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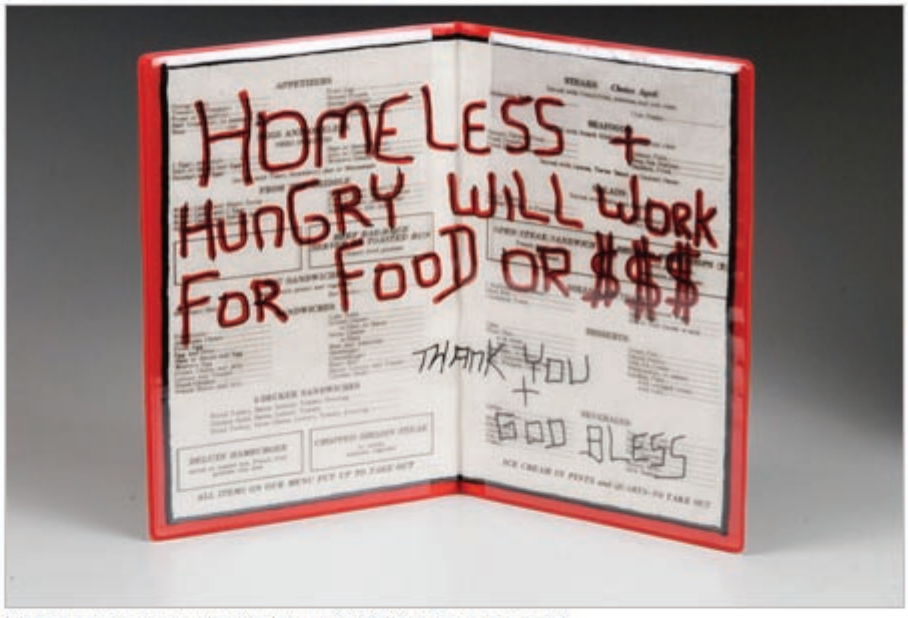
# Losing It: Mental Notes

MSVU ART GALLERY, HALIFAX AUG 14 TO OCT 3 2010




Kirtley Jarvis *Menu (Inside View)* 2008 Courtesy the artist

Anxiety, dementia and mental illness provide potent entry points into "Losing It," a group show at MSVU Art Gallery in Halifax. London, Ontario's Kirtley Jarvis offers an installation, *Home Show for the Homeless*, which is dominated by Jarvis' embroidered replicas of panhandler's signs. By purchasing these signs from their makers and reproducing them in textile form, Jarvis hopes to highlight the precarious lives that many Canadians lead, often just one paycheque or one breakdown away from the streets. Halifax artist Mary-Anne Wensley—who has long worked with themes of obsession, repetition and anxiety—draws on two areas of practice. The first, materialized here as the installation *Dehiscence: To Gape or Burst*, involves adhering sausage casings to the gallery walls to spell out a translucent, semi-comprehensible pseudo-script. (In the past, Wensley has stuffed sausage casings with day-to-day detritus and also woven empty casings into house-like forms.) The second Wensley series presented is *Coping Mechanisms*, kinetic sculptures that rub shoulders, massage heads and conduct other potentially soothing (and potentially disconcerting) actions on viewers. Finally, Ottawa's Cheryl Pagurek installs a series of backlit photographic transparencies alongside a floor-projected video. Both the still and moving images show the artist's home as reflected in puddles on roads and sidewalks. Though the principle is simple, the resulting pictures muddy reality and reflection with surprising sophistication. A soundtrack of a doctor reading the medical chart of a dementia patient further mirrors the theme of distortion-wracked perspectives. Mixing horror and humour with pathos and poise, "Losing It" uses a variety of creative strategies to illuminate issues that are still—even today—often left in the shadows. (166 Bedford Hwy, Halifax NS)

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