

# Exploring Karma: The Art of Racism

Elizabeth Phan, staff writer

On Friday, Sept. 21, 5-7 p.m., Lisa Beane's art gallery opening was held in PVCC's Dickinson building. Her art is on display until Nov. 7, Monday-Friday: 1-8 p.m. and Saturday: 1-5 p.m.

Karma: The Art of Racism explores hidden truths of racism in America. Beane's art depicts violent images and themes with bright, childlike illustrations. Beane said she is inspired to reveal truths hidden in history through her art. She uses her pieces to speak out about sexism, inequality, and racism.

The Black Box Theatre, where the gallery is being held, is closed off from other galleries and is lit to show the magnitude of each individual piece.

Compared to other gallery showings at PVCC, Beane's gallery takes viewers away from their daily surrounding and puts them in a place where they feel uncomfortable and vulnerable. The room allows each piece to speak for itself.

Beane said, "Reality and truth are there. They tell a story. Step back and think. That's why there are no descriptions." She believes African-Americans were not the only targets of racism. Beane said, "It is not just about the blacks, but Hispanics and Asians and everyone."

Some of Beane's work was extreme and touched on triggering issues such as lynching. A particular piece seemed to catch the eyes of many. It was brightly colored and had flowers and cotton surrounding a letter about a lynching. The letter seemed to be written by a child and symbolized innocence witnessing the violent past.

In the letter, the girl wrote, "You can believe I be a good girl. Praise you today Lord because he roped one of your children for you!"

To reduce racism, Beane said, "Everyone has the choice to be good, to be nice, it takes so much energy to be angry and hateful."

Each piece had the power to make viewers feel uncomfortable and think. To stand in front of



art representing the oppression that men, women, and children of ethnic descent has the potential to be life changing. Beane said feelings of hate stems a person's hatred of themselves.

Chair of Visual & Performing Arts and Professor of Art Beryl Solla chose Beane's art. She said, "Ms. Beane shows us two parallel cultures that have very different world views. Culture is a living, changing, reactive thing. Sometimes it obscures and sometimes it shines a light on social issues that are simmering just below the surface. Ms. Beane's work shines such a light and raises issues of complicity and privilege. This exhibition challenges us to look beyond the surface and see the harsh realities of history and its effect on our world view."

Solla seemed concerned about controversy. She was careful and thoughtful about showing this exhibit. She explained the content is difficult to digest, but because of her commitment to PVCC's mission, she felt the need to show to exhibit.

She said, "People have the right to choose what they want to see."

She finished her statement by hoping anyone who goes to view the exhibit gains the same experience as she. She said, "It opened my eyes to long standing problems that need to be addressed."

Beane said, "A note to anyone who has faced racism: it is because they are uncomfortable."