



FORM + CONTENT

This new North Loop gallery boasts bold artists with big ideas about art and everyday life.

Once a month for the past year, public artist Camille Gage and a band of volunteers have been gathering on a Minneapolis freeway overpass, holding up large signs showing how many Americans have been killed or wounded in the Iraq war. The numbers are fabricated to resemble those on car odometers, the goal being that the captive audience on 35W below would connect the numbers above with those on their idling, gas-fueled vehicles. ▶



Meanwhile, inside the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, emerging artist Robyn Stoller has been crafting letterpress prints that join her interests in organic forms with her Jewish heritage. The forms are inspired by cellular structures within the human body, while the letters are made with centuries-old lead type Stoller purchased from a printing press in Israel, letters that were once combined to print news, obituaries and other announcements.

Both women had been part of the Minneapolis collective Rosalux Gallery. Both exhibit elsewhere in town. Both have day jobs: Gage is a special-events manager at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute; Stoller is coordinator of the Tychman-Shapiro Gallery at the Sabes Jewish Community Center. And each decided, independently, that she was ready for a new art adventure.

One day, over a cup of coffee, the pair started to wonder, as Stoller recalls, "How could we create something that would allow us to have a space for exhibitions, to get noticed locally, nationally and internationally, and to build a community of mutual support, dedication and investment?"

"And things just spiraled out from there," adds Gage, who began contacting other established artists about collaborating on a new venture. The group grew to include artist Howard Oransky, who is also the Walker Art

Previous page: Numerous members of Form + Content gathered at the north loop gallery shortly before its grand opening. (From left to right): Robyn Stoller, Camille J. Gage, Leah Golberstein, Jil Evans, Anna Mansell, Christine Baeumler, Joyce Lyon, Jim Dryden, Howard Oransky.

Top: "Remnants from the Nest," a graphite and gouache work on gessoed board by Lynda Monick Isenberg, recalls natural, organic shapes one might find on a hike through the forest.

Bottom: Leah Golberstein's "Witness," made of flax fiber and handmade paper, hangs from the ceiling.



Center's planning director; book-cover designer and illustrator Jim Dryden; installation artist and architect Jay Isenberg and his wife, Lynda Monick-Isenberg; and painters Joyce Lyon and Christine Baeumler.

Baeumler invited painter Jil Evans, who in turn invited emerging printmaker Jeff Wetzig. "He fit in because he's introducing a conceptual side to printmaking: He works on a large scale and creates installations. And I really like his mind," Evans said. As for Wetzig, he was interested because, he explains, "Here were all these established artists with great credibility and integrity. Why wouldn't I want to join them?"

Even though most of the artists had never met one other, much less viewed one another's work, they gathered in Evans' living room and "had the most incredible chemistry," Gage recalls. "There was tremendous joy in the prospect of adventure ... and we weren't even drinking," she jokes. Adds Oransky, "There was this very powerful sense of openness and possibility. I knew I could trust them."

The result is Form + Content Gallery, located in the North Loop district of downtown Minneapolis. The group decided to set up shop in the Warehouse District—a visual-arts destination in the 1980s, before the area's takeover by Target Center and sports bars—because "Northeast Minneapolis is saturated and we wanted to be part of the broader cultural landscape that's happening here," Oransky explains.

The Guthrie, Theatre de la Jeune Lune, Interact, the Hennepin Center for the Arts, the Minneapolis Library, Open Book, the loft boom, and the numerous coffee shops, architectural firms and restaurants make the area "feel like a cauldron of activity across disciplines," Oransky adds.

Above: The work of Jil Evans, including this oil painting "Dutch Opera I," is rich in texture and full of active brushstrokes.

"Trace Elements," the gallery's inaugural show, focuses largely on the 11 founders' diverse work and was selected by Walker assistant curator Doryun Chong. Leah Golberstein's textile sculptures hang from the ceiling, while Wetzig's massive woodblock print of a fence festooned with twinkly lights runs the length of the gallery's mezzanine.

In the small, narrow gallery—which is registered as a for-profit partnership, but run like a non-profit collective—each founder gets one month in which to do whatever they want. But the group has also allocated three slots a year for other artists, because part of the mission is to forge cultural partnerships, collaborate on programming and generate artwork outside of the gallery. So expect an array of activities from poetry readings to performance art in the coming months.

"We're all excited about exploring this little space together and introducing the art we

make to the outside, everyday world," Gage says. As for "the rookie," as Stoller calls herself, "Although the space is not huge, I have huge ideas and I'd like to find a way to fit them into our space."

METRO TIP: Just blocks from Form + Content Gallery is one of the area's restaurant mainstays, Origami, which has happy hour every night of the week with drink and sushi specials. Indulge in some Dynamite Roll before heading over to the gallery for Evans' show: bold figurative imagery abstracted from Dutch flower paintings. +

"TRACE ELEMENTS" THROUGH APRIL 5
"THE DUTCH OPERA" THROUGH MAY 17
FREE OPENING RECEPTION APRIL 12, 6-8 P.M.
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