

Artwork Description: *BAD STARS/postcards for a better budget: reimagining the cut (2020)*

2021 Eldon + Anne Foote Edmonton Visual Arts Prize

Christina Battle Nomination

Monday, March 8, 2021

Dear Selection Committee,

I am deeply honoured to nominate established Edmonton artist Christina Battle for the 2021 Eldon + Anne Foote Edmonton Visual Arts Prize. Her works *BAD STARS*, and *postcards for a better budget: reimagining the cut* were both part of the exhibition “even the birds are walking” (curated by Noor Bhangu) at artist-run centre Latitude 53 from January 24 – March 14, 2020. Whereas the video project *BAD STARS* which considers the complexity of disaster, and the connections extending across the environmental, cultural, political, economic, and social, the participatory artwork, *postcards* merged together community outreach, collage practices and information related to the current socio-economic challenges in the province of Alberta. Moreover, the project was successful because of Christina’s erudite ability to engage people and guide them in a creative exchange.

Part installation, part art event, *postcards* brought together over forty participants in a group collage/mail art event to discuss and think about how we are locally impacted by policy and politics in a relatable yet ground-breaking way. As both a participant and regional curator, what impressed me about this project was how Christina was able to take the Alberta 2020 budget — a lengthy legalese document — and lead a group of people through its language and significance. No longer out of reach or incomprehensible, participants were able to use sections of the document and collage it with images. This process gave the numbers and language in the budget meaning; it transformed our experiences with the policies that directly affect our lives as residents of Edmonton. In my fifteen years as a curator in Canada, I have not participated in a group activity that has made an abstract document so tangible, particularly in an open, creative and community-focused way.

The exhibition installation repurposed components of the art event into a take home tool-kit. With pages of the budget, images, blank postcards and a set of instructions, visitors could reflect on the budget at home and send their messages across the province to whomever they chose. This component of the project extended the contemplative nature of the project, while also keeping it creative and action-oriented. The take-home nature of the project was further made relevant throughout the year as public spaces in the province closed due to the pandemic.

This work stands out not only in terms of Christina’s most recent work, but also as a project that was showcased in Edmonton. Most gallery programs focus on delivering top-down content to audiences, but rarely do they achieve the participatory level that *postcards for a better budget: reimagining the cut* has. Christina’s projects enriched my personal experience with the art event and exhibit and allowed me to engage with a document I had little knowledge of. As Christina reflects, “I see the role of the artist as one who not only reflects the world back to us, but also helps us to imagine alternative ways forward—one who can help usher us into a world that is healthier, more caring and more just.”

I have nominated this artwork not only because I strongly support Christina’s practice, but also because I see her work as a catalyst for understanding complex, global ideas. Christina skilfully weaves together an array of visual mediums that highlights the nuances of our lives in relationship

with events, especially here in Edmonton. She has a remarkable skill of engaging people in dialogue, which are sometimes difficult, with tenacity and care. Her approach is rooted in collective community dialogue and fosters empathy and civic understanding.

With over close to twenty years experience as a professional multidisciplinary artist, educator, and arts programmer, Christina has consistently engaged the public with her work and experimented in her practice. She has exhibited extensively across Canada, the US, and Europe and continues to question the role of the arts in our civic society. It is for these reasons and more that I believe Christina's work as a grassroots and community-engaged artist has been exceptional. Christina shows us that there are divergent pathways to communicate ideas and art in innovative and thought-provoking ways.

If further information is required, please do not hesitate to contact me. I sincerely hope that you will support Christina Battle's nomination for the 2021 Eldon + Anne Foote Edmonton Visual Arts Prize as she is versatile, perceptive and learned individual – qualities necessary for an artist who has deeply inspired me as a curator, and who will undoubtedly continue to contribute and inform both our regional community and the visual world we live in.

Sincerely,



Nadia Kurd, PhD

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