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## Calgary exhibit finds the humour in minimalism

Who hasn't felt a little uncomfortable trying to decode the "meaning" behind a white cube?

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JEREMY SIMES / FOR METRO

John Hampton, curator of the new Why Can't Minimal exhibit at Contemporary Calgary.

By: Jeremy Simes For Metro Published on Thu Aug 13 2015

Laugh a little, seriously.

Contemporary Calgary's new exhibition, Why Can't Minimal, finds humour in minimalism: an artistic style that might be expressed a tad too seriously, said the exhibit's curator John Hampton.

In all seriousness, Hampton asks: who hasn't gone to a show and felt a little uncomfortable trying to decode the "meaning" behind a white cube?

Well, Why Can't Minimal hopes to ease those concerns, letting the viewer see the pieces for what they are: artwork that will likely make you smirk. But feel free to ponder, if that's your thing, Hampton said.

"I feel like (minimalism is) an intimidating type of art for people outside the art world," he said. "There's this expectation that you're supposed to get what (the art) is saying, but it's really not giving you anything."

He said the pieces aren't intended to make viewers laugh out loud, but put them in funny or preposterous situations where they just "get it."

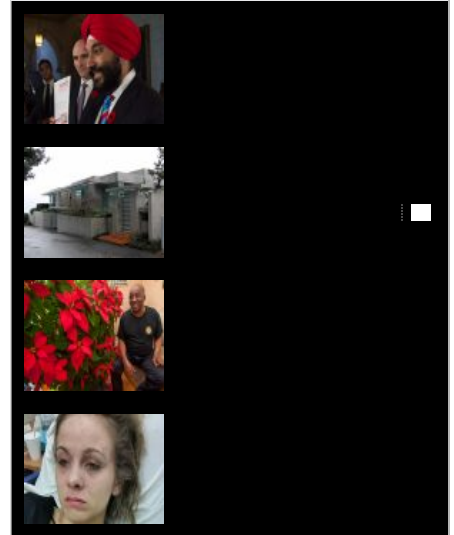
Hampton said the beauty of looking at artwork is that it can flood the brain with too many questions.

However, that can prompt anxiety within, causing viewers to disassociate with the piece altogether, he said.

As a result, he said people should embrace that nonsense and let the viewing become an experience: the art simply washes over you.



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"Humour and art are very similar experiences," he said. "If you try to explain a joke, it's no longer funny."

For those who see the show, Hampton said he hopes viewers achieve a level of comfort with contemporary art.

"It's a level of comfort that allows them to say a piece is stupid or absurd," he said. "But not necessarily mean that in a negative way; they can still appreciate it if it's absurd or doesn't make sense."

Why Can't Minimal will run until Oct. 18 at Contemporary Calgary, 117 8 Avenue SW.

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