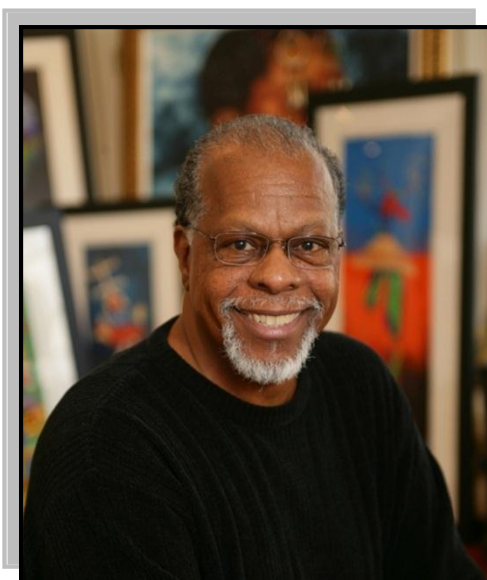




exhibits the artwork of AARON F. HENDERSON

Artist Statement

I use gouache on paper and oil on canvas as my primary means of expressing narratives that reflect my life experiences. These conjured narratives, determine the direction, style and format of the created work. For me, the narrative is the most important component of



the creative process, often beginning with cultural and social explorations. It allows me to journey to the past, speculate on the future and interpret the present through my visual renderings. The ability to traverse time and space while being grounded in an African/African American culture allows me to fully utilize and passionately appreciate my gifts.

Visual Artist Aaron F. Henderson produces a remarkable body of art, which brings to life the brilliantly vibrant colors that are so much a part of African and African American culture. His ambition is to capture the powerful, spiritual and expressive feelings of his themes and to transfer them into passionate images for his viewers. Henderson was lured to the easel at an early age by the expressive freedom that accompanied

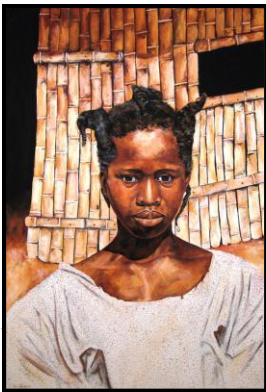
creativity, and has devoted his life to exploring, creating, and enjoying art. Though never formally trained, Henderson has a unique ability to paint memories & emotions, dreams & spirits, harmony & rhythm. Aaron has been painting for more than 40 years and has dedicated much of his life to studying and creating art.

He is a narrative artist and when viewing his work, one often sees classic “life stories” unfolding in the faces and the movements of his subjects. His goal is to show his audiences a compelling interpretation of his narratives. This is accomplished through Aaron’s exquisite use of color to create works of art, which convey emotions, harmony and rhythm. Aaron is fully aware that he has been blessed by God with an extraordinary talent. His objective is to obtain knowledge, and use his God-given talent to reflect all of his experiences, dreams and visions through his work. His work has been featured in a number of publications across the country. Most recently his work has been featured on HGTV’s ‘Ground Breakers’ and acquired by the permanent collection of the Franklin G. Burroughs – Simeon B. Chapin Art Museum in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. He earned a B.S.E.E. (Electrical Engineering) degree from Tuskegee University in 1971.

I have always known the spirits and they know me. The first generation of enslaved Africans brought to America had to fight to hold on to their sense of God. After enduring the horrors of that portion of the *Maafa* (Kiswahilli term for “disaster”) known as the transatlantic slave trade, this first generation struggled to hold on to life itself, while in the machinery of the Euro/American slavery system. All traces of identity, family, culture, language, and religion were stripped from them as if by a slow fire. Their dignity was obscured as they were sold on the auction blocks, forced to labor in horrible conditions and adapt to alien ways and an alien language. When they cried to God in prayer and song, the new words rang with echoes of the spirits of their forebears. All was not lost. In the music of their voices rang through a miracle: hope, strength and an ancient nobility of the eternal soul. Their faith in the spirit and in spirits that they knew through prayers and songs would carry them through this horrific episode of human existence. This faith became a light of hope that shined for generations to come. How



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was this possible? Could a people who endured such tragedy actually convert that tragedy to a crucible of faith and hope? How did they find solace in a corrupted form of Christianity while enduring a horrendous system of oppression? The religion itself was so perverted by mankind that it supported the slave trade and the subsequent American Apartheid. Their souls cried out for the God of their mothers and their mothers’ mothers. And when they cried out what a beautiful



music it became. These songs were not the sound of suffering, but uplifting music that transcended the horrors of the everyday world that they knew. Heavenly flowers of song grew from the depths of sorrow. Is there some spiritual truth still hidden in these songs that can project us beyond the boundaries that keep us from fulfilling the dreams of our ancestors? Perhaps through visual representations we can revive our collective memory and share our strength. We must never forget the lessons of history. We cannot ignore the spiritual voices of our forebears and of the God that dwells within us all. I will attempt through visual interpretations of the lyrics of these songs to capture the essence of a spirit-filled people surrounded by oppression and stripped of their identity yet able to find joy and hope. The spirit has always been with us. It is still here today.

Aaron Henderson’s artwork is on display from **September 1 – November 5, 2012**, at the **Center for Ethics 1531 Dickey Drive, Atlanta, GA 30322**

For more information, visit: www.premierart.net

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