

# North Dakota Museum of Art

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## North Dakota Museum of Art announces the opening of Regional Artists, Vance Gellert and Cyrus Swann

On June 17, from 4 - 6 pm, the North Dakota Museum of Art will host an opening reception for Minneapolis based artist, Vance Gellert and pottery artist Cyrus Swann of Pine River. The reception, which is free and open to the public, will include an informal gallery talk by Gellert and music by the Granary Girls.

For nearly three years **Vance Gellert** has been traveling throughout Minnesota and North Dakota in search of self-taught artists who are compelled to do their craft. His photographs of the artists and the landscapes in which they live will be accompanied by the artists' work.

According to Gellert, "I'm searching out and making portraits of outsider artists of the region. I define these as people who are not formally trained but driven to create delightful and intensely personal art. I find this group to be quite fascinating and better, very photogenic. Finding them is itself an interesting process. The project began October 1, 2004, and it's still defining itself. The first thing I discovered was that the landscape photos I took in the environments where these artists live paired well with the portraits and are shown together."

Vance Gellert took a BA in physiology and a PhD in pharmacology, both at the University of Minnesota, before realizing that he really wanted to be a photographer. He returned to school at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond and finished an MFA in photography in 1984. In 1989 he became co-founder and director of the Minnesota Center for Photography, a position he held until 2003. He resigned to become a full-time photographer.

Gellert has always liked working in series or on large projects. For example, in 1990 he started to shoot photographs of tractors on Machinery Hill at the Minnesota State Fair. After collecting nearly 500 images, Gellert decided to assemble the photos into a collage representing one tractor. Next Gellert photographed a farm west of Minneapolis on Highway 12 and assembled multiple images of the farm as the background for the tractor. Hybrid Tractor was given to the University of Minnesota Student Center in 1992.

**Cyrus Swann** is a multi-media artist who focuses on three-dimensional ceramics, moving from pottery, to sculpture, to installation. According to the artist, "My work explores the depths of form and surface available in the medium but also addresses issues of mass production, consumer waste, and comparative value of one object to the next. I am also interested in pushing my technical ability. I have a commitment to tradition and craft although I don't feel bound by rigid definitions or parameters." Swann moved back to his hometown, Pine River, after earning his BFA from Bemidji State University. He developed a studio by remodeling the out-buildings on his family farm.

All items in the Swann exhibition will be available for purchase and selected work is also available in the Museum Shop.

The North Dakota Museum of Art is located on Centennial Drive on the University of North Dakota campus in Grand Forks. Gallery hours are weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and weekends from 11 to 5 p.m. The Museum Shop is open during these hours as well. Although the Museum does not charge an admission fee, the suggested donation is \$5 for adults and pocket change for children.