

The Art of Generosity

Written by Editor

Wednesday, 14 November 2007 08:54

On December 1, 2007, The Red Piano Too Art Gallery is hosting a live Art Auction to benefit The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). This benefit auction is a part of: A Lowcountry Christmas Celebration on Da' Sea Islands of Historic Beaufort, South Carolina.



More than thirty artists are donating art for the auction. A special donation by Terry Watson of an original painting by the late Sam Doyle titled "First Motor Car on St. Helena Island" is to be featured. Bidding will begin at \$3,500. (His works frequently begin in the \$15,000 and \$18,000 range.) Also included are a bronze by A. I. Davis that was originally priced at \$4,000 and a quilt by Cassandra White valued at \$1,000. Bidding for some of the other artists' pieces will begin as low as \$30. The art will be available for preview on November 30, 2007 from 1:00pm – 5:00pm at The Red Piano Too Art Gallery.

Born on St. Helena Island, Sam Doyle, the legendary folk artist, never strayed far from home. He was as much a historian as a painter. His paintings on tin or scrap wood usually depict the colorful people who inhabited the island. Often he included their names on the paintings. "Rev. Catchit" was the person islanders caught it from on Sunday. "He-She" was a half-man, half-woman that Doyle painted and explained, 'Some people just be like that'. "Dr. Buzzard" was the island's voodoo doctor.

Doyle attended Penn School on St. Helena's Island, the first school for Blacks in the South. There he got his own nickname, "Uncle Sam" and later did a self-portrait of himself riding a goat. In 1944, he began to document St. Helena's past; the traditions, personalities and supernatural occurrences. His first painting was of the Wallace Eagles, a baseball team named after the plantation that Sam Doyle grew up on, and where his grandparents had lived as slaves. The bulk of his painting was produced after his retirement in the early 1970's from his work in the laundry room of the nearby Marine Base on Parris Island. Doyle focused on the evolution of his world, from horse and wagon to shopping carts.

Doyle's pride in Penn School, his relatives, friends, and their struggles and accomplishments resulted in his depiction of these people as heroes, along with the heroes of his race—Joe Louis, Jackie Robinson, Ray Charles, Nat King Cole and Martin Luther King.

"I want to share my art with as many people as possible," he said. And so he has and continues to do. Sam Doyle's work was featured in the famous Corcoran Art Gallery show that brought "outsider" art into the mainstream of the art world and has been shown extensively throughout the U.S. in major galleries and museums since then.

A. I. Davis is a relocated New Yorker who now calls Beaufort "home." Davis, a multi-talented artist, is most noted for his wood and bronze sculptures and for his exotic burl bowls. Currently there is an exhibit of his photographic work at the gallery through November entitled "A Show of Hands."

Mary Mack, the owner of Red Piano Too Art Gallery, very generously offered to host this benefit auction for NAMI, which is the largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to improving the lives of persons living with serious mental illness and their families. A nationwide

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organization founded in 1979, NAMI has become the nation's voice on mental illness, with affiliates in every state and in more than 1,100 local communities across the country. In Beaufort County alone there are two chapters. One is headquartered in Hilton Head Island and the other known as NAMI Beaufort County "North" is seeking to open an office in Beaufort from the proceeds of this auction.

NAMI is dedicated to the eradication of mental illness and to the improvement of the quality of life of all who are affected by these diseases. Caregiver and consumer support groups are available. Each chapter meets once a month. For more information see the website: www.nami.org or call 681-2200 in Hilton Head.

The live auction is scheduled to begin at 2:00pm on December 1, 2007 and is free and open to the public—light refreshments will be served.

The gallery is located at: 870 Sea Island Parkway on St. Helena Island, South Carolina. For more information call (843) 838-2241 or visit www.redpianotoo.com