

Ferguson's art on display at the Annex Gallery



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By Michael Riley Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Local woodworking artist David Ferguson's woodWord art exhibit has been showing at the Annex Gallery at A Place for the Arts since June 6. The exhibit comprises his various wood pieces ranging from motion activated, rotating boxes, tables, benches, a coat rack, a mirror and a timepiece. The pieces have words etched onto them to help people better understand how their minds and thinking actually work, and to bring forth ways they can deal with the immense challenges that humanity faces socially and environmentally. The exhibit will run until the end of June.

Dan Schmidt is a local artist and the owner of Samadhi Center meditation retreat near Bancroft. He shot the video of Ferguson's woodWord exhibit and describes what he feels the show conveys to the public.

The current woodWord exhibit is taking that to a whole new level, fusing master carpentry and artistry with insight into the hidden or unconscious aspects of human life that most people are not aware of. While the pieces of furniture themselves are quite beautiful, the consciousness that the words evoke also serve to lift the veil of familiarity with the world that surrounds us. I particularly

enjoyed creating an effect with David's clock which conceptually fuses the idea of psychological time with physical time. I used a recursive Fibonacci spiral to create an infinite time loop in the video to try to convey the fractal nature of time," he says.

David Ferguson was at A Place for the Arts on June 10, trying to get the video by Dan Schmidt to play and loop properly on the screen, as it sits in the window facing onto the street.

"It keeps shutting down on me. I was in last night for a little while and I got it going. It seemed fine, and now when I look at it it's frozen on the opening page again. So, I've set it up again so it can freeze tomorrow," he says.

The video plays for approximately three minutes and plays on a continuous loop so people can enjoy the show from the window if they can't access the gallery or don't have time to wait with the restrictions in place.

Ferguson says that the space behind the east wall has the Annex Gallery and contains his work.

"It's kind of set up for people to walk in and everything turns on when you walk in," he says.

Indeed, the motion activated wood boxes do start turning when one enters the room, creating a nice effect.

"It's interesting seeing it all together. It's something I sketched out about a year and a half ago. I imagined it being a slightly wider space, but this isn't too bad," he says.

Ferguson says the coffee table and the timepiece are last minute additions to the show. The coffee table was done within the last few months, while the timepiece is a last-minute addition. The clock in Ferguson's exhibit has a physics equation; $T=D/S$ which means Time equals distance divided by speed. The wording that rings the perimeter of the clock dial reference issues that need attending to in a timely fashion.

Ferguson says he'll be getting installation shots of the exhibit done next week as he'll be applying for more exhibits down the road. He references the Dan Schmidt video as well, so he's pleased he'll have a lot of documentation of the exhibit.

"A lot of galleries, woodWord would have to be part of a bigger show, as it's not big enough to be its own show, say at the Art Gallery of Peterborough, where it would just be swallowed up. There's another one in Peterborough, Artspace, with smaller galleries and this exhibit would be perfect for that. They have my proposal," he says.

A lot of good comments have come Ferguson's way about the show and there are several congratulatory comments in the sign-in-book at the door to the exhibit. Clasina Weese, a volunteer at No Place for the Arts, said that on the morning of June 6, she had some people that were thrilled with David's show.

"While everyone appreciated the show, I had a gentleman and his mother come in purposely to see the show. They spent 45 minutes admiring the fine art that is David's work. They of course inquired about price and I had to disappoint them and say that David was not selling his body of work. Then there was a gentleman that was looking for some specific wood piece and I suggested David would be the person to speak to about making the item for him. He also spent some time admiring the workmanship and show. I know several of the artists at A Place for the Arts spoke very highly of the art, creativity and workmanship," she says.

Dan Schmidt said he was happy to be involved with the project as he has always loved Ferguson's woodworking and he has seen his style evolve over many years.

"A few years ago, David gifted me a cutting board with the words 'eat local' emblazoned on it. It was a way to bring greater consciousness to something that we do every day and I really liked the concept of making ordinary things a vehicle for illumination of how we live and operate on the planet," he says.

Schmidt finds Ferguson's depth of insight into the world and high level of precision and skill in his art to be inspiring and uplifting in a world where he feels consciousness is needed now more than ever.

Andrew Edgar is a local artist and teacher. Walking into the Annex Gallery over this past weekend, he was struck by how beautifully crafted the exhibit was.

?The name of the show is woodword? Spelled woodWord with an emphasis on the capital W of word, why is that? Looking around I notice the incredible looking tables and benches. These aren't your usual art pieces?! Okay, what is going on here? The coffee table has a whole bunch of words on it as do the dining table and the boxes so these are the words and the furniture is the wood. Okay, I get it! But there is more, taking a closer look at the words there is narrative that starts to develop. David Ferguson has put together a collection of art pieces that are designed to make you think through activities that happen at and around these items. For instance, a coffee table often sits in a family room, so on the coffee table are written words associated with family, not like sister or brother, aunt or grandpa, words like clan, class, cult, religion. What is the connection? The words used, suggest questioning the connections between each one. David has designed this art piece to promote the viewer to question whether they are in the us category or the them category. David Ferguson is using everyday objects to encourage thinking about society structure and how we operate in it. Through his art, David Ferguson is communicating ideas about what might happen around these objects. A dinner table is a place where food is eaten but also where family and friends develop relationships and solidify ideas about life, politics and religion. The coffee table is a stroke of genius with words inscribed in it that place a person or community on the in or the out. David Ferguson's art work is a perfect blend of provocative and finesse, thought provoking elegance,? he says.

Ferguson talked with A Place for the Art's Jane Armstrong about having a closing event for his exhibit at the end of the month. However, with the continuing threat posed by COVID-19, and the small number of people that could attend with the ongoing restrictions, they decided it wasn't worth the effort. He says at this point, he's pretty much done with the exhibit.

?I've done my publicity, I've talked to people, I'm not going to hang around much when the exhibit is open as that would just make people uncomfortable, he says. ?If someone wanted to invite me out to take in the exhibit with them, I'd be all for that. But otherwise, I've sent it out there, I get my images next week and that's it.?