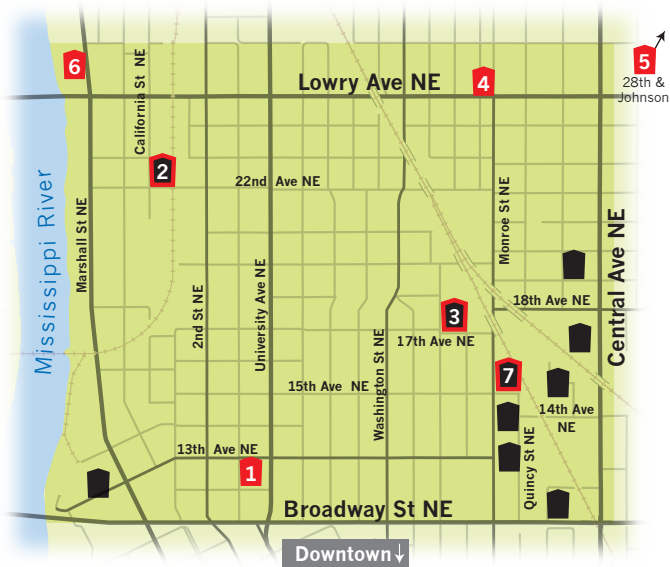




arts INSIGHTS

A page about artists and The Arts at Work by the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District in collaboration with the Northeast.



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Virtual Art-A-Whirl draws 27,000+

by Leslie Palmer-Ross and Margo Ashmore

Northeast Minneapolis Arts Association's feverish effort to build virtual aspects of the largest studio crawl in the country paid off, and it will remain open for business online all summer long.

With the in-person events canceled, Bicycle Theory and Curbside Marketing, LLC teamed up with the organization and hundreds of artists to post studio tours and demonstrations as well as create online stores. There are artist interviews and even musical performances at artawhirl.org.

"We had 21,000 visitors from 5pm Friday, May 15th until midnight Sunday, May 17th. We've had an additional 6,000 users since then, and 351,920 page views," Anna Becker, NEMAA Executive Director reported early last week.

The site even boasts connections to order food from Northeast restaurants. The format was new for everyone and like any Art-a-Whirl, artists had varied experiences.

Some artists had a limited online presence and did not see much activity. The weekend seemed to be successful for many participants. One reportedly sold all her inventory.

Tyler Whitehead, who creates public art and has a studio in the Holland Arts Building shared, "As a newcomer

to the Art-A-Whirl scene, it was great to have some traffic driven to my website. I wasn't sure how things would work this year but I think NEMAA made the best of a difficult situation. I hoped the added traffic would lead to future work and it already has."

Annie Hejny in the Casket Arts Building summed up her experience: "Virtual Art-A-Whirl was more successful than I anticipated. When I first heard that the live event would be transferred to a digital platform, I had frustrations and fears about accessibility for the community ... But I leaned into the possibility of a virtual event and created an online shop.

"It was a tremendous amount of behind-the-scenes work to make, organize and market my shop. All of my sales were from buyers who already knew about my work so I am not sure if I gained new exposure to the community like I usually do from a live Art-A-Whirl. Instagram and my website were the most important tools for me.

"There was a different kind of exhaustion at the end of the weekend. It was the kind of tired one feels from spending too much time in front of a screen versus the usually post-Art-A-Whirl tired from having talked with hundreds of individuals. Overall, I am grateful for the experience and am excited to continue selling through my shop for the foreseeable future."



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Adamant that art is worth paying for, Zoran also shares it publicly



Story and photo by Josh Blanc

At the new playground adjacent to Sheridan Memorial Park, you'll encounter the first actual climbing boulders in the city not made of plastic, and other sculptures by Zoran Mojsilov. Before you get there, visible from the Broadway Bridge or walking to the river end of 13th Avenue, you'll see Zoran's outdoor studio. It's a place where the public is invited to watch him work and a gift by the artist to the community—art enjoyment for those who can not afford to purchase a large sculpture. The space is a

rotating gallery of stone, wood and metal art in progress.

