Art exhibition at Ursuline College puts spotlight on ‘Second Sex’

By Brittney Edelman
bedelman@sunnews.com

PEPPER PIKE — As one walks into Ursuline College’s Wasmer Gallery, the visitor will find a laptop displayed on a high standing table to the left. There are headphones and a sign displaying a music note. The visitor puts on the headphones.

“I like your sweater... your nails are really nice and long... you did a really good job... you do so good... I like your hair... you have a nice jacket... I like your sweater... you look amazing... you’re amazing... I like your sweater...”

What is heard is an audio presentation by Brittany Campbell, an artist living in Cleveland. Campbell’s piece is part of curator Alenka Banco’s art exhibition “Ms, Miss, Mrs - 21st Century Representations of the Second Sex.”

The exhibition first ran at Convivium33 Gallery in Cleveland from Apr. 3 to May 8. It traveled to Wasmer Gallery Aug. 24 and will run until Oct. 19.

“They start to sound the same after a while,” Banco said of the phrases in Campbell’s piece.

Campbell recorded, in her own voice, all the compliments she received over the course of one day. When asked to participate in Banco’s exhibition and choose a piece to show, Campbell decided to make the audio presentation.

“One is not born, but rather becomes a woman,” French author Simone de Beauvoir wrote in her 1949 book The Second Sex.

Sixty years later, in 2009, Beauvoir’s book was re-released and it sparked Banco’s decision to thematically center her exhibit around perceptions of womanhood. Thus, “Ms, Miss, Mrs - 21st Century Representations of the Second Sex,” was born.

“Then from woman’s point of view I shall describe the world in which woman must live; and thus we shall be able to envisage the difficulties in their way as, endeavoring to make their escape from the sphere hitherto assigned them, they aspire to full membership in the human race,” Beauvoir wrote in The Second Sex.

The exhibition reflects different decades of life and what being a woman means at different times for different women. Campbell is in her 20s and the other artists’ ages range from 30s to 60 plus.

Five of the artists have won Cleveland arts prizes, three are university educators, one is a former university educator, three are educators in the private sector and two are art buyers for major Northeast Ohio hospitals.

Banco asked each woman to select the piece that they felt best fit in the exhibit. Some pieces were completed over the course of a few decades or produced specifically for the show. The exhibit features different media, such as ceramics, sculpture, painting, wax, photography, film and performance.

Visitors can also get a taste of the artists’ verbal thoughts on womanhood, which are presented in a glass display aside from their artwork.

The artists’ quotes make the exhibit more personal for spectators, Banco said.

Banco gets chills while reading Chris Seibert’s quote. Seibert is a performer, director, playwright and is the director of education at Cleveland Public Theatre. She states that she realizes that she cannot and will not have children. Her work schedule is too demanding. She believes her theater work requires so much attention and dedication that she would not have time to properly raise a child.

Other artists in the exhibit include: Anna Arnold, Cathie Bleck, Rian Brown, Kristen Clift, Liz Maugans, Helene Morse, Angelica Pozo, Lamy Printz, Audra Skuodas, Susan Squires, Barbara Stanczak, Trudy Wiesenberger.

There will be a panel discussion on the exhibit at Wasmer Gallery, 25500 Lander Road, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Sept. 19. Gallery hours are noon to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays and 1:30-4:30 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays.

For more information about Wasmer Gallery, contact Frank Frate, director, at (440) 646-8121.

See more Pepper Pike news at cleveland.com/chagrin-valley.

(216) 986-5472
Twitter: @BeeEdelman