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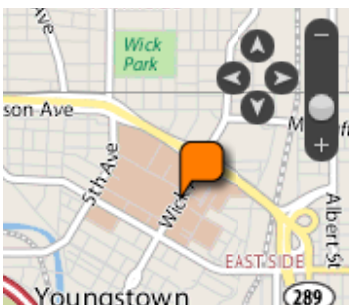
Billboards around Valley build buzz for exhibition

Published: Thursday, October 2, 2008



McDonough Museum of Art

525 Wick Avenue, Youngstown





Did one catch your attention?

TRACEY D'ASTOLFO

Vindicator Correspondent

YOUNGSTOWN — Are you wondering what the meaning is behind a handful of billboards that have popped up in recent weeks around the Mahoning Valley? Like the one that says “War Is Over” on Route 422 in Niles, or the one of a woman’s high-heeled shoe kicking through muddy water on Market Street in Boardman?

The billboards were put up by the McDonough Museum of Art to call attention to its new exhibition, “AGENCY: Art and Advertising.” But they make no reference to the exhibition. Inquiring minds have to seek out the meaning.

The McDonough erected them a few weeks ago to silently build buzz among the curious.

The exhibition explores artists’ use of advertising media for works of art, as opposed to the more conventional use of advertising, said museum spokesperson Johanna George.

“The billboards give no mention of the McDonough Museum because the images presented are not ads themselves, but they are artworks, appearing in the framework of ads,” said George. “These artists are making works that intersect the art world and the world of advertising, as in art in the form of advertising.”

The curators of the exhibition, Kevin Concannon of the University of Akron, and John Noga, Youngstown State University alum, chose the artworks for the billboards.

Noga described the “War Is Over” billboard in the exhibition catalog: “At the height of the Vietnam and United States conflict... Yoko Ono and John Lennon combined their artistic sensibilities and launched their famous billboard and poster campaign ‘War is Over!’ ... the simple black Helvetica typeface placed upon the stark white background, implored: ‘War Is Over! If You Want It.’ With this statement, they asked the world to imagine the ceasing of strife, conflict, turmoil and hatred at all levels, hoping that the resulting peace and love would permeate the entire whole of human existence.”

Lamar Advertising donated the “War Is Over” billboard for the exhibition. The Frank and Pearl Gelbman Charitable Foundation and an anonymous donor also gave funding for the exhibition.

George said the billboards inspire conversation and questions, which the museum hopes will bring viewers to the museum.

“On this scale, they act almost like exaggerated Post-it notes, triggering observation, contemplation and assimilation of the artist’s ideas — along the road,” Noga writes in the exhibition catalogue.

The exhibition at the McDonough will be on display through Nov. 8.

XThe McDonough is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, with extended hours until 8 p.m. Wednesday. Admission is free. For more information, call (330) 941-1400.

SEE ALSO: [Billboard locations.](#)

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BILLBOARDS

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Artists, locations

“Sky Billboard” by Geoffrey Hendricks; Market Street, Youngstown, near Indianola Avenue, facing south.

“[expletive deleted]-Kicker” by Marilyn Minter; Market Street, Boardman, near Terrace Drive, facing north.

“War is Over!” by Yoko Ono and John Lennon; Route 422 in Niles, near North Road, facing west.

Untitled, six billboards by Felix Gonzalez-Torres: South Avenue, Youngstown, facing south; corner of Gypsy Lane and Belmont Ave, facing west; Market Street, near Princeton Avenue, Youngstown, facing south; Route 422 south, near route 551, facing west; Route 46 south, near Silica Road, Austintown, facing south; Parkman Road, near Coit Drive in Warren, facing south.

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