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ARTIST Q&A: THOMAS FERRELLA

Artists along the Farm/Art DTour are selected through a multi-step juried process. In the weeks leading up to the Fest, we will profile the ten artists from around the country selected to create large-scale art installations along the 50-mile route.

Thomas Ferrella is an artist based in Madison, Wisconsin. Ferrella's piece, *A Mutual Curiosity*, a series of large-scale photographs of Sauk County Residents*, explores the interface between *DTourists* and locals. This installation marks a pilot collaboration between Wormfarm and Madison Arts Commission Blink temporary art program.

We asked Ferrella a few questions about his work and inspiration.



Why did you decide to apply to participate in the Farm/Art DTour?

For the past 4 years, I have played a minor role in the Farm/Art DTour by performing with my band at the Painted Forest through an invitation from Edgewood College. Throughout that time I have been quite impressed with the festival and in particular the level of art on the DTour. The landscape's inherent beauty adds a dimension to the artist's vision creating a surreal juxtaposition between the work and the landscape. This is not a gallery or museum show, this is art on rural land, it is truly art for the people.

My goals as an artist are simple: to do valuable work and to be in good company and this event clearly meets the latter goal and I hope to aspire to the former.

What was the inspiration for your installation?

I think this was 2 fold; 1) I felt the landscape (as mentioned above) really lends this surreal element that I wanted to use as a springboard. I envision these huge eye photographs to do just that especially at night, and 2) as I have been to the Reedsburg area many times over the years and while meeting many of the local folks, I have learned about their perspective and experiences of this event and how every year their way of life gets this influx of "foreigners." By listening to their stories and of course their opinions, I was curious about their perspective of this spectacle. So this "looking" was going both ways and I wanted to explore and depict that interface.

How do you see your work aligning with the vision / goals of the overall event?

By doing 8 separate installations along the entire route, my goal is to do something that helps tie the event together. To create a series of moments and anticipations that is carried from beginning to end.

What do you hope people take away from seeing your installation?

There is a study out of Berkeley associating the sense of awe, wonder, and amazement with a lower rate of inflammation, a more active immune system and hence a subsequently healthier life. I believe great art taps into that same neurokinetic pathway. We as viewers of art have all felt that sense of wonderment when we are surrounded by beautiful things, whether it is a performance, film, visual work or nature itself. So logically, I am aspiring to those same goals.

What challenges do you foresee in realizing your project?

Limiting myself to only 8 pieces. Ha! I am coming across so many beautiful local people with amazing eyes (and stories) and of course I would like to see all of them installed.