**Matt Drissell's Iowa Art**

Mark: A cadre of artists will be setting up shop this weekend in Orange City. They are the *Iowa Arts Council Fellows*, and their mission is to bring to light Iowa’s arts, to inspire, to provoke, and to teach. There will be a sculptor who hand sews her works, a multimedia artist who courageously stares into the subject of violence against women, a printmaker who shapes his art in incorrigible wood blocks, and a painter who has found a surprising and whimsical way to connect with the land. It is this painter whom I had the chance to talk with.

Matt: My name is Matt Drissell, and I’m an artist from Sioux Center.

Mark: The paintings of Grant Wood, of course, come to mind. He may forever come to mind when talking about Iowa and art. Rightfully so. His paintings piquantly portray the land and people of the Iowa that is memory, even for those who have never been to Iowa. It’s an elegant proof of regionalisms power. It is a lesson and a problem for a contemporary painter interested in examining Iowa, its land and its culture.

Matt: It’s all of those things coming together: an appreciation for the way art can build ties in a community, the way art can reflect a unique place, how arts can really shape us and help us really dream about what things could be, how things could change in many exciting ways.

Mark: Contemporary Iowa, a majority of it, is dedicated to row crops. Wood, of course, portrayed beautiful rows of crops. Drissell has found a very different approach by thinking not only of the landscape, but of how the landscape affects us and how we think about our present place:

Matt: And I’ve found an interesting what to bring a lot of those sensibilities together is by using industrial food products.

Mark: Those products built from the molecule up - those molecules which so many row crops are stripped down to

Matt: things like popsicles made by Blue Bunny, not to far south of here in Le Mars, and these beautiful colors, these popsicles we associate with fun and summertime. I melt them, I drip them, I create different works with them.

Mark: And the works are enticingly bright abstract fields of color. Compare that to the long rows of green above a soil background.

Matt: Well that ties in really well with some of my concerns, as thinking about traditionally what we eat from the garden versus how our food is one, two, three, four steps removed from what we see around us. That works its way into the abstraction, in many ways. Sort of a metaphor... food metaphorically abstracted from the plants that we see in the field.

Mark: The abstraction presents a reality. The paintings reveal the place where we live in a way that the memory of Iowa does not. They are provocative and challenging, and they will be on
display this Saturday at the Barn at Blue Mountain in Orange City. Drissell and his fellow artists will be there, too. A zine-making workshop will begin at 2. The exhibition opens at 4. The reception begins at 5.

For Siouxland Public Media, I’m Mark Munger.