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# Art show analyzes intersection of art and homelessness

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Contributing Writer

"What does wealth mean to you?" This is the question currently being posed at downtown's Legacy Gallery.

On display until May 2, Regarding Wealth is an art exhibit that features work by artists who have, in one way or another, been touched by poverty and homelessness.

"The paintings chosen for this exhibit reflect various concepts of wealth," says the event brochure, "having it, losing it, and sharing it."



Curator Carolyn Butler-Palmer with Ken Flet's The Fog of Miscalculation.

The exhibit features artwork from UVic's Michael Williams Collection and seeks to open debate about "the relationship between art and wealth," according to exhibit curator and Williams Legacy chair Carolyn Butler-Palmer. Palmer is being assisted by students in UVic's History of Art program for the show.

Patrons of Regarding Wealth are invited to take part in an ongoing public dialogue through the use of gallery chalkboards, a free voicemail line, and research portfolios that offer a deeper look into much of the work's history.

Perhaps the most iconic piece in the show is "Apple Tree Gang" by Victoria artist Michael Lewis. Lewis' painting depicts a group of homeless people who lived in Victoria from the 1960s to the 1990s.

Also included is work from Norval Morrisseau, an internationally celebrated artist who lived an all-too-familiar life of homelessness and obscurity that was cut short after perishing from exposure on the streets of Montreal.

On March 7, the Legacy Gallery hosted an open round-table discussion featuring long-time homelessness activist and photographer Rose Henry, executive director of the Victoria Cool-Aid Society, Kathy Stinson, and Kelly Reid, executive director for housing in the mental health and addictions department of the Vancouver Island Health Authority.

"For those living in poverty," said Reid at the round table, "I think art can penetrate the cloaks of stigma and stereotype, and make real the fact that if not for some cosmic roll of the dice, you or I might be behind that shopping cart, or dancing crazily with the lamp post."

During the discussion period, some critical points were made.

"Part of the problem that we're dealing with here," commented one audience member, "is that art has become for the betterment of rich people, it's exploiting the products of poor people, co-modifying it, and then raising its value completely away from the producer. I'd like to point out that were all sitting in an art gallery right now."

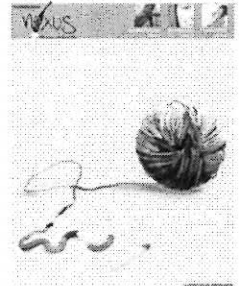
In a similar vein, amongst the many positive comments left on the chalkboard, someone had written, "The poor man's tragedy is the rich man's feast."

If anything, a little critical debate is a good indication that Regarding Wealth is succeeding in creating dialogue around a contentious issue.

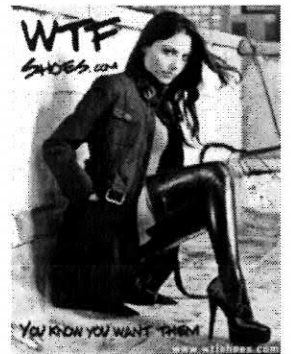
"It's a meaty subject," said gallery director Christine Woychesko during the round table. "We see this exhibit as a space of ongoing dialogue where we can begin to explore this issue," says Butler-Palmer. "It's a beginning, not an end."

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