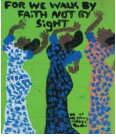


When the Spirit Moves Them

Written by Editor
Thursday, 24 July 2008 07:47

A group of Folk Artists will gather at St. Helena Island's Red Piano Too Art Gallery on Saturday-August 9, 2008 from 12:00 Noon to 5:00 PM for The Sixteenth Annual Summer Show. The theme this year is "Spirituality in Folk Art." The gallery is frequently described as "primarily a Folk Art Gallery".



The question might be asked what exactly is Folk Art?

There are "authorities" or "experts" in the Folk Art world who are dedicated to the development of a meaningful definition of Folk Art and they clearly define three subdivisions or three branches if you will, of Folk Art and these are: Visionary (Spiritual), Vernacular (Everyday), and Outsider (Distressed). These experts go on to give us a definition, which says: "The Folk Artist is predominately untrained and anxious to convey to others a particular message. The Folk Artist's message is either (1) spiritual, (2) a declaration of distress, or (3) conveys an everyday happening. In Folk Art the message itself is primary!" These experts also make the point that "in defining folk art as with fine art one must draw a line between art and craft."

According to gallery owner, Mary Mack "We always have to pay sufficient homage to the Folk Art Gods but my own working definition of Folk Art is that it is work by self-taught artists or, that art which appeals to the heart."

"When I was in the 7th grade my music appreciation teacher gave my class some definitions of music—one of these being "music is that which is pleasing to the ear"—I can't recall any of the others but this definition has stuck with me over the many years and I apply it to Folk Art; Folk Art is that art which is pleasing to the heart."

Folk Art is not a new form of art, but it became more popular when regional and national museums began exhibiting this type of art and adding it to their permanent collection. In 1982, a group of African American Southern Folk Artists traveled to Washington, DC for the opening of an important show, "Black Folk Art in America, 1930-1980" at the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Amongst these twenty self-taught artists whose work was featured in this landmark exhibition was the work of St. Helena Island native, Sam Doyle. Early in the day of the exhibit opening Nancy Regan came for a private showing at the gallery and Doyle had the pleasure of being photographed with the first lady.

Doyle, a Vernacular (Everyday) artist chronicled the Gullah lifestyle as well as events on the national scene in his work. This trend has continued in the work of many local self-taught artists exhibiting in the Red Piano Too Art Gallery. Some of these are Cassandra Gillens, Charles Desaussure Allen Fireall, Diane Britton Dunham, Johnnie Griner, and Irene Tison to list a few.

This years show "Spirituality in Folk Art" will have as its featured artist—Florida Folk Artist "Missionary" Mary Proctor. While grieving for her beloved grandmother and other close relations who died in a house fire in 1995, the Lord told Mary to "Paint the Door" and she did! Through her doors, Mary has found the comfort the Lord had intended for her. She is "truly living to do God's work through my art". Today, the work of Mary Proctor can bring thousands of dollars and she is admired and collected all over the world. She has been featured in the leading folk art magazine Raw Vision; indeed she made the cover of the Winter 1999-2000 edition, just four years after her vision to "paint doors." Even more remarkable is the fact that

When the Spirit Moves Them

Written by Editor
Thursday, 24 July 2008 07:47

one year after she started to paint she was featured in a one-woman show in a leading New York gallery.

Proctor's paintings consist of bits and pieces of household items incorporated into compositions inspired by scripture and memories of the grandmother who raised her. She frequently uses tin or wood for her canvas; they are not all "door-sized" (sometimes they are on paint cans) but are all something wonderful and affordable. Many of her works convey spiritual truths and life lessons, self-affirmations, warnings against drinking, how to raise children, marriage vows, and other related topics. With a bubbly and talkative personality, Missionary Mary Proctor and her art will surely touch your heart.

When asked about the different artist coming for the Summer Show gallery employee and artist, Victoria Smalls said: "This will be my second Summer Show with the gallery and I feel like a child at Christmas—I can't wait to see all of the artists and their new works." "It is all so very exciting for me to be a part of this."

The public is invited to meet the different artists and to view "art that is sure to touch the heart" at the Sixteenth Annual Summer Show "Spirituality in Folk Art". This show is free and open to the public. The Red Piano Too Art Gallery is located at 870 Sea Island Parkway on St. Helena Island, SC. The gallery's hours are 10:00 AM to 5:00PM Monday through Saturday and 1:00 PM to 4:30 PM on Sunday. For more information please contact the gallery at (843) 838-2241.