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Local Family Shares Art in New Exhibit at Library

By Cathy Tyson



From left: Liam, Lucas, Valentina, wife Jen, Sebastian, Zackary and Alan Photo provided

While it's hard to miss the towering bronze book sculpture by Brian Goggins at the outdoor plaza at First Street and Golden Gate Way, or the unusual "String of Pearls" at the base of the main stairway from the Library's parking garage, the Community Hall Gallery at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center is a hidden gem.

Unless you're a regular attendee at municipal meetings like City Council or happen to enjoy functions sponsored by the Library Foundation in the Community Hall, it's fairly easy to miss out on the Gallery tucked into the main event space at the Library.

There have been a number of interesting exhibits since the doors officially opened in November of 2009. Members of the Public Art Committee, who are all working artists, have been diligently fulfilling their mission statement to secure art that will "contribute to the cultural enrichment of residents and visitors with a diverse and stimulating cultural environment."

Lauren Faulkner, Art Manager for the Varella family, reports that, "Friend, fellow board member at the Oakland Museum of California and member of the Public Art Committee, Sandra Wolfe, approached Alan (Varela)

regarding the loan of pieces from his collection to be featured in the exhibition series: Lafayette Collects." In appreciation of the Varella family's generosity, there was a reception at the Gallery to kick off the exhibit.

When asked about his motivation for sharing part of their private collection, Varela responded, "As a resident of Lafayette with five school-age children, it is important to my wife and I to pursue every opportunity to bring enrichment and diverse education into the community. This exhibition series is a powerful tool, bringing people together and exposing the resource residing within our community. For this reason, I am happy to share the works."

Varela enjoys exploring different cultures, evident by the variety of artwork throughout the family home. His philosophy on collecting centers on bringing uninhibited views of the world as interpreted by others into his own realm. According to Faulkner, "By doing this, he is gently exposing his children, as well as members of the community, through events such as Lafayette Collects, to the diversity of the world at large."

Currently displayed are three acrylic/collage pieces by William Theophilus Brown from the Bay Area, a series of 12 small works on paper by Joaquin Gonzalez from Miami and finally two large monoprints by San Francisco abstract artist Gustavo Rivera. This first exhibit of the Lafayette Collects series will be on display until the middle of May and, like all exhibits in the Community Hall Gallery, is free of charge. The Public Art Committee is anticipating featuring Lafayette collectors once or twice per year. Look for an exhibit by Lafayette photographer Blake Farrington to go up when the Varella collection comes down.

Graduating from Sonoma State with a B.A. in Art History, Lauren Faulkner, whose family is from Lafayette, met the Varella family through mutual acquaintances, leading to her unique position as manager of their collection.

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