

Men of power featured in new art exhibit

By Tammy McMahan
Sentinel-Voice

"Lives of great men all remind us that we can make our lives sublime, when departing and leave behind us footprints on the sands of time.

Heroes or villains, patriots or terrorists; how does history decide?" writes artist Sylvester Collier regarding his exhibit, "New Works," on display at the Left of Center Art Gallery through August 31.

The collection of images of powerful men is as intellectually stimulating as it is visually arresting. Each painting features some of the defining moments in the lives of these men. These moments of trial and triumph impacted history for better or for worse, depending upon your perspective.

The multiplicity of images captivates the eye, as colors and shapes mix and merge and push and pull to convey emotion and create the illusion of depth and movement.

Some of the paintings are accompanied by the poetry of Keith Brantley.

"Mahatma" and "Mandela" illustrates the complexity of great men. Collier masterfully presents a Mahatma Ghandi who is peaceful but powerful, as shown by the blending of his famous face with that of a brilliant white dove and the scales of justice.

In "Mandela," Collier painted a leader whose gentle, easy smile seems to convey great love, and his thick-lined face shows the suffering of 27 years in a South African prison because of his anti-apartheid stance.

Likewise, the accompanying Brantley poem speaks of the former South African president's victory and vic-



Photos special to the Sentinel-Voice

Notable men such as former South African President Nelson Mandela, right, are the subjects of artist Sylvester Collier's now-showing exhibit.

timization.

Brantley wrote: "To rekindle the flames and reward the tears/Of the truly faithful bringing power to the people..."

"Emancipator," "Fidel," "Dreamer," "Guerilla" and "Cesar" show five men—respectively, Abraham Lincoln, Fidel Castro, Martin Luther King, Jr., Ho Chi Minh and Cesar Chavez, who traveled different paths to achieve their concept of freedom.

Collier has expertly chosen colors and created forms to compose the motivating maelstrom of civil discord that prompted the actions of these historical giants.

In "Emancipator," the beleaguered, haunted face of America's Sixteenth president is surrounded by weapons of war and chains.

"Fidel's" figures, with raised hands clutching broken chains, may be a message of defiance to the United States. Interestingly, these same figures can appear like fractured images of the Statue

of Liberty, one of the most revered symbols of freedom to Cuba's neighbor to the North.

"Dreamer" is a spectacular, grand painting of Martin Luther King, Jr. Although the center of the work shows a serene King enveloped in the peace sign, Collier also portrays King peering out from the bars of a Birmingham jail.

In "Guerilla," a resolved Ho Chi Minh is placed alongside scenes of war-time horror, as frightened, naked children run in the streets and bombs are dropped. Collier's inclusion of part of the infamous photograph of the children in the midst of the acrylic work packs an emotional and visual punch.

With masterful strokes, Collier depicts Cesar Chavez as weary but happy, as farm workers and fields lay before him in "Cesar."

"Chairman" and "Zionist" draw the viewer to two commanding figures of the Middle East: Yasser Arafat

and the late David Ben-Gurion. Collier depicts men with determined eyes that may manifest their yearning for a homeland that's unequivocally their own.

The artist skillfully includes a gargantuan Star of David in "Zionist" and a massive mosque in "Chairman" to represent the titanic struggle between two people who share a common goal

but who wrestle with their ancient cultural differences.

The "New Works" exhibit also features paintings of Haile Selassie, Pandit Nehru, Jomo Kenyatta, Emiliano Zapata, Booker T. Washington, Kwame Nkrumah, Benito Juarez, Anwar Sadat, Gamal-Abdel Nasser and Simon Bolivar.

When asked about the theme of powerful men and

their influence on the world, Collier said, "I think these men show that there's no one way to achieve a goal. What's good for one person may not be good for everyone."

Collier also stated, "I hope people will look at the work, get engaged and then have some kind of response to it—love it or hate it."

He added, "indifference is failure to me."

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Jazz Appreciation Month unveiled

WASHINGTON (AP)—Jazz composer, singer, trumpeter, bandleader and producer Quincy Jones joins the National Museum of American History Friday in announcing the first "jazz appreciation month" next April, called JAM 2002.

"Jazz is a vital part of America, and as the nation's history museum we want to raise public awareness of jazz as one of America's cultural treasures," said museum director Spencer Crew.

The month will include concerts and exhibits, with schools, museums and libraries encouraged to set up programs. The museum has a band: the 18-member Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, over 100 oral histories of musicians and about 100,000 pages of unpublished music by Duke Ellington.

A Web site - Smithsonianjazz.org - will be previewed Friday.

Jones, 68, has been a noted jazzman since he was 15 when Lionel Hampton played his suite "The Four Winds."

Since then, Jones, one of the first black musicians to break into Hollywood, has had 77 Grammy nominations and more than 40 movie and TV scores.

"There is a reason why German lieder or French musette or Greek dances aren't the music that permeate this world," Jones said in an interview 25 years ago.

"And there is a reason why the music that developed on the South Side of Chicago and in Memphis is the ... universal Esperanto..."

The reason, he said, is that American blacks have been "kicked that hard."