

Art in an Ever changing World
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Worth the Time

Sunday morning February 27, 2005. I've been following my usual routine, a cup of coffee and listening to public radio. At the top of last hour there was a short story that caught my attention. Today is the last day that Christo and Jean Claude's *The Gates* will be seen in Central Park in New York City. Living in Wisconsin, I'm hundreds of miles away from the glitz and glamour of New York, which at times seems like a world away, but there has been something about this project that has caught my attention. Maybe it has been all the media the project has received? Or, maybe it's the re-emergence of public art on a national scale? Could it be that I'm just attracted to the saffron drapery? I'm not really sure.

In a recent edition of the Smithsonian magazine, there was an article dedicated to *The Gates*. The article gave the work a historical context and pushed the development of the work that took place over 25 years. A lot had to happen before this work was going to take shape. Christo and Jean Claude had to design the work, sell the piece to the public, and raise funds. This is what I would consider a logistical nightmare. You have got to admire the artists' fortitude and belief in what they are doing.

Tomorrow, the work is being removed from the park and a twinge of sadness passes through me. The reason's are twofold, one, because I wasn't able to make the trip to see the work; and two, because a piece of art has caught the attention of the nation and now it's being taken away. Oh, it will pop up here and there. I'm sure that many art enthusiasts are pining to purchase their own piece of *The Gates* and I won't be surprised when an ad on Ebay show's up next week. Then, though, the gates will only symbolize the event that took place in a February of 2005. The objects will reflect a nostalgia that seems so prevalent in our consumerist culture.

So, where am I going with this? I am trying to get at what lies behind spending millions of dollars to produce and show works of art. Is it an ego driven pursuit on the part of the artist? Or is it a way of communicating with people? Why not take all the money and spend it on lowering the cost of education or helping the homeless? Maybe, I'm really asking about the viability and worth of art?

As an artist, there are highs and lows in ones work. This is something that we all go through in life. At times when the lows seem very low you begin to ask yourself if what you are doing is really worth all the trouble you are going through. There is a moment of reflection where you step back and begin to question. Why go through the hassle of creating art, when you could just sit down and write your ideas on a piece of paper. Wouldn't it express the same thing?

I am going through one of those periods right now. I'm asking myself about the relevancy of what I am doing. I'm about to finish three years of graduate school in Art and I'm wondering if I'll even continue to make art once I leave school. With all the time, money and effort that I have put into this, I feel that I should. In my situation, I believe this is more a matter of the form my work will take after school. I just don't know where things are going to lead after I leave the structure that has sustained me for so long. School has given me purpose.

This uncertainty is not internalized only with in my own work. I look at other peoples work and ask is it really worth it all. I'm thinking of a work that I saw in the first year graduate student show. The piece was a space suit made of wood and burlap, which I understand will be eventually sunk to the bottom of a lake. Is it really worth the trouble and does anyone really care?

I have got to believe it is, because this is what I do. The reason, I believe, deals with exploration and communication. If I spent my whole life not questioning and just living, then I don't think that I would ever realize the importance in living. If I never questioned what I do, I would never be able to justify why I do it. If I don't make the attempt to communicate, then no one will ever reciprocate my initial gesture. So, this is why I make art. It is made first in reference to my condition and secondly as a way of hoping that there are others who might take some value in what I am saying.