

Sculpture Space artist captures local flavor



Visiting artist Patrick Grenier built this studio on the lawn of Sculpture Space to resemble a late 19th-century film studio created by engineers and scientists working for Thomas Edison.

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UTICA —

Not every community has a refugee center. Not every city has a brewery – and what about the tomato pie.

These are among the things that make Utica unique. Visiting artist Patrick Grenier wants to capture that local flavor in his work at Sculpture Space – a sculpture and film project “Nomskul” (as in nomadic sculpture).

The project is inspired by a late 19th-century film studio created by engineers and scientists working for Thomas Edison. Grenier’s sculpture, built on the lawn of Sculpture Space at 12 Gates St., mimics that studio.

Speaking through art Built from wood with a prop-up roof to allow natural light in, the studio – although somewhat smaller – closely resembles pictures of the original studio. The studio represents only one part of Grenier’s artwork, however.

The bigger statement lies in what will happen within the studio, Grenier said. He will film Utica residents throughout the month in a variety of ways – eating tomato pie, polka dancing, drinking a Saranac beer, break dancing etc.

He’ll capture the one-minute performances through a 1970s-era camera, encased primitively in a large wooden box, resembling Edison’s early film camera the Kinetograph. Ultimately, the completed film will make a statement about society.

“Social sculpture is a sociological approach to art – the relationships people have with each other. I’ve always admired that idea – working collectively with people but also being very indirect,” Grenier said. “The New Jersey artist discounts the idea that real art must come from a tortured painter working alone in his studio. Art, he said, is community endeavor.

“There’s been this false idea about art that it is autonomous,” he said. “I’ve always been skeptical of that idea.”

Art for Grenier is a social interaction rather than making an object. “I am an artist searching for a critical position in society to foster change.”

Contacting the artist Grenier’s final project can be viewed along with works by other visiting artists during a works-in-progress reception from 5-7 p.m. Monday, March 24, at Sculpture Space.

To be part of the project, e-mail Grenier at filmUTICA@gmail.com.