

# Two dazzling exhibits coming to Diggs

▲ 'Waiting for a Vision: Photographs of the South Carolina Sea Islands,' and 'Haiti: Flesh of Politics/Spirit of Vodun (Voodoo),' the post-Duvalier era

An old religious custom survives on the sea islands between Charleston and Savannah. Before being allowed to join one of the traditional churches, prospective members must leave home and live for a time in the open woods away from other people. The candidate must wear a white cloth or string tied around his or her head to let others know to respect the solitude of the person "waiting for a vision." Each day, an appointed deacon of the church delivers food and water and listens to a recounting of the previous night's dreams. Eventually, the deacon recognizes evidence of the salvation in one of the dreams and reports back to the preacher that the prospective member is fit to be baptized and welcomed into full membership in the church.

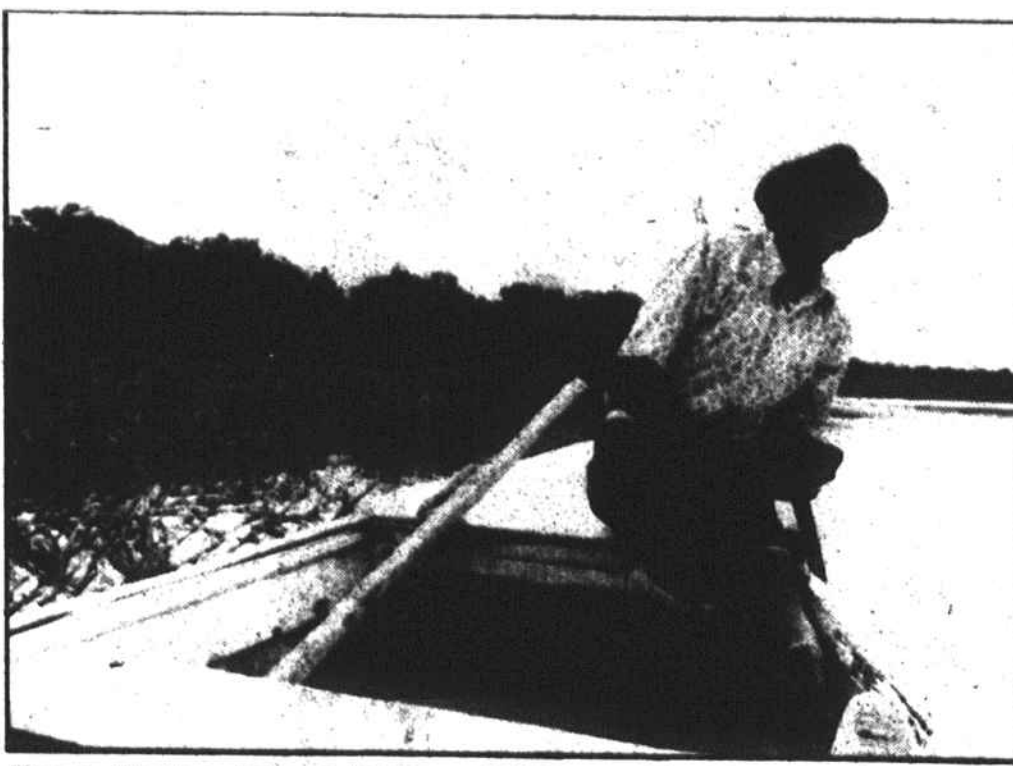
This tradition and others will be portrayed visually at Diggs Gallery at Winston-Salem State University July 1 to August 29 with the new exhibit, "Waiting for a Vision: Photographs of the South Carolina Sea Islands." An opening reception will be held Wednesday, July 1 from 6 to 9 p.m.

Waiting for a vision is one of a number of African traditions that

have survived in some of the sea islander communities. Islanders knit circular casts nets to catch shrimp and mullets in marshy salt-water creeks, build flat-bottomed oyster boats called *bateaus* and small shrimp boats called *knuckle boats*, and know how to weave coiled baskets from bullrushes and sea grass. They plow their garden plots with horses called *marsh tackies* and older people sing and tell stories in a Creole dialect called *Gullah*, which incorporates hundreds of West African words into southern English.

Many sea islanders live on former plantation land and overgrown ruins of tabby (a primitive concrete made from burned oyster shells) mark the sites where their ancestors worked as slaves. Unfortunately, the traditions of the sea island people are currently threatened by intense coastal resort development.

As property values climb, taxes and new residential construction are forcing many sea islanders to abandon their independent, self-sufficient folkways, move to inland urban centers or else, wear the uniforms of golf course or hotel personnel and work much as their ante-



Roger Manley, "Frank 'Domerado' Brown Working the Pivot in His Bateau-Boat, St. Helena Island, S.C., 1988," black and white photograph.

bellum ancestors did, in the service of a new leisure class.

The exhibition, "Waiting for a Vision," includes 33 black and white photographs by photographer Roger Manley. Manley is a freelance curator, folklorist and photographer from Durham.

