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Commuter student learns more about the city by experiencing Muckenthaler

BY ELIZABETH MUNOZ – POSTED ON MAY 7, 2014
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1. The Muckenthaler Cultural Center, in Fullerton, provides the community with experiences that stimulate creativity and imagination with various art galleries. (Elizabeth Munoz/ Daily Titan)

I don't get to see much of Orange County, let alone Fullerton, because I am a commuter student. I live 30 miles away in Los Angeles, a place I know like the back of my hand. It is my home.

For the past four years of my college life, Cal State Fullerton has become my second home, but I know little to nothing about the city past the bounds of the student parking lots.

But what I have seen of the city is beautiful. The train station in downtown Fullerton is a place to sit and observe the hustle of daily life, no train ticket required; it is serene despite the loud locomotives.

McClain's, a quaint coffee shop, is the ideal place to inspire writing while sipping on a dark caffeinated beverage.

Aside from these city gems, Fullerton remained a mystery to me; until I was given a chance to delve into its charm and history.

The Muckenthaler Cultural Center is a treasure hidden away atop a hill, which served as my formal introduction to this part of Orange County.

It is a two-story, 18-room mansion, that belonged to Water and Adella Muckenthaler. When someone walks through it, it is hard to believe that anybody lived there. But antique cigar boxes and priceless crystal vases are preserved in glass display cases, providing evidence that they did.

The 8.5 acres manor was built in 1924 and donated to the city in 1965 by Harold Muckenthaler. It has since then been repurposed as a place to provide the community with experiences that stimulate creativity and imagination.

It is a mixture of rich heritage and marvelous architecture that introduced me to a part of Fullerton that I had never seen.

The estate is a sight to see, even if there is not an art gallery open.

It is encompassed by lush foliage and towering palm trees, creating a tranquil ambience.

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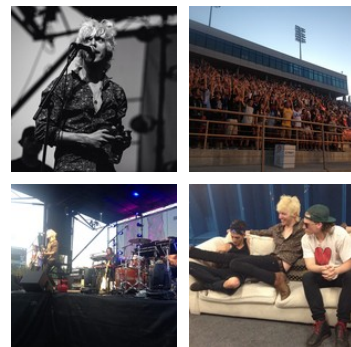
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On the slope of the hill is a brick gazebo secluded in dark green ivy. A garden lizard ran past me, but I was too relaxed to be startled.

Meanwhile, families enjoyed picnics in various parts of the garden.

All I could think of was the children of the Muckenthaler family playfully running on the grass, hiding in the countless nooks of the property. Black-and-white framed photos that hung in the hallways of the house helped me solidify their history and faces.

However, the interior is even more awe-inspiring.

Although the first floor has been hollowed out to make way for the galleries and the gift shop, the heritage has not been compromised.

The pictures on the walls reflect what's in front of me, without people or furniture.

My inner child surfaces, and all I want to do is touch the crystal chandeliers and ornate gold horse statues in the foyer.

A life in Fullerton was opening up before me. I suddenly felt more part of the city, soaking up a piece of 90-year-old history.

My only regret is that it took us four years to get acquainted.

TAGS: [Orange County](#), [The Muckenthaler Cultural Center](#)

About Elizabeth Munoz

Elizabeth Munoz is a staff writer from the Spring 2014 COMM 471 class.

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