



STEVEN NEHL/THE OREGONIAN

Using cardboard materials to reference computers, artists Katherine Bovee and Philippe Blanc present an update/homage to Marcel Duchamp's revolutionary conceptual pieces in their installation at Portland Community College's Northview Gallery.

The boxed-in mind at work

By **VICTORIA BLAKE**
SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN

It's the Age of Apple, Wi-Fi and high-speed Internet connections that make a universe of people and ideas accessible at one's fingertips.

What does so much info-at-a-mouse-click portend? Let the techno theorists and pundits cogitate that. In their new show at the Northview Gallery at Portland Community College's Sylvania Campus, artists Katherine Bovee and Philippe Blanc instead contemplate fertile but ignored terrain in a heady work composed of little more than cardboard boxes: the aesthetic meaning of computers.

It's a thrilling, smarty-pants idea, and Bovee and Blanc summon appropriate bytes of ingenuity in "legacy: boxed version," their latest piece to gaze at computers as artistic objects. They also

awaken the ghost of the irascible, spunky Marcel Duchamp, whose porcelain urinal in 1917 changed the course of art history and revolutionized our notions of what an art object can be.

But clever ideas and arch Duchampian humor aren't, alas, enough to satisfy viewers' inner computer geek. Bovee and Blanc have high ambitions here: They want to consider the technological revolution through the lens of a revolutionary artistic moment. They also want to update the idea of ready-mades, which Duchamp essentially introduced. But like graduate students talking post-postmodern critical theory, the show amounts to a soundtrack of collegiate barstool talk. It isn't quite transcendent or clear-minded enough, leaving viewers, metaphorically at least, holding warm, empty mugs once filled with cold beer.

The installation is simple: an arrangement of cardboard boxes that resemble computer monitors, stacked atop one another to form eight columns turned, like sunflowers, to the corner of the concrete-floor gallery. Between the columns, a spaghetti arrangement of white cords runs to and from power strips and more cardboard boxes. Each monitor holds part of a rough, pixel-heavy, computer-printed image of — what else? — an actual column.

At the center of the piece, five cardboard monitors lie flat, with a pretty stained-glass-looking sky printout on their surfaces. The artists call the installation an "ideal landscape," but what that means isn't clear. The only landscapes are the sky squares in the middle. With all of its overlapping and interwoven cords, "Legacy" might be de-

review

*Legacy:
Boxed Version*

What:
Installation by
Katherine Bovee
and Philippe
Blanc

Where:
Northview
Gallery, Portland
Community
College, Sylvania
Campus, 12000
S.W. 49th Ave.

Closes: Sept. 16

Continued from Page 27

scribed as a mental map, an image of the sometimes-disorganized modes of information transfer.

"Legacy" is so simple and minimal in its construction and presentation that it's almost lacking visually. Maybe that's the point. When Duchamp entered his urinal in an art show in 1917, the porcelain object was immediately transformed into a piece of art. So, too, are these

boxes, which have been ordered and manipulated within the white walls of a gallery.

But nearly 90 years later, that strategy is just too facile. The folded, glued and stacked computer boxes seem more like the art of Francis Picabia than of Duchamp: "Legacy" is simply overworked material, and not terribly original.

Still, something's invigorating and refreshing about this show. Perhaps it's the artists' seriousness

and earnestness. (Bovee writes for the online art magazine "Port," where she occasionally fills the computer screen with high-sounding ideas about art and culture.) In their latest aestheticization of computers, they've discovered fecund ground with their crossover of Duchamp's ready-made theory and their own fabricated version of computers. Their ideas don't ring with the weight of authenticity. But in the virtual age, that might be enough.