Randy Walker’s new public art in NE a nod to daily city living

by Josh Blanc

Artists working in the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District will create a five-minute public art piece as a welcoming entry point into the North- east Minneapolis Arts District at the new East Side Storage and Maintenance Facility in the Holland neighborhood. The facility at the corner of University and 26th Avenues NE is a multi-purpose municipal operations campus for city vehicles, equipment, storage, maintenance and offices. While many of the city’s feet of garbage trucks and garbage bins are in the building, no trash is collected or stored in the building.

I first met Randy almost twenty years ago, at his then studio in the Northrup King Building (2001 – 2009). His works, made of string and found objects, stood out to me as very thoughtful, able to transform regular objects into mesmerizing pieces of art. Since then, Walker has taken his fascinating and unusual public art throughout Minnesota, all over the country and here in Minneapolis.

His Bracket Park sculpture Residence Journey is a piece of public art that draws all ages. He “re-imagined the roped by elevating it into the sky and anchoring it to the earth...the cables give it an apparent motion through space while simultaneously tethering it to its original site.”

While his studio is no longer in the Northeast, this new project, Collection Point, has brought him back to the neighborhood. Randy talked about how he studied and borrowed from the environment to create the piece. A maintenance facility that works with garbage was not an immediate inspirational launching pad, but he started to realize that garbage trucks and the workers are one of the regular touch points residents have with the city and its staff. Even his regular trips to his own garage became informing—the repetitiveness of opening and closing the bin had a pop culture connection, the arc of the hip hop lid started to intrigue him. Eventually Randy’s genius led him to appropriate 96 of the lids into cast concrete forms at 180 pounds each; the finished piece showcases the many lids opening up as it reaching to the sky. A structure 30 feet tall and 18 feet in diameter with a bracket ladder system will hold the lids. American Art Stone in New Ulm created the mold and produced the pieces; the whole sculpture weighs 20,000 lbs.

Throughout the course of the project, working with the artwork steering committee and the city arts administrator, Randy engaged with community members in out- reach sessions at local businesses, community centers and schools. An activity was designed to solicit comments concerning the city in general, and Northeast in particular; a diverse group of participants responded both in drawings and words about what is meaningful to live here. Collection Point will include a gallery (or collection) of selected responses, which were reproduced graphically and transferred to pre-cast panels.

A gateway to the Northeast Minne- apolis Arts District, this public art piece serves as a nod to the workers and residents of this historically working class neighbor- hood. A new working facility and a modern artwork stand side-by-side in welcoming people to the center of the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District.

Photos courtesy of Randy Walker

Fun fourteen artists working in the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District were awarded Minnesota State Arts Board grants totaling $136,800. Most will receive $10,000 for their projects. Congratulations to all the recipients. Here’s what they will do with their grants:

John Akre will create My Northeast and Yours, a film essay combining documentary and community-created collage animation about the making and remaking of place in Northeast Minneapolis.

Leslie Barlow and Lola Osun- kayo will present Within, Between, Beyond, an interactive exhibit featuring videos, portraits, and activi- ties for learning about the identity experiences of mixed race people and transracial adoptees.

Colleen Bertsch will create new arrangements of traditional Roma- nian costume (caraculs) for presented singers and instrumentalists and present a public performance of this repertoire. The performance will be recorded and released on CD.

Kristin Boldin will work with a mentor to complete a new draft of her first memoir, Broke Down. A panel of readings and discussion on parenting and mental health will be held at The Coffee Shop North in Minneapolis.

Mary Welke will create new, mixed media paintings about prai- re, farmland burns, and land renews- al. An exhibition, public conversa- tion, and inter-generational painting workshop will be held at the North- feld Arts Guild.

Collection Point, at left, integrates art sourced from the Northeast community, reproduced on the multi- soids of cast concrete lids. Photo at right is looking up from inside the new instal-

Twin Cities Death Cafe, which will start about 7 p.m. and is dedicated to normalizing death as a topic of conversation.

Russ White

An estimated 225 people attend- ed and 839 viewed MCNA’s live-stream of the public forum; 4,686 voted in the primary and 2,149 in the February 4 general election.

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Artists awarded State Arts Board grants

Washington Avenue.

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Breakfast only Sat & Sun

Sat* 10am - 11pm

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Open

12 Northeast | February 12, 2020

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22nd Ave NE

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1st Thursdays

5 – 9pm

Downtown

Broadway St NE

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