

Ritz exhibit takes a look at art 'Through Our Eyes'

By **TANYA PEREZ-BRENNAN**
The Times-Union

What is black art?

That is the question the Ritz and LaVilla Museum grapples with in its exhibit, "Through Our Eyes 2003: A New World View."

After a decade of showing the work of local black artists, the museum's curator, Lydia Stewart, said she wanted to expand on the idea of black art. This is the exhibit's 11th year being shown in venues throughout the city.

In addition to the showcasing of work by 21 black artists, this year the museum accepted the entries of a Filipino artist and a white artist who grew up in Nigeria.

"'A New World View' kind of describes the philosophy of being inclusive," Stewart said.

And although creating a show dedicated to work by black artists was the initial motivation, Stewart said the idea is for viewers to understand the way the artists see the world, whether or not they focus on themes particular to the black experience.

The show contains an eclectic sampling of paintings, drawings, sculpture, clay pottery and photography.

One work that stands out is Gil Mayers' series *Final Fashions: What to Wear to the Electric Chair*. The mixed media on paper reveals collage and cut-outs of images from pop culture. One image is of a well-dressed man being electrocuted in the chair. The whole series has a feel for being a social commentary on the commercialization of the death penalty and how it has almost

on exhibit

"Through Our Eyes 2003: A New World View"

When: The exhibit runs through Sunday, Feb. 29.

Where: Ritz Theatre and LaVilla Museum. 829 N. Davis St.

Information: (904) 632-5555.

become a spectator sport.

The work of Annelies M. Dykgraaf, a white artist who grew up in Nigeria, makes comments on cultural identity. In a woodcut self-portrait, a woman clearly divided stares at the viewer. She is half white and half black — the white identity reveals a woman with straight hair and the black identity seems clearly African, with her hair in a head scarf and piercings dotting her face.

Marvin Wise's oil on Masonite painting, *Knowledge is Power*, is striking. A portrait of a black woman wearing a bright red bandana with large, plaintive eyes predominates. There is a fear and hopelessness in her look. White letters of the alphabet lay behind her and what looks like a stalk of cotton grazes her cheek.

The exhibit also explores colorful, joyful themes, such as in Daniel Ruben Wynn's Picasso-esque acrylic on paper *Woman Reclining* and Keith Doles' vivid portrait of African women gathering water in *Sisters at the River*.

tanya.perez-brennan@jacksonville.com, (904) 359-4287