Outside Kieran's Kitchen Northeast and the FOOD Building at 14th and Marshall, new work is underway. Zoran is cutting symbols out of stone representing different cultures in our community. He describes the piece as a curtain between the outside and the inside. Stone tables in the courtyard will contribute to the visitors' sense of a magical place.

I sat down with Zoran to talk about this new body of work.

Mojsilov moved to the Twin Cities in 1986. He got a job at the Walker Art Center working for the installation crew. He was able to get a studio and won many awards and grants over the years. In 1996, he moved his studio to the Grain Belt Brewery complex and has been

there ever since. He states that he was one of the founders of Art-A-Whirl, with David Felker and many other artists whom we have profiled over the years. He said he does not care for the arts festival scene it has become. "Selling trinkets or small art pieces to make a living as an artist is not my gig." He wants opportunities to make statements.

He doesn't care if he offends you or if you agree with him or not. He knows who he is and knows how to survive as an artist. "You can not spend your time waiting for praise and for others to give you more opportunities. You have to look out for yourself because no one else will."

Observant, generous to those who are honest and real, Zoran also knows a con artist when he sees one. He has made his career as an artist by realizing that people who really want his work are willing to pay for it.

He tells a story about a developer who likes to use art in his buildings. When the developer claimed to have no money, Mojsilov told him to find an artist within his budget. "My work is worth the money." The developer finally gave in. Zoran says he tells this story to young artists to encourage them to stand up for themselves and their work: "Don't be desperate. Someone will want your work and you have to be patient."

He has also traded art for other valuable services. In his mid-twenties living in Paris, he was having lots of dental issues. He developed a relationship with an art-loving dentist, and was able to trade art for dental work, an exchange that has led to a long-term relationship.

You treat him fair, he will treat you fair back. He drops the F-bomb frequently and describes himself as "hair on the tongue" – or "no filter." Spar with him intellectually and with explicit epithets, I bet he will be your friend forever.

Time Machine, the catalogue of

Zoran's show at the Plains Art Museum in Fargo, North Dakota, (November 8, 2018 – May 25, 2019), chronicles Mojsilov's life achievements. (Go down to his studio and ask him about his book, he might offer you a copy. Bring some good bread or beer you will be sure to get one.) Having been born in Yugoslavia (now Serbia) and growing up in a communist/socialist country, he had only the basics of life. He knew little about art but art was all around him—in Europe with its remnants of the Roman Empire, in the Silk Road architecture and art. He surmised that these surroundings sent subliminal messages to his mind.

Quality is important to Zoran, both in his work and in everyday life. Why don't Americans seem to respect or value artists the way Europeans do? Zoran argued that America's capitalistic society tends to devalue artists because we focus on price, not quality or the experience of art. Comparing art to the pleasures of great food, Zoran pointed out that after World War II, America went to canned food while Europe stayed



with farm to table. In America the emphasis is on cheap food and being able to "eat in your car."

Zoran Mojsilov has created a huge body of work, spread throughout the Twin Cities and beyond. Many of his sculptures are right here in Northeast Minneapolis. Although no two pieces are the same, his distinctive style is easily recognizable. He, too, is a distinctive personality, someone worth time to experience; a "one-of-a-kind" artisan.

Jeff Lohaus tribute

Sculptor and painter Jeff Lohaus died suddenly over Memorial weekend. Lohaus once sold miniature sculptures of a pierogi on a fork, fundraising for a larger installation surrounded by words in several languages to celebrate the many cultures that have foods similar to the Polish or Ukrainian pierogi.

Fellow artist Jack Pavlik said on Facebook "I knew Jeff in the way that many people at our building had, in short conversations spread out over long periods. I did have the



honor of having him in a number of exhibitions ... he was a big help in setting up the shows and was always a friendly spirit. His work had beauty, wit, and sarcasm and will be missed."

Kathleen Sullivan of 2001A Space said of her friend, "I can't believe we

will never see that tall, kinky haired guy at openings, gatherings and Grumpy's."

Classmates and more recent colleagues described him as kind and gentle, his art "wonderful."

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