

Artful Relationships

By Arya Faili

The newly re-opened de Saisset Museum situated in the beautiful Santa Clara University campus is home to many works of art ranging from talented local artists to well-known photographers. The museum contains multiple breathtaking exhibits that embrace certain themes and ideas rather than housing a single open gallery. The *Creative in Common* art exhibit is unique in that it bears a familial theme in regards to the paintings found decorating the pure white walls. Open from January 16 to March of 2015, the exhibit aims to display works from artists who share some sort of familial connection whether it be parent and child, or husband and wife. Many of the pieces show similar characteristics that one can only assume are somewhat influenced by the artist's significant other. All of this ties beautifully together given the living room scene poised in the center of the gallery. The ten artists whose work is displayed include Harry and Lynn Powers, Kara Maria and Enrique Chagoya, Ashlie and Fletcher Benton, Sam and Shingo Francis, and Andrew Romanoff and Inez Storer. The exhibit uses the uncommon practice of displaying familial works in order to provide a deeper context in the meaning of the paintings as well as to show the importance of familial bonds and traditions.

Enrique Chagoya and Kara Maria are among the pairs of artists showcased. As a married couple, their artworks and techniques are not a result of familial tradition or mentoring. Rather, their styles are unique and very dissimilar with opposing messages often being conveyed. Although, there are occasional similarities that do appear, which seem to be derived from their close relationship. The most notable difference though, is in their styles. Maria focuses more on using vivid colors and a mixture of both muddled and sharp lines rather than Chagoya's neutral, soft strokes. This is especially visible in Maria's work titled "Vortex" which serves as a seasonable reminder that the world we now live in is not so black and white. Rather it is filled with chaos and unruliness. "Vortex" does an outstanding job of grabbing the attention of any passerby and reeling them in to gaze at the madness

unfolding before their eyes. Bright, vibrant hues of blues, whites, and purples solidify the focal point, taking your attention away from the important clutter at the bottom of the canvas while a mass of cool colors swirls at the center. A pile of sticks and paper crowd the bottom where a small black and white woman stands in bewilderment. Sharp geometric shapes are scattered about the foreground, symbolizing disorder and disarray while a vibrant, muddy, blended vortex in the background keeps the attention of the viewer.

Chagoya's work differs from Maria's as is evident in "My Cat Santos Had a Nightmare." This print is on a whole other scale as it depicts joyous yet disturbing looking individuals gathered in front of a fiery background teeming with destruction. Although the people seen in the painting are dancing and hugging one another, their faces bring up feelings of wrongdoing and malice. The guns they hold up may have something to do with that. Black and white dominates the entire print aside from the orange flames burning violently in the distance.

While the couple's works may seem worlds apart they do share some similar characteristics. Both artists tend to create busy scenes, scenes filled with many people, objects, and shapes. There is seldom any prominent negative space in their works both in general and as seen in the exhibit. Both paintings incorporate people in some way and make the viewer think about what is really happening on the picture plane. The two artists also tend to draw important politicians in their works such as Barack Obama or Condoleezza Rice, incorporating political meaning to their pieces. The pair of artists do a stellar job at keeping the eyes of the viewer constantly moving. I personally found myself looking from one side of the painting to another, confused at what to look at next until I took a step back and forced focus.

Other artists such as Harry and Lynn Powers have their beautiful artworks showcased in the exhibit. "Curved Time" by Harry Powers is an abstract piece filled with bright, saturated blues and deep blacks. Complementing the blue is a metallic gold ring symbolizing time bending in space as the

colors bleed into one another. Mysterious blotches of color overlap to give a feeling of being somewhere in the deep universe with an aurora of light blue beaming from the edges. Lynn Powers compliments her husband's painting with her work titled "Sea of Time." This work shares the celestial feeling we get from Harry Powers piece in that there appears a thin circle, a ring, floating in the center of the canvas. While the colors do not bleed into each other, they do overlap and give a sense of depth that illustrates time as seen from another dimension where it is visible to the naked eye. Gold is used in a pair of squares centered in the ring symbolizing togetherness. The colors she uses are not as vivid as those used in her husband's piece but they work to give the painting a sense of age and patina, as time tends to create.

The *Creative in Common* exhibit is a rare gallery where we can see familial connections in art. Seldom do we get to see how close relationships influence works of art in a side-by-side comparison like this. Familial ties are one of the most important facets of our lives, demanding commitment and loyalty to the ones you cherish. If the opportunity arises, make the trip down to the museum to treasure this special exhibit. There may never be another exhibit like this. An ancient Arabian proverb emphasizes the importance of doing something when given the chance, "Four things come not back: The spoken word, The sped arrow, The past life, The neglected opportunity." Unless it is absolutely impossible to make the trip out, don't miss your chance to see a once in a lifetime exhibit.