

# RENO HAPPENINGS



Delores Feemster, Reno Sentinel-Voice General Manager. For news, weekly locations of paper and advertising information, contact her at 323-3677.

## Drawing on black roots

By Joe DeChick  
Gazette-Journal

As a young black child sprouting up in Denton, Texas, Cochise Fitzhugh Couyette was ignorant of his heritage and the whole concept of "roots."

"Other than Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver, I thought my grandparents were the first black people who ever existed," Couyette said.

Today, the 53-year-old Las Vegas artist uses his black

heritage as a thematic canvas for his work.

train engineer like most kids," he said. "I had no

At "about age 35," Couyette's sketches of



HERITAGE: One of the works by Cochise Fitzhugh Couyette now on display at the University of Nevada-Reno.

The soft-colored paintings include portraits of Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X and Coretta Scott King.

Couyette moved to Las Vegas at age 9. "I grew up wanting to be a fireman and

desire to be an artist."

Since "there weren't a lot of openings for blacks at the time," Couyette spent from age 20 to 35 traveling, carousing and building hot rods.

designs for his Los Angeles apartment impressed a friend.

The friend pestered Couyette to continue drawing, and an indifferent Couyette sketched his older sister just to quell the nagging.

His friend persisted and, without his knowledge, entered the sketch in a San Francisco art show where it won third place in the novice division.

"I ran out the next day and spent \$400 on art materials I never used," Couyette said. "But I don't believe in competition because no one is qualified to judge anyone else's work. What counts is a person's emotional reaction to the work."

After being burned by several galleries, Couyette now relies on having work commissioned.

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