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## Images of Home at San Jose Museum of Art

by *Ethan Beberness* April 29, 2018

*New exhibit displays the ever-changing nature of place and belonging*

**Ethan Beberness**  
**The Santa Clara**  
April 26, 2018

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# THE HOUSE IMAGINARY

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PHOTO BY ETHAN BEBERNESS

“The House Imaginary” at the San Jose Museum of Art blends multifarious perspectives on the concept of what a home is. The exhibit touches on the greater social and cultural implications of what homes are around the world.

“Home” can be a difficult concept to define during your college years.

Some students are more keen to call the house where they grew up their home and consider their college residence a temporary place to sleep.

In the traditional American mind, homes are often imagined as idyllic interpretations of the 20th century American dream. Regardless of how successful previous generations were at achieving the dream of homeownership, the image of the house in the suburbs was burned into the American imagination.

“The House Imaginary,” a collection of works curated by Lauren Schell Dickens at the San Jose Museum of Art, both observes suburban scenes and challenges the notion that the home is simply a dwelling.

“In our increasingly itinerant and unstable world, ‘The House Imaginary’ brings

need to investigate, educate, and enlighten.

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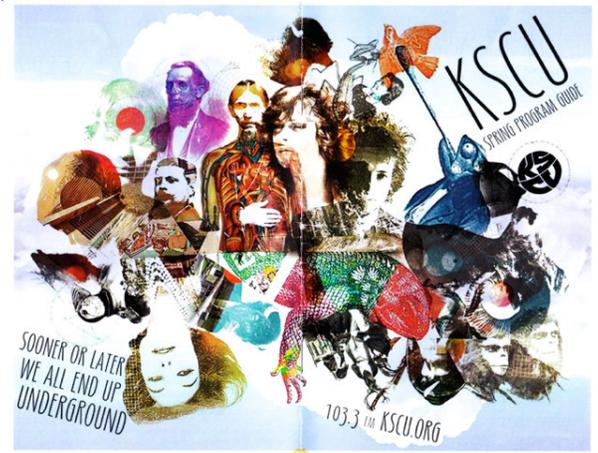


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together varied explorations of the house as both an architectural and psychological space,” Dickens said in a statement written by the entrance to the exhibit.

In “dolefullhouse,” Japanese artist Tabaimo explores the psychological aspect of foreign influence on homes in his country. Using “hand-drawn images that evoke traditional Japanese woodblock prints” and digital manipulation, Tabaimo created an animated sequence that follows a pair of hands continuously arranging rooms as an octopus (representing foreign influence) destroys the house with its tentacles.

Another non-traditional home environment is the prints of a home in the Minidoka War Relocation Center, an internment camp in Idaho where American artist Roger Shimomura spent the early part of his childhood. These memories inspired a series of prints called “Memories of Childhood.” Many of the scenes look as if they could have taken place anywhere in the U.S., if it were not for the barbed wire prominently featured in nearly every print. “As wonderful as it had seemed to live close to most of my friends and relatives, I remember never fully understanding exactly why we moved, and wondering if we were ever going to go back home,” Shimomura said in a statement about his work. Some visitors reacted positively to the challenge against traditional notions of

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home. “Home ownership was the American Dream for my generation. For generations now, the dream is just home, not ownership. I think this is better,” reads a visitor comment card hanging by the exhibit entrance.

Maybe so. While millenials have a reputation for being permanent renters, The Wall Street Journal reported in January 2018 that “The U.S. homeownership rate rose in 2017 for the first time in 13 years, driven by young buyers who overcame rising prices, tight supply and strict lending conditions to purchase their first homes.” Perhaps this shift signals the permanence of home ownership and the American dream in our culture.

For students at Santa Clara, home ownership is barely on the radar. The family home featured in the majority of the works in “The House Imaginary” and experienced by many students during their childhoods and adolescence is replaced with high-priced communal living. Students frequently move between new houses, apartments or dorms every year. It is not irregular for student housing to feature cramped rooms barely fitting the two or more students who sleep there each night. Some students will even share rooms with friends who are not listed on the lease in an effort to make their rent more affordable. The home rental game can be both incredibly difficult to break into and

Aug 20, 2019

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Don’t put too much on your plate, focus on what you love, and take classes that interest you. Santa Clara University provides its students with amazing opportunities to learn from top professors and take interesting classes.

-DJ Shakib, SCU Sophomore

Jun 14, 2019

a defining factor of a student's social experience.

“[Home renting] was this huge mystery that you had to already know about,” senior Brian Huhn said in an interview with The Santa Clara.

As a first-year, he found that the local housing market was all about who you knew. Some property managers require leases be signed a year in advance, according to Huhn. Huhn's first off-campus residence was found through a friend who had a family connection to an apartment a few blocks off campus.

He has come to define his home not as a specific location, but rather as a group of people that he feels comfortable and happy with. “You can live in a mansion with a\*\*holes and you'll hate it, you know what I mean?” he said, “Or, you can live in Swig, in one of the smallest, most disgusting rooms where people have thrown up in the sinks a thousand times and peed out the window, and I still loved it there because of the people.”

In short, “The House Imaginary” teaches us a lesson. It is an exercise in growth. As we become older, our definitions of home may change.

We can form attachments not just to the people we live with, but also to the details of the places we live. “The House Imaginary” is

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After several stressful months and unsatisfying courses, I decided to drop the Marketing major to focus on Communication. After dropping one of the majors, I freed up time for a social life and was way less stressed out.

Jun 14, 2019

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the place to start exploring where and how  
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*Contact Ethan Beberness at  
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