don't know how long that'll take. Let's say overnight. And then I pull it out.

And I have found this clock—this perfectly little, round clock face—and I put that in. And for maybe 30 minutes or 20, I have my own Jello rock clock that when you—

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(*Beat.*) I don't know if it's gonna stand up. But then, just like time, it's just gonna slowly melt away like the witch in *The Wizard of Oz*. But for 20 beautiful minutes, (*laughing*) I have my Jello rock clock. Which by the way, I would not serve to my grandchildren as dessert, even though it probably looks really appetizing.

**Music:** Playful synth.

**Mary Randolph Carter:** (*Whispering.*) Why did I—why do I wanna make this clock?

Because this is true. I am the one that—many, many moons ago—discovered the clock, decided to take it home with me, find a home for it, and then decide—of all things—to try to recreate it. Who do I think I am?! Like, the Jello god of ugly things? I have dragged you into—yes—deep Jello waters. But you know what? Life is too short! And that's why I love to junk and find things like a Jello rock clock to add to my life and reproduce it. It just adds to the joy of, you know, (*chuckling*) let's have a good day and do something totally inane and ridiculous!

(*Garbled vocalizations from the music.*)

So, what do you think? (*Laughs.*)

**Jesse Thorn:** Mary Randolph Carter on the thing she wishes she'd made: a big, ugly, old Jello rock clock. I gotta tell you, (*chuckles*) this clock is unbelievable. If you wanna see what it looks like, we'll have photos of the clock up on our website, the *Bullseye* page at [MaximumFun.org](http://MaximumFun.org)—as well as on our Instagram, [@BullseyeWithJesseThorn](https://www.instagram.com/BullseyeWithJesseThorn).

Wanna check out Carter's new book? You should! It's called *Live With the Things You Love and You'll Live Happily Ever After*. You can get it at your local bookstore or on [Bookshop.org](http://Bookshop.org). It's absolutely beautiful. Sitting on my coffee table right now, literally.

**Transition:** Bright, chiming music with a steady beat.

**Jesse Thorn:** That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created in the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun—as well as at Maximum Fun HQ, overlooking beautiful MacArthur Park in Los Angeles, California. Outside my producer, Kevin Ferguson's window, a hummingbird gave birth to tiny baby hummingbirds! Right outside his window!

Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. The aforementioned Kevin Ferguson is our senior producer. Our producers are Jesus Ambrosio and Richard Robey. Our production fellow at Maximum Fun is Hannah Moroz. Our video producer Daniel Speer. We get booking

help from Mara Davis. Our interstitial music comes from our friend Dan Wally, also known as DJW. You can find his music at [DJWsounds.bandcamp.com](https://djwsounds.bandcamp.com).

You know, I invited DJW to go with me to see Raphael Saddiq this week, but he broke his hip! Good luck in your recovery, Dan.

Our theme music was written and recorded by The Go! Team. It's called “Huddle Formation”. Thanks to The Go! Team; thanks to their label, Memphis Industries, for providing it to us.

Special thanks this week to Jacob Derwin at the Technica House in New York City for recording our interview with Mary Randolph Carter.

You can follow *Bullseye* on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, where you will find video from just about all our interviews—including the ones you heard this week. And I think that's about it. Just remember, all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.

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*(Music fades out.)*