

EBONY ETCHINGS

Kwanzaa stamp designer featured in LA exhibition

By Lanier

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The work of celebrated artist/author Synthia Saint James, special guest artist Beverly Heath and the unveiling of the first Kwanzaa stamp will take place Nov. 2 during a reception and viewing of the "Rites of Kinship ... A Celebration of Tradition," exhibit Sunday, Nov. 2 in Los Angeles.

The exhibit will run from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Museum of African-American Art, located on the 3rd floor of the Robinson-May department store in the Baldwin Hills-Crenshaw Plaza, at the corner of Crenshaw and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

"Rites of Kinship ... A Celebration of Tradition" is sponsored by American Express Corporate Services, The Links, Inc., harbor Area Chapter and Robinson-May.

The colorful and visually exciting four-month exhibit, which will run through Feb. 28 includes 45 original acrylic and oil paintings from children's picture books by Synthia Saint James and a collection of Beverly Heath's assemblage art.

Synthia Saint James is one of today's most important and sought after contemporary artists.

The U.S. Postal Service commissioned her to create the Kwanzaa stamp, making her the first African-American to design a U.S. Postal Service Holiday Series stamp.

Saint James' vibrant and colorful works have been commissioned and have appeared in many notable exhibits on television shows, on UNICEF greeting cards, and are in the possession of several embassies, celebrities and prominent collectors.

Her work is internationally known and spans more than 40 book covers (including those by Terry McMillan and Alice Walker), children's picture books and many licensed products including a signature clothing line.

Her style utilizes bright clear colors and geometric figures in motion with no facial features.

"Rites of Kinship ... A Celebration of Tradition" will encompass Saint James' original art from "Neeny Coming ... Neeny Going" (which received the 1997 Coretta Scott King Honor for illustration), "The Gifts of Kwanzaa," "How Mr. Monkey Saw the Whole World," "Snow On Snow," and more. Saint James' paintings, children's books, product line and U.S. Postal Service Holiday Kwanzaa stamps

will be available for purchase.

Nationally acclaimed assemblage artist Beverly Heath, has had six exhibitions over the past four years. She describes herself as a "life artist," a root woman — who gathers and keeps the history and celebrates life's unfolding events through her inspirational pieces.

Guests at the Museum of African-American Arts will view her powerful, spiritual collection of assemblages, installations, dolls and alters — which have been described as "magically protective" and "exquisite."

Some of her fabled works include *Cracked Mirrors*, *Family Business*; *Rite of Passage & Other Love Songs for Half-Black Sista*; *Bessie Jones A Root Woman*; and *Dixie Johnson, a spiritual woman, cleaned the corners of her house with salt, sewed for a living, loved her family and never ate pork.*

Heath's assemblage work has attracted many collectors, such as Whoopi Goldberg, LeVar Burton, John Outterbride and a host of others.

The Museum of African-American Art is a non-profit, cultural, educational institution dedicated to the interpretation, promotion and preservation of art by or about people of African descent and their contributions to world culture.

The Museum was founded by noted artist and art historian Dr. Samella Lewis and a group of academic, artistic, business and community leaders. Their goal is to increase public awareness and support artist expression of African-American art. The Museum's unique location within Robinsons-May department store invites easy access and emphasizes the fact that art can and should be a part of our daily lives.

Encore engagement for "Spirit Awakens" at Stella Adler Theater

Actress/playwright/educator Akuyoe returned to the Stella Adler Theater Friday, Oct. 24, for a five-week encore performance of her critically acclaimed solo play "Spirit Awakening."

Presented by Robert Charoff, "Spirit Awakening" is an autobiographical show, both personal and mythical, about a woman journeying back to herself, "back to what it means being an African, being a woman."

Written and directed by Akuyoe Graham, the play has garnered rave reviews around the country and features musicians Stanley Benders and Joshua Natural Sound.

Knight

(Continued from Page 1)

book. So, I put it aside. But as the letters and cards from my fans came in with questions about how to get into the business, women in the industry, and how to balance a family and a career, I had to tell my story."

The book's title hints at the goings-on in this world of this music diva.

"It (the title) kind of sums it up. I could not have written this book if it weren't for the ups and downs and the joy and sorrow. I just couldn't say, 'I've gotten so many Grammys and so many gold records, and we've been riding high for about 49 years.' There were some hard times during those years."

Knight's book, which chronicles her life from the first performance at Mount Moriah Baptist Church in Atlanta to her recent success in Las Vegas, enabled her to connect not only with herself, but with young people.

"I wanted to tell my own story, because too many people tell our story for us. As an African American, I wanted to do this for me, my family and my fans," she said. "I also wanted to make a connection with young people — this brilliant generation. We've lost our credibility with them, in my opinion. So, we need to become real and say, 'Hey, I fell short of the heart.'"

Knight's book also delves into her failures. But, she said, she did not let her problems blunt her personal growth. Inconspicuous in the book are her stories of personal turmoil.

She did that for a reason.

"I tried not to bring the readers my load, because it doesn't work with my making them happy. So, I keep my private things with me."

Knight said the main thing she wants her readers to get out of her book is learning how to survive.

"I am not a perfect person. I have my faults," she said, "but my underlying faith has carried me through and continues to carry me. People need to know that whatever happens in their lives, joy cometh in the morning."



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Gladys Knight and Virgie Williams promote Knight's book.

Ebony magazine survey names Atlanta number one city for African-Americans

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Atlanta has been named "America's number one city for African Americans," according to a survey conducted by *Ebony* magazine.

The survey details that Atlanta is regarded as the city with the most employment opportunities, the most diversity, the most affordable housing and the best schools for Black Americans. Other top cities cited in the survey were Washington, D.C., Chicago and New York. The Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB) confirms that Atlanta continues to be a top destination for African-American tourists.

They say that the city offers the rich heritage of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement, traditional southern cuisine, some of the best historically Black colleges and universities and cultural attractions in the nation.

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