

Vallières creates world of wonder through discarded cardboard ? and an artist?s approach



It's often said that one person's trash is another person's treasure ? and, through the eyes of Quebec artist Laurence Vallières, they can create worlds of wonder, with an edge.

Sculptor Vallières, who got her start in ceramics, is showcasing a very different medium in a new solo exhibition at the Aurora Cultural Centre, featuring larger-than-life, evocative pieces made out of discarded, humble cardboard.

?It's been a life-changer,? Vallières told The Auroran at the show's opening reception on Thursday evening, standing amid sculptures as varied as an eight-foot-tall cat, a multi-piece rendition of Mickey Mouse in Steamboat Willie, and wildlife ranging from dinosaurs to apes.

?My first passion was ceramics, but I wanted to do something really big for an event,? she said. ?I had to fill up space and ceramic was not the material to go big. There was a lot of cardboard in the recycling bin of my studio, so it was the idea of one of my friends [who said], why don't you reproduce one of your little sculptures in cardboard??

A life-changer indeed, her unique approach to sculpture using an unconventional medium soon courted attention and before too long she was getting calls from galleries from as far away as Europe wanting her to work her corrugated magic.

Pop culture is a prevailing theme in her work, but within the pop culture depicted are some pointed examples of social commentary. She finds her inspiration in both pop culture and societal issues, but sometimes she's also inspired by what's already on the cardboard she finds, such as branding and different shapes.

?It doesn't happen often, but when you find something new and you know it's going to work, like a way to draw or a way to use material, it feels like falling in love,? she said, with a glance over to Steamboat Willie. ?For me, it's the same kind of little rush and it's a feeling that I am trying to find all the time. It only happens once in a while, but I would say that's the most rewarding part.?

Another rewarding aspect of her artistic journey, she said, has been inspiring others to, if you pardon the pun, think outside the box as far as their artistic horizons are concerned.

?I get so many emails from teachers and parents,? she said of those who are interested in trying their hand at cardboard. ?It's super-affordable and they're having fun; it's forcing you to understand three dimensions and applying and moving things to make it work through imagination. I think it's a good exercise and I think it's good for children to try, good for adults to try. I just like that

you can do that with nothing and I think it's inspiring ? I hope it's inspiring.?

The exhibition runs through July 22 in the Aurora Cultural Centre's Homeroom Galleries.

?Laurence Vallières (born in Québec City, 1986) is a Montreal-based artist, internationally acclaimed for her larger-than-life cardboard sculptures,? says the Centre. ?Initially focusing on ceramics during her education at Concordia University, her art evolved following a 2010 artist residency in St. Petersburg, Russia, where she was exposed to the practice of urban art.

?Environmental concerns and sustainability lie at the core of Vallières's practice, which she expresses through depictions of animals and references to pop culture characters like Mickey Mouse and Tweety Bird. Each of her creations are made from recycled cardboard, often gathered from the very location where her projects take place. Reflecting on her ties with urban art, where work is often created in response to pressing cultural, social, and political issues, her dedication to cardboard in her art serves as a call for sustainability?a commentary on consumer culture, advocating for the movement of reuse over consumption and waste.?

?Come witness unimaginable feats of cardboard art through the renowned lens of Laurence Vallières in this special visiting artist showcase. This exhibition is free for all ages and family friendly.?

By Brock Weir