

'This came from a place of love'

Family's collaboration beautifies blighted South San Francisco utility box

By Austin Walsh
DAILY JOURNAL STAFF

A shared passion for creativity between a mother and daughter is beautifying South San Francisco, as two locals collaborated on a project to transform a blighted public space into a bright and spirited art project.

PaulaClaudine Hobson-Coard, a South San Francisco resident, worked with her mother Mary last month to repaint a graffiti-tagged utility box on the corner of Spruce



AUSTIN WALSH/DAILY JOURNAL
PaulaClaudine Hobson-Coard, who beautified a utility box in South San Francisco, displays some of the art she created.

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and Huntington avenues.

Hobson-Coard said the piece titled "Loving Life" is an homage to the mutual appreciation serving as the foundation for her relationship with her mother, which she hopes will inspire others.

"We know this came from a place of love and anything that comes out of this piece is love and it will enrich anyone who has a chance to see it," she said.

The mural on the formerly weathered utility box depicts vibrant yellow and red flowers adorned by a guitar, butterflies and hearts nearby. Hobson-Coard said the deep and rich colors used were inspired by the family's background coming from the Antilles islands in the Caribbean Sea.

"The reason we choose these colors is the energy that comes from them," she said. "We want to exude good energy."

Hobson-Coard was born on the small island colonized by the Netherlands before moving to the United States with her family, where she pursued an arts education. Today she works as a painter and photographer, as well as a musician with her husband in their group the Lovestruck Band.

As a painter, she has won recognition in the San Mateo County Fair. Often the award-winning work is a joint effort with her mother. The two have come together on as many as 100 pieces, she said.

"We work well as a team. We are not struggling to find who does what. We are just stronger together," she said.

Hobson-Coard said her mother has inspired her work as an artist, and their collaborations continue to serve as a tight bond.

"My mom and I are extremely close. I do consider her my best friend. If she wasn't here, I would be shattered," she said. "She is very patient, caring, loving and strong-willed."

Though some relatives may struggle to work together on creative endeavors, Hobson-Coard said she does not face such issues with her mother.

"We balance each other. So when we get together on an art project, we are excited," she said.

On the utility box project, Hobson-Coard said it was refreshing to use that teamwork to bring beauty to a public space previously serving as an eyesore.

"It took my mom and I about three weeks to complete the project," she said. "It's amazing how you can turn a gray, graffiti'd box into something vibrant and beautiful."

Since the project was finished, Hobson-Coard said she has received plenty of pos-

itive comments from residents and members of the community who appreciate the creative effort.

"We have got a lot of good feedback," she said.

Hobson-Coard, who also serves on the South San Francisco Cultural Arts Commission, said she hopes the box will inspire others to express their creativity while improving their neighborhoods.

Such a sentiment compelled Hobson-Coard and her mother to complete their work on the utility box, she said.

"It's not just for us, we do it for others," she said. "We want to give back to the community."

Ultimately, Hobson-Coard said she hoped the work would build more goodwill and positive thoughts among those in South San Francisco.

"We put love into this and we want to give love and good energy to the people," she said.