

FALL ART TOUR[®]

NEWSLETTER FEATURE MAY 13, 2021

AN UNEXPECTED GIFT

TEXT AND PHOTO BY SANDRA LEWIS

We all entered year 2020 not knowing what was coming. Many of us are not comfortable “not knowing”. Perhaps it’s the sense of losing control, of not being able to shape our day-to-day reality in ways we are familiar with. If we have at least an illusory grip on our immediate world, things will turn out alright in the end, we think.

Last year was the mother of all unpredictability. It brought plenty of hardship, loss, and sorrow. And yet, it also carried many gifts if you allowed yourself to look for those. Time was one of them. Not everyone was able to benefit from this gift. Many did, though.

Artist Hartmut Ringel was a grateful recipient of the world slowing down. Sure, he faced his own hardships, but the extra time afforded to him was not wasted. He is also comfortable “not knowing”. This allowed him to enter the year with an open heart and mind. And beautiful things followed!

Finding a suitable and affordable studio has been a challenge for Ringel. A challenge only too familiar to most artists. Last year delivered big on that account. Hoping for a small barn or a shed to use for his art projects and installations, Ringel instead received exclusive access to an abandoned rural church in Sauk County.



The Harrisburg Reformed Church

The Harrisburg Reformed Church, built in 1867 was closed for good in 1958. Most recently it was used to store eggs from a chicken farm. There is a wonderful synchronicity coming, the chicken theme was not yet exhausted.

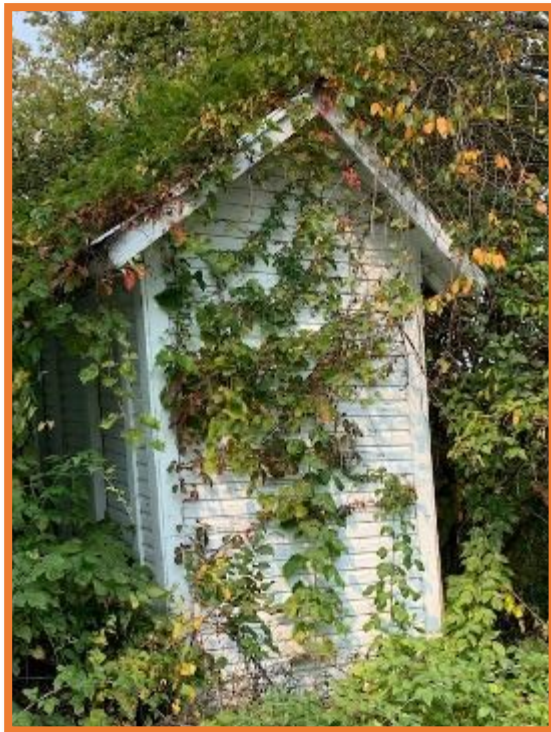
Hartmut Ringel applied twice to create an art project for Art Dtour, a biennial event organized by the Wormfarm Institute.

Both times, his proposals were rejected. It turns out, the timing and the space were not yet lining up.

One of the organizers of Art DTour, Donna Neurwirth, was touched by Ringel's idea for an art installation. So much so that she found him a suitable space in which to create his piece entitled "The Power of Fragility". The abandoned church became the site of this powerful piece.



Built in 1867, closed for good in 1958.



Tool shed behind the church

The owner of the church, Scott Sprecher, offered Ringel help with cleaning the space out. Having extra time on his hands, Ringel spent four weeks removing chicken debris, sweeping, and mopping. During that time, he enjoyed having the church windows open with the summer breezes sweeping in and out of the space.

The art installation he originally envisioned started to take on the actual contours of the church. Ringel mused: "Just when do you see a church with open windows?" He decided to employ the gentle wind in his artwork. (More on this later.)



“The Power of Fragility” by Hartmut Ringel

Enter the “chicken theme”! Ringel has been using chicken eggshells in his artwork for some time. He and his family keep used eggshells, wash and dry them, and save them for his future art pieces and installations.

The Power of Fragility, the art installation Ringel created in the abandoned church, movingly and gently embraced the beauty of the old building. Where just a few months ago chicken waste dominated, now clean, thoughtfully arranged eggshells invoked powerful emotions in the viewers of the artwork.

How fragile are we? Is being fragile a strength or a weakness? How robust or fragile is our civilization in the face of a microscopic virus? These were just some of the questions that were racing through my mind while I viewed the artwork.

The breeze was coming through the windows, playfully rocking the eggshells back and forth, giving them a lively, kinetic appearance. I sat on in old church pew placed where the altar would traditionally be, positioned to face the former congregation. I felt peaceful and hopeful. Perhaps our fragility is our true superpower.

The owner of the church was so pleased with the beautiful old building breathing the signs of life again that he offered Ringel unlimited use of the church for the duration of 2021. I cannot think of anyone better than Ringel to honor this powerful space where hundreds have said their prayers.

Ringel believes that when you have a date and a space, art happens. It’s a commitment, a meeting of sorts between the artist and the event or space provider. He does not force the idea, he already knows it will be full, like a circle. It will be perfect, like a circle.

Hartmut Ringel has a new art installation in mind. One that has been germinating for a long time, longer than he has known of the church. And the church will once again shape the artwork. All I can say is that it will involve water thoughtfully placed within the confines of the old church.

The installation will be open to the public. Visit Ringel's website for more information on this project. The former church will also welcome the Fall Art Tour visitors in late October since it's serving as Ringel's studio this year.

Come see the studio in the church and meet the artist. He has already set the stage so art can happen. And it will!



The Power of Fragility (close up)

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE WORK OF HARTMUT RINGEL:

www.hartmutringel.com

Call 608-432-9500 or Email: hartmut.ringel@gmail.com

Stay in touch:



[FALL ART TOUR HOME PAGE](#)

[CLICK HERE](#)