Russ White: The ironies of coins and currency

"I chose money because it's a funny thing. It has value but also asserts the moral values of a culture with world statements, such as "Liberty,"" Russ White said, of his latest series of work, Local Currencies, which was displayed through August at the University of Minnesota in the Coffman Art Gallery. A similar show, Loose Change, appeared at the Hopkins Center for the Arts earlier.

"Liberty is an ironic slogan for the nation with the highest incarceration rate in the world. I wanted to do work that makes us think about our values, but what actually makes us rich?"

White started in 2014 using ink and watercolor to draw still lives of paper money, crumpled. He found a rare shape of George Washington, and the story that he is a 250-year-old portrait of a slaveowner in our pockets. "I'm carrying around tiny portraits of men on our coins. "Think of it, becomes the date on the coin."

His connection to the art, however, is much more personal, having heard the stories of family members struggling with the Pomogs and being lost to the Holocaust. Harris became familiar with CTSD only last year while helping various family members raise money for their refugee camp in Bethlehem. "Through many conversations with them and others there I have been hearing how things have evolved through the generations," Harris says, "It is illuminating for me in understanding their experiences, and also in better understanding the experiences and challenges of disenfranchised communities here in the United States." Humanity, Harris writes, is the most important thing to learn from this performance. "It is important that we step outside of political biases and broad media representations to experience the reality of their experience, and to draw connections with things that are happening in our own society today."

Barbara Bridges: Open Every Door

From her beginnings as an East Coast girl collecting shells on the beach outside her house to a scholar and professor at Bemidji State University, Barbara Bridges has spent her life putting old things together. "All doorknobs aside, the one thing I can say about it is that it's gonna be hard to let them go," she says.

The "Liberty" image that won a purchase by the Minnesota State Fair, including purchase by Minnesota Museum of American Art, White Bear Center for the Arts Metropolitan Regional Arts Council awards. Bridges says people should take what others have evolved through the generations.

Craig Harris per- forming, at left. Photo by Candy Kuehn 2017. Barbara Bridges shows her sculpture to a friend.

More about Art to Change the World artists in our next Northeast Arts Insights.

Many Northeast-based artists show at the State Fair

We'll take a closer look at this Northrup King Building artist's work and philosophy by interviewing other Northeast area artists whose work appeared and/or placed at the Fair, in our October 3 edition Northeast Arts Insights page.

Photos by Margo Ashmore

by Nick Cocciarella

"See, Say, Do." - What's Your Is- sue? A group of artists, many from Northeast Minneapolis, will be shar- ing their works at Art to Change The World's fall event, "See, Say, Do."

The event will be held at Squirrel Haus Arts in South Minneapolis on October 5-14, and will include performances, workshops and an art exhibit. Each artist and their team will present works covering a wide variety of social and environmental justice themes, from mental health awareness and cultural diversity to climate change and economic reform.

Here are the details on two of the presenting artists:

Craig Harris:

The Importance of Humanity

Craig Harris is a multimedia artist who creates interactive performanc- es and sculptural environments. He is heavily involved in the theater and dance scene as a composer and writer. Harris' performance, Sensibility, is a multimedia dramatic work containing sights, sounds, and experiences of people living under sus- tained occupation in the Palestinian territories. The goal, he writes, is to raise awareness for Continuous Traumatic Stress Disorder (CTSD), a trans-generational mental health condition common in this population.

Ten local artists will be showing the in- tersection between individual free- dom and community responsibility. His connection to the art, however, is much more personal, having heard the stories of family members struggling with the Pomogs and being lost to the Holocaust. Harris became familiar with CTSD only last year while helping various family members...