

## Heritage Days Honors Floyd Gordon

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Penn Center celebrates its 34th Annual Heritage Days Celebration, November 10-13, 2016 and honors South Carolina native artist Floyd Gordon, by naming him the 2016 Featured Artist. Penn's York W. Bailey Museum located on St. Helena Island, South Carolina will exhibit a collection of Floyd Gordon's artwork.

The theme for the Heritage Days Celebration is *Remembering Our Roots . . . Embracing Our Future* and Gordon's art beautifully depicts the very meaning behind the theme. Floyd Gordon's creations are striking. His acrylic, watercolor, and mixed media paintings have a dramatic feel and are filled with vibrant tones.

For decades, Gordon has captured the culture, history and traditions of people primarily from the South. While he pays tribute to farmers and crop growers in many of his works, Gordon equally lifts up musicians and performing artists in his Jazz Series.

Gordon grew up in Rowesville, SC, the son of a sharecropper and one of 13 children. Growing up working the land with his family, Gordon most certainly could have been an excellent farmer. His talent for telling stories and detailing those stories in brilliant-colored

pictures took him down a different path.

“I’ve always been fascinated by colors,” Gordon says. “The first time I really



remember applying my fascination was when I started school, and the teacher gave me crayons and a coloring book. I was so fascinated by the colors and the pictures that I colored every page. I didn’t have another coloring book, so I drew pictures to color, and took my book to the teacher.”

By the time he was in second grade, Gordon was using his skills to produce signs, work boards and other teaching aids for his teachers.

“Back then, they didn’t call it art. They called it drawing,” he laughs.

“I remember working as a young boy to save money to buy my first set of paints. It cost me \$3.60,” Gordon continues. “Then I saved up more money to buy a three-legged wooden easel, which cost me \$3.39.

Gordon sold his first painting when he was in the seventh grade. That same year, his principal cleared the lunchroom and set up a gallery for the budding artist to display his works.

Sixty years and thousands of paintings later, Gordon still says that was his first real break as an artist. Gordon also gives much credit for his artistic abilities to his collegiate experience at Claflin University.

He first visited Claflin in the eighth grade, when his first art teacher, James McFadden ('54), introduced him to Arthur Rose, the University's art chair. Rose would go on to teach Gordon how to wield a paintbrush and capture life on canvas.

While at Claflin, Gordon was drafted by the U.S. Army and stationed in Germany. Gordon said he remembers being inspired by the bright lights of the German city of Nuremberg as he descended from the darkness of night in a plane. "It was so striking at the time," he says.

He returned home in 1969, but didn't re-enroll at Claflin. Gordon worked various jobs, including at the U.S. Postal Service, and owned an art gallery in Hollis, N.Y.

He rekindled the desire to fully delve into his art upon returning to South Carolina in

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