

WRITING SAMPLE: WESTERN GALLERY STORY

In the hustle and bustle of everyday life, it is easy to pass by the Western Gallery. But take the time to step inside, free of charge, and one might be surprised by the high-quality exhibits appearing in the gallery, as well as its broad spectrum of appeal.

As part of the gallery's mission to reach out to the entire university and the community at large, Sara Clark-Langager, the gallery director, works hard to bring exhibits to Western that have a wide appeal. She says attracting people to Western is one of the most difficult parts of her job. "Most people automatically assume that only people in art should go to the gallery. Why not give it a try?" she asked.

Clark-Langager herself was not exposed to art until she visited an art museum during her own college years. "I fell in love and I'm interested in giving people that experience," she said.

This is a part of the Western Gallery's mission of reaching out to the community and, as the director, Clark-Langager shows a dedication to choosing a variety of media and interdisciplinary exhibits to bring to Western. "I am not going to do an exhibition that only the art students down the hall are going to be interested in," said Clark-Langager. "My highest priority is that it has to be an exhibition that will appeal to every student on this campus."

Following this interdisciplinary criteria, the Western Gallery is currently exhibiting the hybrid sculptures of Ken Butler. Butler's work combines contrary materials, such as a machine gun and a violin, and combines visual art and music. "What he does is take non-functioning objects and give them life again," explains Clark-Langager.

Recent cuts in the budget for higher education may lead to a change in the program at the Western Gallery. Although no official cuts have been made, Clark-Langager said she is gearing up for having her budget cut in half. If this happens, the Western Gallery will be unable to continue to bring the same high caliber exhibits into the community.

But Clark-Langager is still looking to the future. "Luckily we have a nice collection," she said. "Luckily, there are some very good museums that are close to us that have good collections. It is still going to cost money, but we won't have the huge shipping bills."

Western has also received a prestigious National Endowment for the Arts grant and is planning an exhibition that will focus on yet another interdisciplinary theme—environmental issues in the Northwest.

The Western Gallery is located at 516 High Street. It is open Monday through Saturday, 10am – 5pm. Admission is free to the public.