



CULTURAL DIVIDE

HORMUZ MININA EXAMINES DUALITY IN SHEDSPACE | BY FELICIA FEASTER

AFTER THE SEPT 11 terrorist attacks, Hormuz Minina had a disturbing epiphany. He had been in America for over 10

years. He imagined himself acclimated. He *felt* like an American. He had mastered ATMs and drive-thrus.

But after Sept. 11, all of that sense of belonging disap-

peared. Minina discovered a new color divide that placed him on the very bottom rung.

An America that had previously, historically divided itself according to black and white had now added a third, far more dangerous category that included anyone who resembled the people who masterminded the Sept. 11 attacks. The Bombay native became part of that new, most dangerous class of all. Distinctions of Egyptian or Indian or Arab or American-Indian no longer mattered under the all-encompassing umbrella of *brown*.

Minina had never worried about how he *appeared* before, but now he was very conscious of always looking clean shaven in public and wearing neat, American-style clothing, especially when he had to go to the airport.

Even today, sitting in a North Highland coffee shop, Minina looks every bit the part of a clean-cut engineering grad from Georgia Tech in his neat Polo shirt boasting the name of a corporate golf firm. He still has the soft-spoken, curlicue accent of his native Bombay. But with his cropped hair and the way he greets a friend with a perfect, "Hey, how's it going?" Minina seems in every way emblematic of an acclimated American.

But inside Minina is a changed man.

That alteration of self will be addressed in an upcoming art project he is creating for the annual summer exhibition *ShedSpace*.

For the past three years, curator Joey Orr's *ShedSpace* has paired local artists with area shed owners who give their outbuildings over to an artist's concept for one night during the project's August run.

VISUAL ARTS

Minina's shed will debut Sat., Aug. 16, in East Lake. Part of the serendipitous appeal of *ShedSpace*, says Minina, is the chance for artists to create a one-night project tailored to the specifics of the shed.

"My whole piece is shaped from the experience of meeting the people and from seeing the shed," he says.

The shed, which has two separate entrances, reminded Minina of his own dual identity as an Indian and an American. The shed's owners also helped inspire Minina's theme of split identity. The East Lake couple are a fascinating mixture themselves — an Irish-American husband who speaks Chinese and his Chinese-American wife who speaks none. The installation will feature dual video projections and a performance art piece in which Minina will strap himself to a spinning table for three hours. It all serves to address his feelings of cultural disconnectedness.

Art-making is a relatively new sensation for Minina. He first came to Atlanta to study engineering at Georgia Tech. The city too busy to hate did not make a great first impression. Minina's freshman-year roommate was a born-again Christian who tried to convert Minina. "[He would]

wake me up at 2 o'clock in the morning reading from the Bible," says Minina. When Minina says he's still traumatized by the experience, you believe him.

It took a long time for Minina to find his place in the city. But in 1999 he became involved with the alternative art space Eyedrum.

"It made me feel part of something," says Minina. "It gave me a sense of community."

It was his exposure to the artists and the creative encouragement at Eyedrum that led Minina to try his hand at art-making.

The pieces Minina produces are a fascinating mixture of engineering precision, chance and flux. The works are often enormously time-consuming and expensive to produce, which explains why Minina says, "I can't do more than one piece a year."

For a recent Spruill Gallery group show, also about Sept. 11, Minina rented two enormous 40-foot-long, freight train shipping containers whose long forms in the

gallery's parking lot were meant to evoke the toppled World Trade Center towers.

"What was really interesting about this piece was ... you had the whole Dunwoody crowd — a lot of these people had never seen installation art, let alone something of this scale."

Though Minina currently works as an engineer designing automated golf driving ranges for a Swedish-based firm, he says he will never stop making art.

"Instead of waving a flag, I use my art as a way of demonstrating my connection to America."

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ShedSpace continues with an installation by Joe Peragine in College Park Aug. 23 and Lisa Tuttle in West End Aug. 30. In addition, there is a month-long installation at the Little Five Points Community Center by artist collective Dos Pestaneos (Hope Hilton, Scott Lawrence and Andrew Ross), shed by Mad Housers. For information, visit www.shedspace.org.



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