

Open to Interpretation

by Giovanna Pasini

Surrounded by soft blue and milky white artworks, I remember a time I gazed out an airplane window traveling high among the clouds. I imagine myself looking down onto the miniscule but vast ocean below me as my cheek presses against the chilled glass. My eyes fill with wonder and awe as I entertain the idea of playing among the white clouds of cotton. Flying offers me a different perspective than I can ever experience on land. Is this what the title of the exhibit is attempting to express: a *new passage* meaning a new perspective?

“Navigation, migration, travel – words that indicate movement, the process of getting from one place to another,” reads a placard on the wall of the art exhibit *New Passages*. A vast silence engulfs me as I step into Bay Area artists’ Mari Andrews and Ann Holsberry’s minimalist exhibit in the de Saisset Museum of Santa Clara, California, which will be running from April 10 – June 15, 2014. A single square room of four bare bright white walls displays the simple artworks comprised of eight mixed media pieces and thirteen small sculptures, all creating a sense of airiness. I quietly enter into a seemingly new world and *new passage*.

All the pieces in the exhibit compliment each other in their simplicity. The earth toned mixed media pieces and metal sculptures do not crowd the room and leave ample space to admire the work of Andrews and Holsberry. The room exudes an aura of calmness and invites the audience to become absorbed in their imaginations. No blatant titles or descriptions accompany the individual pieces on the walls of the exhibit. Sheets of information about the single artworks are available if desired. The mix media or sculpture is initially presented without any preconceived words, allowing an individual’s imagination to run wild. *New Passages* is truly open to its audiences’ interpretation.

A blotchy blue artwork commands my attention from the far end of the warmly lit exhibit. Hanging from the wall on a thin paper-like material, the mixed media piece possesses various shades of deep blues and depicts a white bird-like figure soaring above a human shape. Two light blue arms, the only significant human characteristics, reach for an evading bird as if the human desires to possess the ability of flight, too. To me the painting suggests that humans always yearn for impossible abilities, but the beautiful thing about this exhibit is that the same piece can suggest a drastically different meaning to another viewer, while he and I would be equally valid in our beliefs. I later find out this artwork is made of cyanotype, pastel, and gouache on a thin piece of paper; Holsberry’s piece is entitled “Taking Flight” (2014).

As I shift my vision to the right, a metal sculpture intrigues me. Twenty-six rounded hollow wire balls only a few inches in diameter are mounted horizontally along a wall. The light casts a shadow below each metal figure. I have no idea what the artists is attempting to represent. The sculpture begins at a point of only one round wire shape, and proceeds to get wider to the right, until the piece is about three or four wire balls in width. The expansion of the rounded wire suggests a straight on perspective, like looking at a path narrowing in the distance. Another girl in the room suggests they might be raindrops. After some thought, I come to the conclusion that the rounded wire shapes are actually imprinted footsteps. I discover this sculpture by Andrew's is actually entitled "Wire Stones" (2013-2014). After remembering all my elaborate ideas of what the sculpture is supposed to be, I laugh and think to myself, *Well, that is pretty straightforward*. Without a title or description, one's imagination can flourish when determining the possibilities for this sculpture, which may even be more exciting then the actual truth.

New Passages provided me with the opportunity to have a new passage into my imagination. A *new passage* signifies stepping out of reality for a little, and taking time to lose myself in my thoughts. In the moments I admired Andrews and Holsberry's art, I did not feel like I was a student of Santa Clara University. I did not even register where I was. I was lost in my imagination. I was soaring above the clouds in *New Passages*.