Also coming to Diggs Gallery is an exhibit of dazzling voodoo flags and political photographs from Haiti, July 1 to August 29. The exhibit, "Haiti: Flesh of Politics/Spirit of Vodun (Voodoo)," will explore the post-Duvalier era in Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

In the United States, vodun has been grotesquely distorted by the movie industry which helps perpetuate a stereotypical attitude toward vodun and Haiti's people. The 35 sequined vodun flags in the exhibit present objects rarely seen in the U.S., the visual images of the living gods of vodun.

Sal Scalora, curator of the exhibit and the director of Atrium Gallery at the University of Connecticut, has had a longtime interest in the Haitian people. Moved by the suffering of the Haitians at the hands of the Duvaliers, he became fascinated with their folk religion vodun.

"Vodun, which controls the religious and social aspects of

Haitian life, is a positive, protective force in the lives of Haitians. Some experts say that Haiti and vodun are inseparable," Scalora says.

In the U.S., vodun is often distorted and Scalora says these depictions perpetuate a stereotypic, racist attitude toward religion emphasizing witchcraft and voodoo dolls. He hopes the exhibit gives validity by replacing myths with reality.

Vodun is rich in symbols and history. Rooted in ancient African rites and developed over thousands of years, Vodun was forced underground once brought to the New World by slaves. The slaves accepted the Christian saints as counterparts to their African spirits; St. Patrick for Damballah, the Virgin Mary for Erzulie and St. Peter for Legba. The images of the gods depicted on the vodun flags on exhibit are an integral part of the vodun religion, says Scalora, who has witnessed several vodun ceremonial rites.

There will be an opening reception Wednesday, July 1, from 6 to 9 p.m. at the gallery. The evening also will include live music and a slide lecture by Scalora titled, "Haiti: Walking on Fire, Politics and Religion." The gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Events are free and open to the public.



"Bossou," the bull is the loa (spirit) of the fertility of the soil, Vodun Flag by Yves Telemarc, glass beads and sequins on cloth.

## Dance troupe and arts center highlighted

This week, I am continuing my series of articles highlighting the extensive number of cultural and arts organizations in our community. I hope to provide you, as a reader, an in-depth view into these organizations and the chance to see what they offer to our community and you as an individual. This week I am highlighting two organizations in the area.

### Dancers Unlimited

Dancers Unlimited was founded in April of 1981 by Wyenia Matthews, the choreographer, producer and director of the organization. Initially formed to expose youth from economically disadvantaged backgrounds to all forms of dance, Dancers Unlimited's goal was to provide an alternative to the streets, drugs and trouble with the art form of dance.

While the main focus is on the art of dancing, academic excellence is also required. Participants are required to maintain at least a "C" average in order to remain in the group.

Approximately 500 young people have matriculated through Dancers Unlimited since its beginnings in 1981. There have been seven recitals throughout the years and the group's repertoire now included approximately 300 dance routines.

The age range for those who can participate in the group is wide. Children of all ages are invited to participate and it is not unusual to have children four years of age learning to dance as well as teenagers. Each child is instructed in tap, ballet, modern and interpretative dance. The practice sessions are held each Saturday between the hours of 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Classes begin in September and end with a culminating dance recital in May. There is a \$15 registration fee and students should come prepared to

learn all forms of dance. This year there will be courses offered in baton twirling, tumbling, modeling and voice.

Dancer's Unlimited's most recent recital was held May 16 at the Kenneth R. Williams Auditorium

and wood.

The Sawtooth Center for Visual Art offers classes year-round and during the summer. When all the children have gone home, the evenings belong to the adults. What better way to get back in touch with

Adult summer classes at the Sawtooth Center will begin the week of July 13 with courses and short workshops in ceramics, drawing, painting, weaving, basketry, jewelry fabrication, casting, stained glass, glass blowing, photography and more.

For the adventurous, the Sawtooth also plans a four week landscape watercolor painting class. Artistic adventurers can take a weekend workshop in painting on slides and transparencies with photo artist Fred McGann. Other workshops include pastel portraiture and a repeat of "Faux for Fun," a popular faux finishes workshop.

The Sawtooth Building is open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information about the Sawtooth Center call 723-7395.

## ARTS REACH

By REGGIE JOHNSON



um at Winston-Salem State University. The evening featured 33 dance routines including: Trouble of the World, Pass Me Not by Hammer, Remember The Time by Michael Jackson, Black and White, Unforgettable, Nature Boy, Liberian Girl and a Little Mermaid/Beauty and the Beast selection.

The long range goal of this organization is to perform with the Winston-Salem Symphony Orchestra and travel nationally and internationally as a dance troupe. Volunteers are desperately needed at this point in the development of Dancers Unlimited. Donated rehearsal space is also needed by the group for its Saturday practice session.

If you want to be of assistance to the Dancers Unlimited or want to find out more information about it, call Wyenia Matthews at 744-1992.

### The Sawtooth Center for Visual Art

The Sawtooth Center for Visual Art continued a 46-year tradition of quality art and craft instruction by offering over 500 courses to nearly 6,000 students. Children and adults of all ages, interests and skill levels enjoyed classes in

the creative inner child than burying your hands in a lump of wet clay, learning to weave a basket, or just sitting down with paper and pencil to share some quiet time with a still life.

"The Pursuit of Happiness..."

Saturday, July 4

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