

Finding Family

By Chonsa Schmidt

The de Saisset Museum on Santa Clara University's campus is featuring Creative in Common, an exhibit of related artists that asks visitors to explore the definition of family. It's as if the exhibition was made for college students. During a time of discovering life goals and personal interests, your familiar family influence has suddenly become a memory. Creative in Common brings those memories back to help you define family. The exhibit will be on campus from January 16 to March 15, 2015. Two rooms display mostly abstract paintings and a few sculptures, surrounding visitors with bright colors and enigmatic subjects. Ten different artists are on display, allowing visitors to compare pieces between two relatives, like husband and wife or father and son, and question the power of family influences. Some of the artists on display include, Harry Powers, Lynn Powers, Inez Storer, Kara Maria, Fletcher Benton, and Andrew Romanoff. Their pieces decorate small rooms with home furniture like a coffee table, couches, and a bookshelf. The living room setting relaxes and comforts visitors, being a reminder of home as thoughts of family resurface. Although family influences are evident when comparing pieces, each individual work shows a distinct style and preference.

Parents' intense influence on their children is made obvious by the artwork in Creative in Common. Artist, Sam Francis, and son, Shingo Francis, have paintings next to each other in the exhibit. Sam Francis's "Untitled," aquatint on Rives BFK paper, from 1987, sparks fun and curiosity. He depends heavily on primary colors, and although colors overlap, they do not mix. The thick lines and paint splatters create busy areas on a large canvas, but Sam Francis also leaves plenty of white, empty space to avoid over complicating the piece. Next to the unruly color is Shingo Francis's "The Open (Orange Blue)," acrylic on canvas, from 2014. This painting carries a flow of colors that is more elegant and controlled. There's a large space in the center that sharply stops the rich color on either side. The center shimmers with barely a hint of color. Bordering the line are dark shades of

red, orange, and purple. They gently fade into light purple and blues until the top and the bottom of the canvas have purely white space.

Placing the two paintings adjacent to each other makes both the common elements and the different styles more obvious. Father and son share a gift for abstract art. A gift for extracting emotions and intrigue from people with subjectless art. They both consider nature to be the main inspiration for their work; however, Sam Francis's individual colors are blatantly more wild and unpredictable than Shingo Francis's organized, patterned layers of blended vibrant color. "Untitled" is adventurous and exciting, asking viewers to be comfortable with the incomprehensible. "The Open (Orange Blue)" makes viewers feel like they're witnessing nature's unadulterated beauty. The colors of the most passionate sunset turn into the deepest blues of the ocean then quickly fade away to nothing but white canvas.

Creative in Common showcases beautiful works of complicated art, but makes digesting all the artwork easier by comparing two artists that have similar inspirations. Each piece is thought provoking about different topics, but the collection as a whole asks each person to define the meaning and purpose of family. The de Saisset Museum offers a homey place to struggle through each work's message, just as each of these artists had someone to provide them support and inspiration. College is a time when people distance themselves from their immediate family to discover new families. Take a day off to visit the free admission museum on campus, to think about your family, and to find the importance of family to you.