



Art 'Work' MSUM exhibit shows a woman's place in the gallery

By John Lamb
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Walk up the east stairs to the Cyrus M. Running Gallery at Concordia College and you're greeted by what looks like a quilt of tanned female body parts hanging on the wall.

"This piece gets a strong reaction from people because it's a little disturbing to look at, but that's the artist's point," says Mallory Nermoe, the co-director of the gallery. "This visceral aesthetic was intentional," states Kel Mur in her artist's statement. "I wanted the piece to have the look of leather or a pelt, something that a hunter would wear or display as a trophy of his skills."

The resin and waxed linen body parts are sewn together in a grid as an allegory for how women carry the burden of familial labor.

The piece is called "Women's Work," sharing a name with the exhibit Nermoe curated. The show is part of this week's annual Faith, Reason and World Affairs Symposium at Concordia on the theme, "Power Plays: Why Gender Matters."

"You engage with art in a very different way than when you're going to listen to a speaker," says Darcie Sell, symposium co-chair. "The mental process is very different and it can often feel very personal. We want people to engage in a topic that can be difficult to discuss and reflect on how gender affects their lives."

If you go

What: "Women's Work" reception
When: 4 to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 18, with a panel discussion from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.
Where: Frances Frazier Comstock Theatre, Concordia College, Moorhead
Info: This event is free and open to the public.

Symposium highlights

Concordia College's annual Faith, Reason and World Affairs Symposium will take place Sept. 18 and Wednesday, Sept. 19, with most events held in Memorial Auditorium. Author and activist Rebecca Walker will speak 7:30 to 9 p.m. Tuesday. On Wednesday, Jackson Katz of Mentors in Violence Prevention will present 9 to 10:15 a.m. Debra Fitzpatrick of the University of Minnesota's Center on Women, Gender and Public Policy is scheduled to speak 10:45 a.m. to noon Wednesday. For a complete schedule of events, visit www.concordiacollege.edu/symposium.

Rectifying sexism

The display showcases more than 20 female artists from around the country responding to inequity at home, at work and even at play.

Kyleah Rusch's photograph, "Like a Girl," is a self-portrait wearing athletic eye black. The title refers to intended insults like, "You run like a girl" or "You throw like a girl," and embodies "the scornful backdash we

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TOP: Michaela Chorn's "From the Hair" removes her face and body to only show her as her hair.
BOTTOM: Kel Mur's "Women's Work" shows the female body as building blocks of domestic labor.
Photos special to The Forum

For letter, or worse, mail can improve relationships

I'll never forget the day. In many ways, it was a day like many others. Blue sky. The sounds and smells of lawn-mowing in the distance. That slight crispness to the air that suggests cooler days are coming. But one thing set this day apart. It was the day that I received a truly odd object in the mail. It didn't come from a politician. It wasn't emblazoned with phrases like: "Closeout Sale!" Or:



TAMMY SWIFT

"Grand Opening!" Or: "Final notice!" Or: "We want you back!"

In fact, the envelope was completely devoid of any exclamation points at all. The address and return address were neatly handwritten. It was in real pen and

written by human hands — not a computer-generated font cunningly designed to look like cursive.

What could this be, I wondered. Maybe Target was trying a more personal approach to sending its credit card bills? What else could explain this piece of mail that wasn't a bill or advertisement or CVS coupons for "Valued Customer Yummy Swift." Greedily, eagerly, I ripped it open. I unfolded

it to find a relic from the past. It was a handwritten letter from an old friend. She wished me a happy birthday and asked how I was doing. She told me about her canning and baking projects and regaled me with back-to-school stories about her kids.

I pored over every word, re-reading certain passages to prolong the experience. Should I post about this momentous post on Instagram? Should I have the letter

bronzed? Should I sit right down and write my friend a letter, thus hopefully turning us into "pen pals?"

I remember when pen pals were commonplace. In fifth grade, our teacher invited us to start writing to kids from a school in Vermont. I was matched up with a redheaded girl named Candace, and we exchanged letters and pictures over the course of a whole school year. I barely knew her, especially after

exchanging letters in which we shared only the most superficial details — like the fact I liked spelling class or the mention that she loved the color purple.

Even so, it was so exciting to get those missives on blue, flowered stationery in the mail. It made me feel important to warrant correspondence from a stranger who lived a thousand miles away.

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