

worlds in Philadelphia.

He wanted the venues to reflect this aspect of the work, which is why it appears in North Adams in a former Chevrolet dealership in an old mill building on Route 2, while in Williamstown it will premiere at WCMA.

"There is this stark difference between these places, and that was exactly what I was trying to do and what a lot of people do -- go back and forth into these two worlds and experience them," Osorio said.

Bringing art out of the museums and galleries and into the real world is a concept very dear to him, and the Route 2 location has added an exciting extra level to the work for him. He's already seen people driving at night turning around and pulling in to see just what it was they saw out of the corner of their eye -- it's literally become a roadside attraction overnight.

"People are literally driving in and turning on their headlights and noticing this at night," Osorio said. "They see it through the glass, they get back in their car and then they take off. That in a sense is providing a completely different context for looking at the work, which was exactly what I was thinking about when I was creating the piece. Yeah, you have public art, you take it for granted, but this is a temporary installation."

Originally Osorio wanted to have the installation in an open space, but the old dealership served his purpose even more than he initially expected. The works' proximity to two bars and a weekend classic car club gathering has added even more opportunity for the roadside attraction element, but as a local sight for those on foot as well as motorists. Osorio has witnessed bar patrons drop by to examine the installation as it progresses, and

this placement of the work at the center of personal routine speaks to the point of the work itself and its partial function as a monument to ordinary lives in North Adams.

"For the motorcycles, for the bars, for the vintage car club, this work is just blending with their everyday life," he said. "I wanted to create a work of art where people have access, and we can reinvent the old rules of looking at art."

Osorio said his point will reach its fullest potential when the work resurfaces in WCMA -- a completely different and more traditional experience. What he hopes is that there will be some who have experienced the installation in both venues and through those experiences be able to examine the possibilities of the activity of viewing art -- even purchasing art -- and how that action translates into everyday situations far from the art galleries.

"Think of the possibility that a showroom can also be a museum," he said. "Sure, it's about cars, but there is also the potential to present other works so that people who want to buy a car might also be able to see works of art. They can look at the art while they're buying cars or vice versa. In a way that is very similar to collectors who buy art."

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Osorio compiled the themes and materials on the revolving platform through his conversations with the families.

"We had many, many dinners together, and through the sharing of food and conversations, the family would tell me stories of events in their lives that mark an important part of the family history," he said.

Within those family histories, Osorio also gleaned the differences between North Adams and Williamstown -- some of this amounted to confirmation of observations he had made during his early investigations. Placed at the center of social interaction -- and how that shapes the histories of either community -- is the actual layout of the communities, which Osorio took into account as he fashioned family stories into the installation design.

"One of the contrasts or differences in the work is, as you get closer to North Adams coming from Williamstown, the homes seem to be closer," Osorio said. "You are able to see more of the insides of the home because there is less privacy in terms of the property in front. As you walk in North Adams, it's more of a walking neighborhood. In Williamstown, there's a great division between the street and the home -- not all of them, but in certain places. There is more distance between the physical house and the sidewalk."

With this observation, Osorio began to think about how you can buy privacy -- in essence, money can distance you from the rest of the world. In Williamstown, houses have created distance, while in North Adams, vulnerability is the side effect of close proximity of the houses.

"What goes on inside is very similar," Osorio said. "It

just so happens that one has access to more than the other. That appears to create a great difference, but in the fundamentals, they're both the same."

Osorio began to focus on those similarities and try to understand how that led to different currencies through which the families counted their success.

"One I call the owning family and the other I call the working class family," he said. "Not that the owning family doesn't work -- they work to own. I'm not calling them a rich family because I feel that the other family, the North Adams family, is very rich in other ways. Both families have tremendous resources, but one of them has resources that can probably make their lives a little easier than the other. And I mean in everyday life."

Osorio's interest in the differences between the two communities was based in his own experience and what he has seen around the country. Although the small details of a North Adams/Williamstown disparity are specific to the region, the relationship is not, and Osorio hopes the installation will speak to out-of-town visitors about their own version of the same, even as it reveals the Northern Berkshire manifestation of it.

"That relationship exists in New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles - everywhere you go," he said. "It's not particular to that location, but it is one that is quite interesting: You come and you visit from the place that you are from; you can relate to your own version in your specific location, based on looking at the work."

Another point of interest to Osorio is that both communities are accessible to the other, and each family does cross over from one to the other regularly. That negotiation between two worlds lead him back to his own experience of crossing between

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Taking North Adams and Williamstown for a spin

By John E. Mitchell

Posted: 07/09/2010 01:41:55 AM EDT

Friday July 9, 2010

North Adams Transcript

NORTH ADAMS -- Artist Pepon Osorio is known for his projects that address social and class issues and that utilize collaboration with the families the work is inspired by. Osorio has brought this method to Northern Berkshire County to create a massive installation representative of the relationship between North Adams and Williamstown.

"Drowned in a Glass of Water" is featured as part of DownStreet Art at 69 Union St. and will move to the Williams College Museum of Art in September. Osorio has contained his tale of two cities on a rotating platform inside the dealership -- it's still a work in progress that is scheduled to open as a complete work on Saturday, July 17.

Osorio's idea is that each life inhabits one half of the circle, but the constant motion gives each a momentary highlight to the street view and puts them on equal level in the perception of onlookers.

Crafting the decor of the installation with a mix of found and created objects, he has mirrored what he found in local homes with material he has fashioned, intermingling with actual items from the area in order to create this revolving facsimile of the

life that sits plainly in front of us.

"I'm using a visual vocabulary that is very common in that community," Osorio said in a recent interview. "I'm trying to be very genuine and sensitive to the visual vocabulary and the aesthetic.

"For instance,

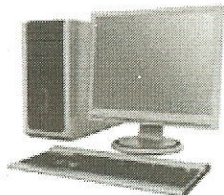
I've never used deer heads and deer blankets, which I was seeing more and more and more with the working-class families that I was visiting, so how could I not use them? It's about that -- about transforming their aesthetic reality in a way that is presented right in front of them for other people to see -- and mine as well, because I am part of it."

Osorio had been mulling over the project for a year and visiting in his quest to find families that were a good fit for the work -- and for whom he was a good fit, as well. His goal was to examine the relationship between North Adams and Williamstown, and his hope was that he would find two families who had opposite views of life, each reflecting the community they called home. His final collaborators, however, did not end up coming from the families he had investigated.

"There was no courting going on. We didn't court each other -- no blind date or anything like that with the families," he said. "We met once, and I followed by intuition. Both families came totally out of left field. I wasn't even looking for those kinds of families, but it was so intriguing in the conversations I had with them that I just felt they were the right families to produce this with -- and also the right fit for the families. It worked both ways. After many weeks of thinking about it, on both sides, we decided to collaborate."

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