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Jaune Quick-to-See Smith brings activism to craft

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By Charles Dunst

As a student pursuing a minor in art (and partly because it was assigned by my teacher), I decided to attend Jaune Quick-to-See Smith's presentation at the Mandeville Gallery, which is on the second floor of the Nott Memorial, for those who don't know.

After traversing the gallery, I decided that my favorite piece of hers is entitled "Imperialism," which is a painting depicting the idea of Manifest Destiny.

After listening to her speak, her motivation for this piece makes it far more contemporary than I could ever have realized.

Her main subject is surrounded by the stars and moon, as he believes that these entities favor him.

Clearly, this is a primitive, old-fashioned representation of Manifest Destiny, as Quick--to-See Smith puts it.

In her speech, she described this painting as a war painting that can be related to many different situations.

For example, she explained that this perfectly depicts many of the Middle-Eastern conflicts, as the Jews and Muslims both believe that it is their land, granted to them by a higher power.

Either of these religions could be the main subject of this painting and represent all the qualities Quick-to-See Smith described.

However, after listening to her speak, it was clear that this was a piece that was intended to demonstrate the heart of conflict, one which has deep, ancient roots.

Her art is most effectively viewed after understanding her background.

Quick-to-See Smith was born on the Kootenai Indian Reservation in Montana.

As a Native-American woman, her art very often utilizes ancient Native-American themes and imagery.

Her art often contains strong sociopolitical commentary, which becomes even more clear after hearing her speak.

Quick-to-See Smith is not only an artist, but also an activist for Native-American art.

After hearing her speak, it is clear that Quick-to-See Smith's activism is not limited to Native-American art, though.

She described the sorrow and anger she felt at the recent events in Ferguson, Miss.

She also described how art can change the world and motivate governments to change.

While I originally attended this event to view interesting art, I ultimately walked away with an understanding of how art, and really great art, can successfully go hand-in-hand with activism.