

# LIFE



Ethan Mickelson / The Arts Partnership

With a distinct abstract style, Jesse Shirek will join a dozen other local creatives living with a disability for the "Artist First" exhibition opening soon at the Hjemkomst Center.

# ABLE ARTS

## Moorhead exhibition celebrates talent of local artists living with disabilities

By Ethan Mickelson  
The Arts Partnership

### MOORHEAD

**W**hen an artist tells a story, it comes from their soul. True ability is measured by the passion poured out onto the canvas of life.

For artist and digital accessibility consultant Jesse Shirek, artwork and life are parallel. The narrative is always ahead, just out of reach in a constant state of flux.

"The creative process to me is like exploring a different world," Shirek says. "So, try to detach from what I'm seeing or the way that I see the world, it's about a different space."

With works to be included in the "Artist First" exhibition at Moorhead's Hjemkomst Center, 202 First Ave. N., starting this weekend, Shirek will join nearly a dozen other artists displaying a dynamic combination of media including oils, tapestry, charcoal, photography and poetry.

### Unique perspectives

Accessibility advocates from Arts Access for All conceived of the project with a single mission in mind — to provide local artists with disabilities a forum to demonstrate their talents. The resulting space allows creators and observers alike to explore new and sometimes distant worlds.

Inside the familiar warmth of his art-

filled home, Shirek explains his abstract and semi-representational paintings. While he faces unique challenges as a result of his limited eyesight, he approaches his work and hobbies with a problem-solving tact that is quintessentially human.

"I'm the only person who's going to see it the way I see it," says Shirek about his works like "Repair," a whirling combination of layered colors. "The disability piece of it is always there and creates this interesting dynamic of how does what I'm taking in really look like, or how does what I'm creating really look?"

Shirek studied educational psychology and visual art at the University of Minnesota

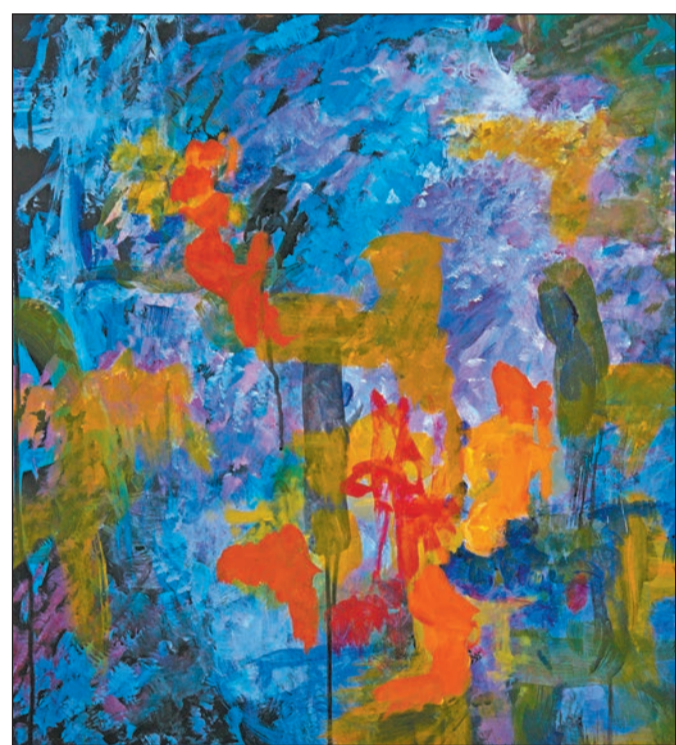
before moving back to North Dakota for work. His daily tasks are a mix of assistive technology instruction and accessible web design consulting. He also serves as the president of the National Federation of the Blind in North Dakota.

He's married to Arts Access for All's lead accessibility consultant, Sherry Shirek, who also lives with blindness. Together and tangentially, they strive to offer access and accommodation to people with disabilities.

### Everyday tensions

Another artist with work to be included in the exhibition is Steve Smith, of Forest Lake, Minn. His work explores the tension of living between two opposing cultures of the Ho Chunk or Winnebago and Western cultures.

"My intent is to share a bit of what it is like to experience the tension and to elicit tension within the viewer in presenting them with an opportunity to see something different,"



Ethan Mickelson / The Arts Partnership

Jesse Shirek explores new worlds through his creative process, often using an iPad to sketch out ideas and find the patterns and figures that emerge.

### IF YOU GO

**What:** "Artist First," an exhibition from Arts Access for All  
**When:** On display Saturday, Feb. 8, through March 31  
**Where:** Hjemkomst Center, 202 First Ave. N., Moorhead  
**Info:** Free public reception will be held at 1 p.m. Feb. 8

Smith says. "I also see my artwork as a prayer of sorts, a way of honoring those things and beings I have encountered that have brought me joy or learning."

These prayers within his artwork are windows into foundational relationships, such as with "Choka Melvin," and

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## Study: Zinc may not shorten colds

By Kiersten Willis

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

There are many ways people attempt to fight colds, but a new study indicates that taking zinc lozenges may not help you get rid of them sooner.

A randomized trial published in BMJ Open showed that taking lozenges containing zinc acetate did not shorten colds, according to a news release from the University of Helsinki.

The double-blind trial saw the university's professor, Harri Hemila, and his colleagues investigate the effect of zinc

acetate lozenges on City of Helsinki, Finland employees. Participants were told to slowly dissolve six lozenges in their mouth each day. In total, they took 78 mg/day of zinc over five days. Participants were told to begin treatment as soon as cold symptoms began in an effort to minimize the delay between getting a cold and starting the treatment.

The common cold infected 88 participants, who then started to use the lozenges. In the five-day treatment period, no difference was found in the rate of recovery between the zinc and

placebo groups. An unexpected finding occurred when participants in the zinc group had a slower recovery time than those in the placebo group.

Results in this study differed from those of eight prior trials, in which colds were shortened. One explanation for the varying results is the differing kinds of zinc lozenges used in the studies. Many studies with negative results used lozenges that had low doses of zinc or had ingredients that bind zinc, which halts the release of free

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Dreamstime / TNS

Taking zinc may not shorten your cold.



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