

Gallery left of center but at top city's art world

By Brenda Kirkpatrick
Sentinel-Voice

There are not many female curators in the nation's art galleries.

So, not surprisingly, even fewer black female curators dot the spectrum.

Vicki Richardson is on the bottom-side of those statistics; she is the curator of the Left of Center Art Gallery.

But her trend-bucking doesn't stop there: she's also its founder.

Richardson is no languid demi-monde, posed upon a fainting couch or a chaise draped with silks and laces and dipping perfectly manicured fingers into a gilded box of bon-bons while the noted artists vie for permission to do just one more portrait of her.

In fact, not only is she one who with boundless energy promotes the artistic efforts of African-Americans and other

people of color in Southern Nevada, but she is an outstanding artist and educator in her own right.

Vicki has exhibited her art work in Las Vegas for 19 years. In 1984, she and two other local artists, Harold Bradford and Sylvester Collier, decided to pool their efforts and, as a group, exhibit their art work which focused on social issues.

They eventually saw the need to secure a permanent gallery where they could exhibit African-American art, while simultaneously opening avenues for other artists to follow in their footsteps.

A philosophy for the art gallery was developed: they would only exhibit original works — no prints or reproductions.

They would not only have exhibits which highlighted the work of one artist, but also have group shows with artists

Vicki Richardson, curator, artist, instructor and founder of the Left of Center Art Gallery displays a portrait of one of her daughters.

Photo special to Sentinel-Voice



from all over the country. There would be educational programs and workshops for "at-risk" youth. Resident artists would hold workshops, gallery talks, and classes for young artists, dialogue with community groups, assist in judging

student art shows and be available for commissioned community art projects. They would prepare written educational guides.

The philosophy appeared ambitious. It was. And it's been implemented, even extended.

The gallery has lent support to the African-American Cultural Arts Foundation, providing scholarships and classes, serving as judges and consultants at annual student art competitions, coordinating student art education, giving workshops at the West Las Vegas Art Center, hosting the Nevada Art Educators Annual Conference, enriching the NAACP's ACT-SO program by serving as judges and mentors for young artists, and promoting multicultural exchange by working with the Hispanic Museum of Nevada.

Overseeing this beehive of artistic activity is the gallery's board of directors who are working diligently to maintain a standard of African-American art whose quality could match that of any gallery in the country.

Left of Center also serves as an artist's studio. The current

exhibit highlights three artists: Scott Jackson, Earl Dunbar and Athena Manassas.

Richardson explained her job: "My role is to identify artists, motivate them and support them."

A non-profit organization, the gallery depends on the patronage of art lovers, membership drives, federal grants and fundraisers. Support comes from other sources as well.

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas, has assigned a college student who is part of their art intern program to work with the gallery.

The gallery also has a retired senior citizen who gives valuable support.

Artistic and cultural outreach is an important component of Left of Center's program. Starting on April 18, at 2:00 p.m., a new exhibit will
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Thorns turns rejection into plus by helping youth

By Deborah Kohen
Sentinel-Voice

Henry Thorns is a hero to thousands of local kids.

Known by friends as "Hen Hen," a childhood nickname that stuck, Thorns has been running the Hen Hen Dogcatcher Youth Foundation since 1981.

The humorous, down-to-earth title he created for his organization reflects his personality. When asked what "dogcatcher" refers to, he said it began with his family's habit of taking in stray dogs when he was a child, then manifested during the high school years when there was a popular song that featured the word.

Thorns loved to play basketball, but was

constantly skipped over, being told that he was too short to play in the big boys' league. So he figured he'd start his own league so he wouldn't be left out any more.

It cost \$200 in start up fees, money he earned by cutting lawns and carrying groceries. Rounding up all the kids who never got picked for other teams, he formed enough teams for

league play.

Now more than 15 years later, the Dogcatchers number sixteen teams in all: 11 teams for boys ages 5 to 14, two for boys ages 15 to 18, and three for girls ages 9 to 18. Up to 1,000 youth are involved in Thorns' program each year, many of whom might have fallen
(See Dogs, Page 16)

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