

Feeling Homesick? Visit the de Saisset Museum!

By Zain Umerani

After being at Santa Clara University for a little over a quarter, I finally got to attend the de Saisset Museum on Palm Drive. After viewing the different pieces of art in the exhibit, *Creative in Common*, I sensed that the exhibit intends to instill the importance of family to college students. As students, we face life-changing decisions on where to attend college and sometimes we have to make sacrifices by moving far away from family. Almost every high school graduate heading to college wants to get away from home. I know I did, and I am sure a lot of us wanted to as well. We take the people close to us for advantage and when they are gone or are no longer close to us, we start to miss them. The exhibit has the viewer reflect on the importance of family and the role a family plays in our lives. *Creative in Common* will be featured all quarter at the de Saisset Museum from January 16th to March 15th. Artists who are related to each other through familial connections are showcased in the exhibit. The exhibit brilliantly grabs the viewer's attention through the use of many colors and exemplifies the importance of family as well as not to take your loved ones for granted.

Ashlie Benton's oil painting, "Departure," stood out the most when I walked into the exhibit. The right side of the painting is covered by a huge blue coil-like structure which looks like DNA unraveling. On the left side, the painting is dominated by a girl whose back is turned towards the viewer with her head down. On her back, tiny words which I could not decipher are written, and on her right the letter "x" is painted in blood-red. At the bottom of the painting is a picture of an arm with a portion missing which confuses and horrifies the viewer because of how graphic the arm looks. The top half of the painting is not as dark as I noticed flowers and light colors. At the top of the painting I saw two people of the opposite gender whom I interpreted as the girl's mother and father. The middle of the picture consists of a phrase, "We don't know the whole story yet but we know it doesn't end well." Those words ran a chill down my spine. A majority of the painting is dominated by dark colors which indicates that something tragic occurred. The girl in the painting

misses her parents as she is shown facing towards them with her back to the viewer. The girl's head is down and she is lost in a sea of colors. I began to realize the value of family and how being far away from them can be devastating. The painting also reminded me of my friends at SCU who have moments of sadness because of how far they are from their families. A lot of them took their loved ones for granted and now feel terrible about doing that. After observing Benton's painting, I began to realize how important a family is and I vowed never to take my family for granted. Just like the girl, we college students are sometimes lost and confused without a family by our side.

As I turned around, I noticed a dark encaustic painting by the name of "Macrocosm," and as I walked closer, I realized that the work of art was done by the same artist as above. The painting has a solid-blue background and two arms with white decorations on them. The hands have tiny lines that are delicately marked on the birch panel. Benton's decorations on the arms are white like silk and drawn carefully so that every detail is visible. The decoration is like a maze with lines and gaps which leaves the viewer startled. Towards the bottom of the painting, golden lines are visible coming out of the fingers and heading towards the dark blue background that seems to swallow the arms. Based on my interpretation, the marks on the hands represent the loved ones such as family members and close friends. The patterns on the arm stuck out the most as I remembered the traditions my family follow. The tradition of "Mehndi" involves the women of the family decorating their arms and is usually done when an entire family has come together. The patterns represent unity and proximity in this Pakistani tradition. I believe Benton is trying to exemplify the importance of family and does so by the decorations as well as the golden lines shooting out of the fingers like stars far in the galaxy. Known for using dark and complex colors, Benton exemplifies the importance of family and staying close together through her painting. The golden lines represent students like us who embark on a journey to attend college and temporarily leave the safe haven of our homes to enter the real world which is represented as the dark-blue background. The dark hands followed by

white decorations further convinced me that familial connections are the most vital and important relationships one can ever have.

Ultimately, *Creative in Common* requests the attention of college students and forces us to realize how crucial family is. Benton's work in the exhibit not only exemplifies the importance of family, but also instills the notion of not taking your loved ones for granted. *Creative in Common* is without doubt a powerful exhibit that illustrates love for family and I strongly urge students at SCU to visit. One trip is all it took for me to never take advantage of my family again. Visit the museum and see for yourself!

Works Cited

"The de Saisset Museum at Santa Clara University - Creative in Common." *Santa Clara University*.

Santa Clara University, 2015. Web. 20 Jan. 2015.

<<http://www.scu.edu/desaisset/exhibitions/creative-in-common.cfm>>.