



News photo by Dan Iverson

Art enthusiasts Bruce and Nancy Pederson of Minneapolis (both graduates of St. Olaf College) view some of the more politically-charged "Day of the Dead" steamroller prints Saturday night at the California Building Gallery in Northeast Minneapolis. The show, produced by Northfield's ArtOrg, will be on view through Dec. 17.

Northfield's art movement

ArtOrg steamroller print show moves to Minneapolis

By DAN IVERSON
Staff Writer

MINNEAPOLIS — Throughout its brief history, ArtOrg has powered its way to become a vital asset to the Northfield arts community through strong exhibitions of local and regional artists. But during the past month or so, the Northfield group has picked up more steam than the 10-ton asphalt roller employed to produce some of ArtOrg's most arresting imagery.

Through its collaboration with the local Latino community and Latino artists from the Twin Cities to produce Northfield's first community-wide Día de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) celebration and related art exhibit, ArtOrg has become a vital link to Northfield for those well beyond its borders.

ArtOrg's reputation for generating provocative works of fine art is ever increasing as well as an exhibition of prints from its "Day of the Dead" show are now on view in a respected Minneapolis gallery. "Northfield Day of the Dead Steamroller Prints" received a warm reception when it opened at the California Building Gallery Saturday in Northeast Minneapolis.

More than 200 art enthusiasts, including several prominent figures from the Twin Cities arts community, on Saturday turned out for the exhibit, which features the collection of 4-by-8-foot prints used to create ArtOrg's 104-foot Day of the Dead banner — which also was displayed during the opening.

Collectors gave their stamp of approval for the show by the night's end by purchasing several of the massive prints inspired by the Day of the Dead tradition. For ArtOrg Executive Director Dave Machacek, it was an affirmation that bringing several individual artists together (most of whom were not printmakers) for a project can not only create a wonderful experience, but powerful artwork.

"By doing really great things locally, you can create something to be appreciated all over," he said.

Colleen Sheehy, director of education at the Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis agreed: "I thought it was stunning. The quality of the imagery, the execution, the color — were just terrific."

Like others, Sheehy was initially drawn by the buzz surrounding the novelty of the steamroller printmaking process, but said she was pleasantly surprised at the quality of the finished product.

"To see images at that scale was beautiful," she said. "They look more like murals, which is



The routed and inked press-board, left, used to create Christina Perez's 4-by-8-foot print along with a video documentary are also on view to give viewers insight to the steamroller printmaking process.

a great connection to the history of Latino art."

Aldo Moroni, director of the California Building Gallery, selected the show for its social impact and avant-garde style.

"The technique that they're using is extremely unique, wild and innovative," Moroni said. "Using a steamroller and tearing over the paper ... It's this non-precious attitude about how to make art."

Joe D. Horse Capture, associate curator of African, Oceanic and Native American art at Minneapolis Institute of Art, said the artwork's cultural and historical significance and contemporary aesthetics made for a strong exhibition. However, it was the project's ability to unite hundreds for Northfield's Day of the Dead celebration that Horse Capture said he found especially moving.

"To have such a great turnout for (the) local Latino community is great," he said. "It makes them feel welcome to the community and exposes them to different forms of artwork. ... The size of the artwork really reflects the importance of making those connections."

The exhibition also provides an opportunity for the younger Northfield artists to gain regional exposure and to continue to promote the identity of Northfield as an arts town.

Art supporter and the driving force behind Northfield's ArtsPlan06 Dixon Bond said the movement of an exhibition designed for Northfield to a larger metropolitan gallery adds evidence that Northfield is a regionally significant arts community, but that the move is only "a step in the right direction."

"I think it's a great thing," Bond said. "It speaks to what we already know what we have (in Northfield). It's wonderful that ArtOrg was willing to try something new and generate cross-cultural interest. ... (But) it may take 50 more of those exhibitions to have a dramatic impact."

However, the proliferation of galleries, museums and artists in the Twin Cities make even small steps monumental in scope for regional groups carving a place in this vibrant arts

community.

"... When there's a show from greater Minnesota that can find its way into that environment, it speaks to the message and quality of the artwork of the exhibition," Horse Capture said. "It's a great achievement not only for the artwork, but the whole process involved. For Northfield to engage with local Latino community and create work on this scale — it's very unusual, and in this case, had amazing results."

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If you go:

Northfield Day of the Dead Steamroller Prints Exhibit

Where: California Building Gallery, 2205 California St. NE, Minneapolis

When: On view Friday through Dec. 17. Gallery hours are: noon to 8 p.m. Thursdays and noon to 6 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays.

Appointments for special viewings can be made by calling (507) 261-8086.

Featured artists: Single prints by Claudia "Billy" Baca, Kendall Bohn, Paloma Barhaugh-Bordas, Anselmo Comejo, Betto Limón, Gustavo Lira, Steven "Nuno" Nuñez, Maria Christina O'Brien, Douglas Padilla, Juan Jose Palacios, Christina Perez, Richard Swearer, Xavier Tavera and Kari Alberg. A set of all 14 prints is also available.