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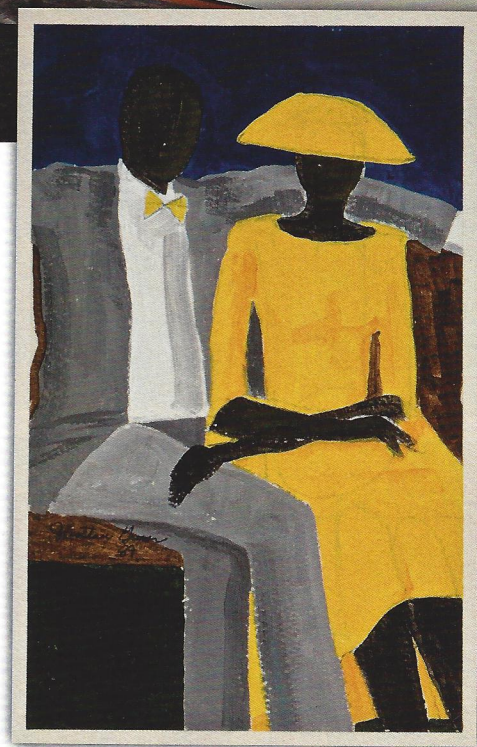
MADE IN THE USA: A LOCAL
ENTREPRENEUR'S QUEST FOR
CRAFTSMANSHIP



Art Agenda

THE HARVEY B. GANTT CENTER FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARTS + CULTURE IS KICKING OFF A YEAR-LONG CELEBRATION OF ITS 40TH ANNIVERSARY.

BY MICHAEL J. SOLENDER



Jonathan Green. *Easter*.

When an institution evolves through the course of four decades to establish a cultural leadership role not only in their home city and on a national scale, it's a feat worth celebrating.

Having reached such an accomplishment, Charlotte's Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture is breaking out the champagne and party favors and kicking off a year-long celebration of its 40th anniversary.

They are treating the community to a series of special exhibitions, past remembrances, and a look to the future with some exciting programming over the next year.

Three exhibitions to experience into the fall are:

'40 AND COUNTING.'

A historical tour of the center's extensive exhibition history showcasing the visual arts and the center's influence on the Charlotte region.

'THE SELECTED WORKS OF J. EUGENE GRIGSBY, JR.: RETURNING TO WHERE THE ARTISTIC SEED WAS PLANTED.'

A rare glimpse into the creative career of this outsized North Carolina artist, teacher, playwright, poet, and band leader. Born in Greensboro, Grigsby's artistic interests were cultivated while growing up in Charlotte. This exhibition features 30 works spanning his entire career.

THE HEWITT COLLECTION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN ART.'

Part of the center's permanent collection, these works represent a wide swath of celebrated contemporary African American artists. Included are Charlotte native son Romare Bearden, Margaret Burroughs, Jonathan Green, Jacob Lawrence, Elizabeth Catlett, and Henry Ossawa Tanner.

Founded in 1974 as the Afro-American Cultural and Service Center by community leaders, Dr. Mary Harper and Dr. Bertha Maxwell Roddey, the center has experienced the kind of growth and evolution few could imagine. Once housed in a small suite in Spirit Square, the Gantt Center now occupies a firm anchor position as part of uptown's Levine Cultural Campus. Here the center screens films, holds discussions and frequently hosts visiting nationally recognized artists such as actress Pam Grier.

Henry Lewis "Skip" Gates, host of the PBS series 'Finding your Roots,' remarked recently that Charlotte's Gantt Center fills an important void nationally by sharing the stories, history and evolution of African American life in the American South.

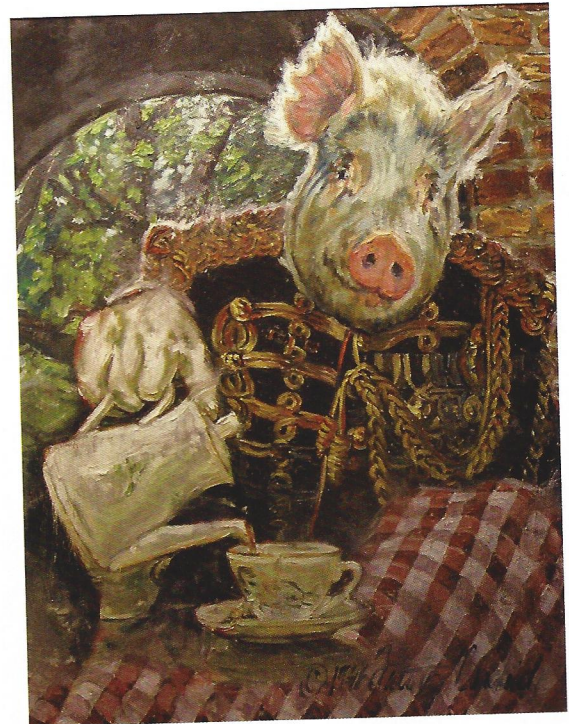
Never shying away from addressing challeng-

ing social issues, the center is a cultural institution that fosters dialogue. Recent exhibits such as 'Cash Crop,' an installation of life-sized slave-trade sculptures, 'The Kinsey Collection,' a vast assemblage of historically significant African American art and ephemera, and 'Question Bridge,' an honest airing of more than 100 perspectives on being Black in America, helped to educate our community and open up frank lines of communication.

"Education has always been central to our core mission," said Geraldine Sumter, Charlotte attorney and past Gantt Center Board Chair. "Back in the '80s when apartheid was seldom discussed in America, we were helping produce Athol Fugard (South African playwright) plays. The center has always pushed the envelope."

The center has mounted more than 100 exhibitions showcasing the work of more than 300 local, national, and internationally renowned artists since their founding.

Perhaps more important has been their catalytic role in championing discussions, forums, and countless educational opportunities that serve to bring neighbors together, honor shared values, and cherish what makes us each unique and important contributors to our city. www.ganttcenter.org



Tarleton Blackwell. *Morning Tea III.*

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