

North Jax artist — life on canvas

By Nicole Dunkley
NJM Correspondent

NORTH JAX — “I entered my work in around four galleries. I was rejected by them too,” says a slender man as he looks towards an acrylic painting of a woman. “The Ritz was the first to take me seriously, and I was in the ‘Through Our Eyes’ exhibit of 2002,” He smiles in thought. “I came in with some polaroids of my paintings. I didn’t know about portfolios at the time,” he laughs. “There is a place for everything, just keep going and keep trying,” says artist Keith Doles.

North Jax native and local artist, Keith Doles, has spent a lifetime getting to know his hometown and with that, a lifelong passion with art developed. Since 2002 he has had his work displayed in The Grotto in San Marco, MOCA Jax, The Cummer, Jax Chamber of Commerce, and recently F.S.C.J North Campus. “Certainly one of my highlights have been the Haskell Gallery at Jacksonville International Airport,” he recalls. “It was a one man show, 40 pieces or so. So many different people could see my work.”

He pulls out an art book and flips to a page featuring the German Expressionist painter, Ernst Kirchner. “He uses bold colors, with angular and jagged figures. He shows the raw emotions of war and the life around the people involved and not involved,” Mr. Doles says as he explains how this artist inspires him within his works and his own Street Series works.



Keith Doles displaying how he lets his brush do more of the work.

The Street Series was motivated by the recession and the working class, with a dash of the Harlem Renaissance. They depict the people within Jacksonville, moving and finding places to be, sometimes attached to technology, but overall, just being a part of their city. “Cezanne is another inspiring artist, but my parents really motivated me,” he says with a smile. “They have always been so encouraging.”

Mr. Doles has been a North Jax resident for 37 years. “Basically my whole life,” he chuckles. “Painting helped me develop an appreciation for the northside. It helps with the rural feelings.” He recently joined the First Coast Plein Air Group where he travels around Fort George Island and Bethesda Park, which is right by F.S.C.J North Campus, and paints in the open air.

“The Spring and Fall are some of the best times because of all the colors. You can set up and just paint all the way until sunset. The colors help determine the subject,” Mr. Doles says as he handles his painting of the warm sands and sunny skies of Fort George. He uses a lot of bold, earthy

hues within his work, both at the start and to the end.

Decade long friend and artist by the name of Princess Simpson Rashid has joined in with the Plein Air Group and been able to share many experiences with Mr. Doles, including being a part of the Jacksonville Consortium of African American Artists. She has seen his work develop through the years, “Especially his landscapes, his care for nature



Keith Doles painting called Angel Oak, acrylic on canvas, 48 x 40 inches.

really helped him evolve as an artist. He is so masterful now,” she says.

He sets up a collection of landscapes of

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San Mateo Little League is GOING PLACES!

NIM Staff Report

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Must Provide Two Proofs of Residency, Birth Certificate and a Drivers License

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Free Clinic Date:

Saturday, August 27, 10am – Noon

(At the field, 1185 Kraft Rd.)

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Little Talbot Island, there is movement within his works — a serene movement. “You just let the brush do more of the work, that’s what I tell my students,” Mr. Doles says as he reenacts his paint brush movements that he uses to show his students in the continuing education classes at UNF that he teaches. He laughs as he says, “I will also hire people to sit and model for a portrait painting for the class. It’s \$10 an hour,” Mr. Doles smiles, “or you can keep the portrait that I paint.”

He explains that he has yet to ever pay a model because they always choose the portrait. Custom Clothing and spooky landscapes artist, Brian Andrews, has spoken with Mr. Doles a few times about his work, “His pieces are excellent. I wouldn’t mind taking one of his classes actually — I love his landscapes,” Mr. Andrews says.



Keith Doles painting called *Blank Canvas*, mixed media, 8 x 10 inches.

Although different in artistic subject matter, he sees Mr. Doles’ work and finds him a great addition to the local art community in Jacksonville. “His work is an exact reflection of all those environments, both nature and urban, it’s more like a celebration of the everyday.”

Mr. Doles has also been published in various books, from educational ones to children’s short stories, “It’s a great feeling

because it’s not just your family and friends telling you how good your work is. People I’ve never met see these books, and they still love them,” close friend, Ms. Princess Rashid says. “He is truly sensitive and giving, he is also quiet — but he is strong. He’s one of the most gentle people I know,” she says while taking a moment to think of him. “He is very involved in his community, and yet will always find the time within his life for his art. He takes all his work seriously. I have great respect for him.”

“I want to someday show my work outside of Jacksonville. Savannah and Orlando would be great and eventually nationwide.” For the moment Mr. Doles is excited for his future studio which will be located at CoRK studios on Rosselle Street, “I’ll have a wall with a large piece of canvas on it and just paint the whole thing,” he chuckles.

Humble artist, Keith Doles, stands over a large miniature city that spreads itself over a table in a corner of the room, “I built the whole thing — even the table,” he says. His long fingers pat the side of the wood and he smiles while looking at the small cars that resemble the Micro Machine toy cars of the 80s and 90s. He is a creator of his own little world and with that he speaks volumes with his very hands — every day.

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Date Book

**Times and dates subject to change.*

Have an event you'd like us to consider listing? IT'S FREE! Deadline for submissions is the 10th of the preceding month & based on space available. Please send submissions to

Gardens, 370 Zoo Parkway. Cost to attend the luncheon meeting is \$12. For details, call 353-3649

The **Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)** Post 11406 meet on the second Thursday of every month at 12709 Magnolia Ave. starting at 7 p.m. Open to the Public — VFW Post 11406 Community Breakfast is on the second Saturday of every month between 8 to 10 a.m. For more info about VFW Post 11406 call 504-2421

Community Center Activities

Ballroom Park and Lodge Activities

heart are available. For more info call the church at 766-4728

Saint George Episcopal Church — St. George Episcopal Church located at 10560 Fort George Rd. has Sunday worship services at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. For more info please contact St. George Episcopal Church at www.saintgeorgejax.org or call 251-9272

The Master's House International — Christ Fellowship Church, located at 17982 North Main Street, hosts a Church within the Church, The Master's House International. Their services are at 1:00 p.m. Sunday and 7:00p.m. Friday evening. This international ministry

St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church Worship Service — St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church located at 1735 Leonid Rd. hosts worship services each Sunday. Worship begins at 11 a.m. with refreshments following in parish hall. Nursery is available. St. Elizabeth's welcomes you, bring a friend!

Victory Celebration Church — Located at 3220 New Berlin Road. Sunday school for adults and children begins at 10 a.m. Praise and worship begins at 11 a.m. Children's Church follows immediately after praise and worship. The Sunday evening service is at 6 p.m.