

## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT

## Precious Lord

Miss Mildred sang from the choir stand. She held the mike up very close and she would raise her other hand. "Lead me on, lead me on let me stand..."

You could hear her voice when it quivered, though it was still just like the night. You could feel her heart as it surrendered and she closed her eyes real tight. "Precious Lord, take my hand, Lead me on, let me stand..."



"Precious Lord" is an excerpt from "Religiosity," a book of poetry

## Meet the Artist: Curtis Lee Corbin

Curtis Corbin is a local self-taught artist who has put together a body of work, called "Religiosity," that mirrors the religious life of African Americans. I had the good pleasure of talking with him about his work recently.

**Q:** When did you begin painting?

**A:** I started in 1988. Prior to that time I was an artist illustrator that worked in pencil and ink. Wanting to broaden my scope, I became curious about painting. I had the desire to become an accomplished artist who used the traditional medium of painting, primarily oil and water color.

**Q:** What was your first painting?

**A:** It was an abstract with browns, reds, oranges and some yellow. It depicted a plucked chicken dancing, which I entitled, "The Dancing Chicken." I kept it for many years and then destroyed it.

**Q:** Why was it destroyed?

**A:** Because I didn't think it was a good painting... just paint, no purposeful intent. Later, I discovered that's what made it special. I discovered the relationship between "just paint" and the depths of one's emotions. It (the painting) caused me to smile.

**Q:** When did you begin to take your painting seriously?

**A:** I was discovered by a gentleman named Dana Chandler, who at that time was a professor of art at Northeastern University in Boston. Dr. Chandler saw my work and offered me a residency at the African American Master Artists in Residency Program (AAMARP). The group had phenomenal artists: Alan Rohan Crite — he was one of the patriarchs of AAMARP — Paul Goodnight, John Wilson. All of those guys adopted me as a talented but uneducated artist. They shared information with me. I learned by observing what they did. They critiqued my work. I grew

tremendously from the influence of these phenomenal black artists.

**Q:** Do you think there is a need for an African-American artist association in Winston-Salem?

**A:** No. It is desirable to have, but not a need. We (artists) should be very open and accessible to each other. But there is something about artists and associations that is an oxymoron.

**Q:** As a self-taught artist, how

did you perfect your skills?

**A:** I practiced a lot. I decided to paint and paint and rip things up and put X-acto knives in until it felt familiar to me. Once I developed familiarity and was able to recognize my experience as emotions coming through, then it (the painting) was all right. So I paint by feeling — if it feels right, I leave it alone; if not I keep on going. The trick is to get to a point where any addition would detract from the painting. Then you can sign your name to it.

**Q:** Does your work have a prevailing theme?

**A:** I love my culture and the richness of the our heritage. Too often we emphasize the struggle as opposed to the triumphs. And I paint out of that place, out of that experience. I have three expressions that I use to characterize my work: historically meaningful, culturally redeeming and esthetically pleasing. If I accomplish those three things in everything I paint, then I will be pleased.

**Q:** What are you working on now?

**A:** A series of pastel landscapes, two figure studies, one male and one female, and an oil of a beach scene.

**Q:** You are a writer as well, aren't you?

**A:** I write poetry, plays, and some narrative writings.

**Q:** Tell me about "Religiosity."

**A:** I have assembled a number of my paintings and writings that deal with the African-American reli-

## Arts Reach

Cheryl Harry



gious experience. The name of the book is "Religiosity: The God In Us."

They depict various elements of religious practices, for example, there is a painting that deals with praying, entitled "Invocation," singing soulfully "Amazing Grace," and a black Jesus, exemplifying humility. In all, there are 14 paintings and 15 poems. The last poem is what I call my signature poem (Corbin begins an oration of the poem): I Am This. What does it mean that I am this; what makes me think you're that? How do I gauge this space between my "self" and where you're at? Is it something I need to know or is it something that I be? Is it all about emotion, compassion or is it simply empathy? The knowing is the human side; the feeling is our being, the future but an endless stream, the present always fleeing. Curtis Corbin is the founder of Kuumba Pieces, an association which specializes in art production and art enrichment. He does interactive art with young people, churches and community organization to encourage and promote artistic expression.

## ACCES presents Stars Under the Stars

ACCES, a volunteer group of young professionals, presents Movies on the Grounds at the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA).

The movies will be projected onto a large outdoor screen by the entrance to the McChesney Scott Dunn Auditorium (MSD). Gates open at 7:30 p.m., and people are encouraged to pack picnics and spread blankets on the grounds. The screening begins at 8:30 p.m.

Rain site is SECCA's MSD Auditorium.

The evening's film is "Some Like It Hot," directed by Billy Wilder. The movie whirls through the flamboyant settings of Chicago and Miami Beach in 1929. Marilyn Monroe is a ukulele-playing vocalist in an all-girl band. Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon are two musicians on the run from the mob, who join the traveling troupe by hilariously

donning make-up and dresses to hide their identity.

Tickets are \$5 for SECCA members, students, and senior adults and \$6 for nonmembers. No outside alcohol will be permitted, but ACCES will sell beer, wine, and other favorite refreshments on the premises. Coolers will be checked at the gate.

For more information, contact the Membership Office at (910) 725-1904, voice mail 7.

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- ♦ Cash Michaels, Carolinian journalist
- ♦ Ernie Suggs, Herald Sun journalist.



Keynote speaker, Stedman Graham, is author of "You Can Make It Happen: A Nine-Step Plan for Success." Graham is President/CEO of S. Graham & Associates, a sports marketing and consulting firm in Chicago.

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