

'Around the Table': Works savor what food means to us

Kimberly Chun

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What's left: Emilie Clark's art depicts the remains of her actual family meals, preserved in latex. Photo: Courtesy The Artist.

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When Oakland artist [Sita Kuratomi Bhaumik](#) was thinking about food, faces and spaces a few years ago, she typed "smells like curry" into a search engine only to discover thousands of entries about the way those supposed curry eaters smelled. "There was one on Yahoo! Answers - the question was 'Help, my neighbor's house smells like curry. What

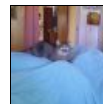
should I do?' " she remembers. "The answer was, 'Call the [INS.](#)' That was the first time I thought about the smell of food being associated with a person and even a legal status, and to get rid of the smell, you got rid of a person."

That revelation eventually led to Bhaumik's "Dear [Indian Grocery Store Under the Freeway](#)," one of 17 works commissioned by the [San Jose Museum of Art](#) for "Around the Table: Food, Creativity, Community."

The fragrant, saffron-hued wall installation riffs off the pattern of a futuristic-exotica paper purchased outside the [Taj Mahal](#) and is stenciled with spices from the now-departed Bombay Bazar and Ice Creamery - the focus of two accompanying lovelorn letters in

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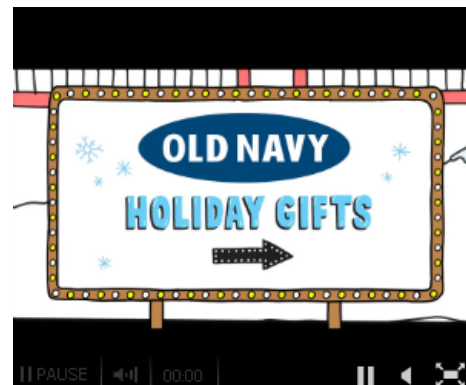


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Paul Walker
(1973-2013)Winter Whites
Gala

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English and Spanish. The store and its owners are mourned, as is the Mission District as a harbor for working-class immigrants.

"The way stores come and go and disappear, the scents will disappear as well," says Bhaumik. "It's just sad that maybe you might have missed it."

The way that the aroma of one person's comfort food can translate as another's stench is simply one thread woven through "Food, Creativity, Community," the second stage of an exhibition on food and its many facets. Among the works in the largest show the museum has ever undertaken are the pungent food-related memories collected in War Gastronomy's "Recipes of Relocation" and Fallen Fruit's citrus-colored depiction of women working in local canneries.

In the end, visitors can study food doing what comes naturally - when it's left to decay - in S.F.-bred artist Emilie Clark's "My Family's Food Waste, A Month for Every Season" from her "Sweet Corruptions" project.

On a table are remnants of everything Clark's family ate - or not - in four months, representing the seasons of a year, including an unrecognizable watermelon and a jar of fish heads that bubbled, then disintegrated. "Beyond providing a place for me to observe transformation, it also made me think a lot about my daily life," she says from New York City, where she ended up cooking mostly whole vegetables and animals - although the odd tuna melt crept into the work. "It was a funny irony. I wanted to save everything, but I also wanted very little to save."

If you go

Around the Table: Food, Creativity, Community: Through April 20. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday, 11 a.m.-8 p.m. third Thursday of the month. \$5-\$8. San Jose Museum of Art, 110 S. Market St., San Jose. (408) 271-6840. www.sjmusart.org.

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