To the Stars and Beyond
by Mackenzie Williamson

After arriving at Santa Clara University, visitors to the de Saisset Museum will meander down Palm Drive, taking a moment to admire the many-colored, burgeoning blossoms and meticulously maintained hedges that are synonymous with the university and springtime. Stepping into the museum, visitors will notice four pieces from the *New Passages* collection, on exhibit from April 10th to June 15th. This collection of 17 sculptures, 6 cyanotypes, and 2 paintings are the product of the collaboration of two Bay Area artists, Mari Andrews and Ann Holsberry. The title, *New Passages*, suggests a reinvention or re-exploration of the notion of passage—the process of transitioning from one physical, mental or spiritual place to another. In order to grapple with this theme, the two artists deepened their historical and personal understandings of the relationship between natural elements, time, and motion. Held captive by the whimsical pieces, visitors will feel nostalgic, explorative, and ruminative while viewing this collection, leaving with newfound solace for and inspiration from the passages of travel and time.

A feeling of peace washes over you when you cross the threshold from the foyer of the museum into a warmly lit, wood-floored room housing the majority of the *New Passages* exhibit. Circular sculptures constructed of organic materials such as wood, lichen, thorns, branches, and bark seamlessly combine with inorganic pieces of scrap metal and wire to create harmonious works. Mari Andrews is the creator of these simplistic pieces that seek to emulate compasses and sundials from previous generations. Many of the sculptures are about a foot in diameter and couples of them are interspersed between the larger, about 6 ft. by 7ft., works of Ann Holsberry. Most of Holsberry's pieces feature photogram cyanotypes, a type of photography where the artist paints a mixture of chemicals onto paper to create light-sensitivity then places objects onto the paper and exposes it to light. The resulting effect is white space where the objects covered the paper and a royal blue background for all spaces exposed to light. For visitors, a feeling of calmness derives from the preponderance of blue when combined with Mari Andrew's aesthetically pleasing circular sculptures. These simplistic forms invite viewers to contemplate the original inspiration for traveling inventions, such as the compass, and reimagine them into creations for the future.

One such sculpture located in the foyer, created by Mari Andrews, entitled "Radiant" (2014) uses slender, straight willow branches of similar length, about 2.5-feet long, to form a circle 6-feet by 5.5-feet in dimension. A foot-wide concentric circle centers the piece and is empty of branches. A light from the ceiling focuses on the once empty circle and fills it with warm light. The branches are

placed about a centimeter apart from each other in a staggered fashion so that every other branch reaches a bit further out toward the surrounding walls. This positioning evokes a mental image of a classic sun drawing with a small circle surrounded by beaming rays. The creator of these adolescent, axillary shoots is also the very object these branches emulate: the sun. The willow tree depends on the energy from the sun to nourish its growth. This undeniable connection between the sun and the trees reminds viewers of another entity that relies on the sun. Humans need the sun's energy to advance their crops through their cycles and in turn, give them the energy to live and think. In a more metaphysical sense, the sun allowed early civilizations to devise a system of time keeping. Mari Andrew studied the evolution of sundials while preparing for this exhibition and she used this knowledge to develop a connection between sun, time, and nature. The sculpture artfully calls attention to the sometimes overlooked, radiant rays of the magnificent sun, and implores viewers to consider the implications of its presence.

Correlating with Andrew's sculpture about time and nature, Ann Holsberry's cyanotype photogram "Navigating by Stars" (2014) is reminiscent of a time when sea travelers relied on the movement of distant stars to find their way. Splattered cream and gold colored dots of encaustic paint create a constellation of stars in the upper right hand corner of the 1.5 by 2.5 foot photo. Relating to the piece's theme of nighttime navigation, a 10-inch in diameter compass made of many concentric circles serves as the most prominent element of this work. Shades of blue coalesce in the background of this starry scene to create the sense of mellow waves undulating in the bottom portion. An ivory, soft-edged cloud-shaped form takes precedence in the center of the paper. The abstractness of this shape lets viewers make the interpretation; is it a ship or just a cloud floating across the night sky? In the foreground, thin milk-colored lines laterally drift across the scene and seem to be blown by a gentle breeze. The title of and ethereal scene in "Navigating by Stars" prompts viewers to contemplate the romanticized notion of using the stars for guidance. These suns of universes not belonging to our own enabled humans to explore the world since the second century BC, and with additional inventions we've been able to deepen our understanding of our place in the cosmos. These awe-inspiring achievements fill viewers with admiration for where we have come and what paths we may venture on in the future.

Through the exploration of personal and celestial navigation, this exhibition will invite visitors to think about what they could contribute to mankind. Holsberry's azure sky scenes remind us of the awe-inspiring importance of the stars, and Andrew's circular sculptures play on forms from the past, but send out an invitation for adaptation. The artists' reinventions of innovations from the

past motivate viewers to tap into their imagination and go beyond the traditional combinations of old information. First we must recognize what technologies have already been explored in order to make advancements in new directions. Maybe we could harness the sun's energy as the willow shoots do, or punctiliously engineer an extraordinary seed to grow into a home. With the passage of time, there are no limits to the bounds of creation.