

Arts & Culture

LAURA YATERNICK, EDITOR • THECAMPUS.AC@GMAIL.COM

Value: merging art and politics

A critique and proactive response from artists to contemporary issues

BY SANDRA RAVOAHANGY
Contributor

The Foreman Art Gallery is currently presenting *Value*, an exhibition that offers a critical outlook on current politics and economical climate. It features contemporary works from Québécois and international artists, as well as artistic collectives. The exhibition will run until March 17th, 2012.

The curator of the gallery, Vicky Chainey Gagnon, set up this exhibition wondering: "How are artists reacting to the current economic crisis?" In a broader perspective, the exhibition examines how various art institutions interact with other (social) institutions and how they respond to certain social issues.

The audience response seemed mixed. While many people stopped and stared at every piece, many others quickly browsed the gallery, perhaps not very sure of what each piece was about. One of the most heard comments has probably been: "Well, I wouldn't really consider *that*

art..." In fact, at the vernissage on January 11th, one of the patrons asked the curator and Cooke-Sasseville (one of the artistic collective presented in *Value*): "Where is art in this room?"

My first impression of the gallery was similar to that of many patrons: "What am I looking at?" It is fairly easy to understand and appreciate the important aspects of the

"To really appreciate the exhibition takes an open mind but also awareness that artists have an important role in showing today's many issues in a different light and putting forth solutions."

issues raised in the pieces presented. However, it is equally easy to dismiss the works as not being art, as the pieces presented in *Value* generally deviates from traditional fine arts pieces. The exhibition includes a few videos, serigraph

prints, and an interactive installation among other pieces.

It is important to keep in mind that *Value* is not as much concerned with aesthetics as it is with conveying the many strategies artists have created to respond to today's politics and economical climate. As one of the artist of Cooke-Sasseville mentioned at the vernissage, "one of art's many functions is to unnerve intellectual numbness and enrich people's everyday life," (paraphrased and translated from French).

Vickey Chainey Gagnon and Cooke-Sasseville's answer to the patron at the vernissage was that art was everywhere in the room. Indeed, what is presented in *Value* could not have been produced by any other people but artists. To really appreciate the exhibition takes an open mind but also awareness that artists have an important role in showing today's many issues in a different light and putting forth solutions. As the artistic collective Wochenklausur explains in their banner: "[...] artistic creativity is no longer seen as a formal act, but as an intervention in society."