

Brother's fight with illness inspires interactive exhibit

By Jana Petersen

TIMES STAFF WRITER

When the brother of Minneapolis artist Laura Migliorino learned he had AIDS three years ago, he started giving away his possessions.

To Migliorino, he gave his compact disk player and CD collection.

Migliorino took out her frustrations with her brother's illness by creating AIDS artwork, which she said was often political and sometimes nasty.

"We thought his life was basically over," she said.

But today, Migliorino's brother is still alive and sees himself as a survivor. He recently asked her to return all his CDs.

So, too, has Migliorino's artwork evolved.

"Over the three years, the approach to the work has become much more introspective and more universal," she said.

Her latest show, "AIDS: Challenging the Myths," opens Wednesday in Gallery One of the Alice R. Rogers Gallery at the St. John's University Art Center.

Migliorino is a faculty member at Anoka-Ramsey Community College in Coon Rapids. Her works have appeared in New York, Chicago, Atlanta and Minneapolis' Gallery Rebolloso.

This show is a far cry from the hard-

SEE THE CHALLENGE

What: "AIDS: Challenging the Myths," a show of interactive artworks by Minneapolis artist Laura Migliorino.

Where: Gallery One of the Alice R. Rogers Gallery at the St. John's University Art Center.

When: Wednesday through Feb. 10. Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily and 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursdays.

Cost: Free.

For information: Call 363-2701.

hitting AIDS shows of years past, Migliorino said. Its focus is on the inner strength and spirituality of people with AIDS.

This is not art-on-a-wall. It's an interactive show, with video and audio presentations, as well as more unusual aspects, such as coffee grounds on the floor of one section.

"Search," the most recent work in the collection, is specifically about survival.

It includes a videotape of two hands rubbing together. The audio is a selection from Tony Kushner's AIDS play, "Angels in America," which Migliorino obtained permission to use.

The selection speaks of disastrous events in human life: floods, fires and the like. Then comes the last phrase:

"But maybe my life is fine."

"It's about coming to terms with tragedy," Migliorino said.

Above all, Migliorino said, she wants this show to be approachable by everyone. And she wants visitors to learn something about AIDS.

Some parts of the show are directly educational. For instance, "The Language of AIDS" allows viewers to take home fact cards about AIDS. Migliorino said she hopes the cards dispell some of the myths surrounding the disease.

"I still think AIDS has an us-them attitude," she said. "It happens to them. It's the disease of bad people."

The stereotype of immorality associated with people with AIDS probably will always be around, Migliorino said. But she hopes her show will change some minds.

"If someone can come through this show and maybe think, 'That's my problem, too,' it will at least get them to think about AIDS," she said.

Her next project will be a book about her grandmother.

Migliorino, a Chicago native, said she's looking forward to the change.

"This is the end of the AIDS work for me," she said. "This is it."

Then, after a moment, she added, "For now."

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Laura
artist

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