

John Deere 6600 Combine Becomes a Work of Art



A salvaged combine gets a new lease on life

The day was coming to a close, the setting sun dimming the Wisconsin farmland. Through the darkness, multicolored light poured from an odd sight: a John Deere combine clad almost fully in stained glass, parked unassumingly in the middle of a cornfield.

The installation was part of the Farm/Art Dtour, a 50-mile-long, self-guided tour of southern Wisconsin's farmland, held from Oct. 4-13, in conjunction with Reedsburg's "Fermentation Fest." The festival celebrated the benefits of fermented food and drink, while the Farm/Art Dtour showcased the skills of local artists and musicians.

One such artist, Pilot Mound, Minnesota's Karl Unnasch, contributed "Ruminant (the Grand Masticator)," a John Deere 6600 Combine donated by a local salvage yard and renovated with stained glass panels.

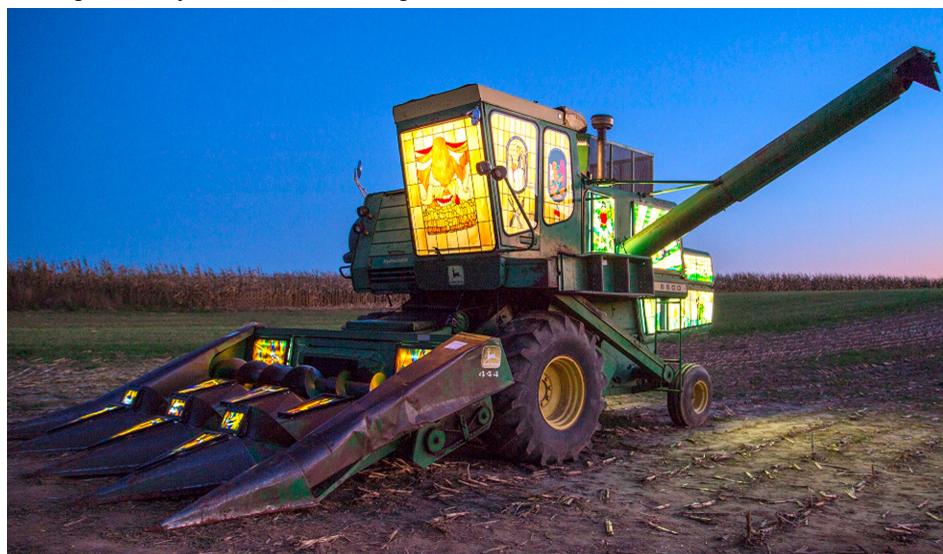
"[I used] stained glass imagery on the combine to refer to varying ideas and perspectives of the harvest, since the festival occurred during the fall harvest," Unnasch said.

Unnasch sees his stained-glass installation as a metaphor, comparing harvesting crops to digesting art.

"Just as food goes through several processes as it is picked and broken down by cattle, so does the harvest as it is gathered and processed by a combine," he added. "In my take on art, the process of viewing, thinking about and enjoying art is done by the viewer in a metaphorically similar fashion as a cow or a harvester. We are ruminants of visual language, in the same manner as a combine is of a crop."



Ruminant (the Grand Masticator), lit up the evening sky with multicolored glow of hundreds of pieces of stained glass in many different colors and designs.



The combine was featured at the Farm/Art Dtour festival in Reedsburg, Wisconsin.

Unnasch's affinity for agriculture and John Deere goes back to his childhood, growing up on a 220-acre dairy farm.

"I learned to run a John Deere B [tractor] as my first introduction to tilling fields," Unnasch said. "The drone of the engine, the long hours spent in the cab, and my fervent imagination combined to make the tractor a place of almost tantric contemplation. I got lost in my own ideas, which had a long-term effect on my

art-making solutions."

A John Deere employee discovered Unnasch's installation while attending the Farm/Art Dtour festival.

"My favorite part of the installation was the creativity," the employee said. "In this case, it was great to see the combine get another life, and be a canvas for the artist's passion and messages about art and rural culture."