

The Detroit News

Cranbrook Art Academy hosts Sunday open house

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April 27, 2018



Conrad Egyir's "Yonder," is a portrait of three women who look alike, except one is black (Photo: Max Ortiz / The Detroit News)

Two of the pleasures of spring are the "Graduate Degree Exhibition" at the Cranbrook Art Museum and the Art Academy's OPEN(STUDIOS) – the chance to chat with student-artists where they work. From 1-5 p.m. Sunday, visitors can tour the museum, free for the day, and the adjacent art studios and chat with 70-plus second-year graduate students.

Even better, the Institute of Science and Cranbrook House will also be open and free Sunday. (The institute's hours are noon to 5 p.m., while Cranbrook House is open 1-5 p.m. for walk-throughs. Visit the Cranbrook House website for a free admission ticket.)

But the spiritual heart of the day is still the graduate students and what they produce. The Detroit News spoke with three of them:

Conrad Egyir

"Yonder" is a heroic portrait of three lookalike women – no surprise, since they're all the same individual.

But Conrad Egyir, a painting student originally from Ghana, has given them each different complexions – only one figure is clearly black.

It touches, he said, on “the problematic social construct and politics of colorism and identity. For example,” Egyir asked, “I have a black lady who’s also posing as an albino. Would you refer to an African albino as white or black?”

Using multiple images of the same character amounts to “a little psychoanalysis,” he said, noting that as an African living in Michigan his feet in two different worlds.

“It comes from place of empathy,” Egyir said, “and wanting to understand.”