

From Vogue to Atkinson, a call for unity and womanhood through art

Paula Rodenas, Staff Writer

A paper boat set sail from Minneapolis to Santa Barbara to be hosted outside of City College's Atkinson Gallery.

"Blessing of the Boats" is a project made by Los Angeles-based artist Muna Malik, who uses her work and art for activism. The project includes a large paper boat sculpture made of steel that Malik created herself.

Atkinson Gallery Director John Connelly explained that the exhibition will be hosted outside of the gallery due to COVID-19.

"The project originally started around issues of immigration and people who were going through that journey," Connelly said.

The exhibition will be up from Oct. 23 to Dec. 11, but may possibly be extended. The installation can be seen remotely at Pershing Park, as well as other locations around Santa Barbara.

"The project has grown since it's original installation," Connelly said. "From being a lot about the immigration issue, to being with the social justice protest, to Black Lives Matter."

The project revolves around the questions of: "How do we build a better society?" and "What kind of messages would you leave for the future?"

Malik focuses a lot of her work around women of color and immigration. She was featured in a Vogue article in August this year.



Desiree Erdmann

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Malik fabricated a large boat that was installed outdoors in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The piece was illuminated at night, explained Connelly.

Then, people would write messages on a piece of paper and attach it to the sculpture.

“People would be behind messages written on paper that were turned into origami paper boats,” Connelly said.

Connelly encourages people to drop off messages in different locations around campus. He also wants to install a drop-off box by the Wharf in Santa Barbara for people to leave their messages in.

However, he is working on making appointments so people can come see the sculpture more close up. But there’s nothing for sure yet.

Since the sculpture is outside, the messages will not be able to be placed on the boat due to rain and bad weather.

“With COVID and the closures, it’s very hard to plan for the future not knowing where we are going to be, in terms of people being able to come to campus,” Connelly said.

For the future, he wants to install the sculpture inside the Gallery and add the different paper messages people wrote to the boat. This way “it will be protected from the weather.”



Arianna Sanchez (left), and Martha Newmeyer look over the small details of their newly completed sculpture for the Los Angeles based artist Muna Malik’s installation “Blessing of the Boats” on Nov. 2, on the Atkinson Gallery sculpture terrace at City College, Calif. They have been working on the installation for six weeks and are excited to finally share it with the community. (Desiree Erdmann)



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As the month goes by, Connelly wants to add some remotely interactive activities regarding the message of social justice, like "origami parties."

"I think it's important because it's about community and gathering," Connelly said, referring to "Blessing of the Boats"

"You always think of a boat moving forwards, not backwards," Connelly said. "That's a message we could all gather around."