

Photos by Layla Farmer

Kianga Ford will soon unveil a local project.

THE ART OF LISTENING

Artists comes to town to showcase her unique talent

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

Internationally known artist Kianga Ford will unveil the latest installment of her "The Story of this Place" project, in Winston-Salem on Aug. 5.

The project is one of a handful of exhibitions presented by the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art's (SECCA) Inside Out: Artists in the Community II series, which brings artists to the community outside the museum while the physical building undergoes renovations.

SECCA Curator Steven Matijcio says Inside Out is part of a larger transformation the museum is undergoing with respect to its image and scope. "SECCA in the past has had quite a predigious history, but we wanted to make it even more dynamic," he explained. "These seven projects (in the series) draw upon the past ... but also show the new face of SECCA ... by presenting art in a way that I think most people wouldn't expect."

Matijcio took the helm at SECCA last summer. Renovations began there in January 2009 and are expected to extend into the start of next year. Through the Inside Out exhibition, the museum has been able to maintain its visibility during the time the building is closed and introduce new concepts of art to the community, Matijcio said.

"I'm happy to open people's eyes to new experiences, and I think Inside Out is a good way to do that," he remarked. "We're using Winston-Salem not only as canvas for these projects, but also as a subject."

Ford has traveled the world with the 'Place' project, which she launched in 2003. Winston-Salem will be her sixth completed project, joining the ranks of cities like Miami, Fla., Los Angeles, Calif., Baltimore, Md., and locales in Norway and Egypt. Ford describes "The Story of this Place" as "experiential listening." She researches the area she is highlighting, and talks to locals about their experiences. Then she composes a fictional narrative, which is set to original music, typically produced by local groups, and maps out a walking or driving course for listeners to follow. Listeners download the audio files onto mp3 players, and journey to familiar destinations throughout the area.

"What's at the core of this project is the fact that I give you the provocation to look at where you are," the artist explained. "... it's not really a historical tour. It really is just about making you present and maybe giving you a few basic ideas to work with when



Steven Matijcio

you're thinking about a place." The narrative is centered around key locations along the trip, and is designed to help people see the world around them differently, Ford says.

"Kianga's project I thought beautifully activated a really large cross-section of Winston-Salem," Matijcio commented. "You could literally walk through these places and rediscover them through her words."

While some may classify her work as spoken word, Ford says that her words are not the chief focus of the project. By telling her stories, Ford says she hopes to inspire listeners to reevaluate the way they inherently view the people and places they see daily, and to help them become more introspective and conscious of the way they see the world.

"When people are trying to read you, they are trying to read in between a pop culture fiction and a historical place," she explained. "This project in particular has let me just sort of wrap all those things together and give people an experience of watching and being watched."

The project will open during the National Black Theatre Festival, slated for Aug. 3-8. Ford, who says theater and cinema have been big influences in her work, is excited to introduce her work to the Festival crowd.

"I can't wait to get some feedback from a real theater crowd," she declared. "I'm really curious about how they'll interact (with the project)."

The Story of this Place will officially launch on Wednesday, Aug. 5, at 6 p.m. at The Garage, 110 W. 7th Street. During the festival, mp3 players will be available at SECCA's booth at the MC Benton Convention Center. Audio will be available for download at www.secca.org. For more information, contact Endia Beal, at (336) 397-2109 or endia.beal@ncdcr.gov. For

more information on Kianga Ford, visit www.kiangaford.com.

News Clips

Compiled from staff, wire and submitted reports

WFU debate team leader dies

Ross K. Smith, who led Wake Forest University debate teams to national championships during his 25 years at the university, died July 19 at his home after suffering a heart attack. He was 54.

Just last year, Smith led a Wake Forest team to capture the 2008 National Debate Tournament championship. He also coached the university's 1997 national championship team.

A funeral service was held July 23 in Wake Forest's Wait Chapel. A guestbook has been created on the university Web site at <http://www.wfu.edu/wowf/guest/smith/index.php>.

In his long career in debate, Smith encountered thousands of college and high school debaters from all over the United States. Smith was the coach and eventual director of Wake Forest's debate program, led debate competitions at Wake Forest for college and high school debaters, judged debate competitions nationwide, and taught at summer debate workshops at Wake Forest and else-



Smith

where in the country. In recent years, Smith also worked with eastern European high school students who came to Wake Forest for summer debate programs sponsored by the U.S. State Department.

Smith, who became Wake Forest's debate coach in 1984 and its debate program director two years ago, was named National Debate Coach of the Year in 1994 and 1998.

B-PAL gala honoring Burke

On August 22, 2009, B-PAL will celebrate its 30th anniversary by honoring Dr. Vivian H. Burke. The gala will be held at the Benton Convention Center, beginning with a meet and greet at 5 p.m. The gala starts at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$30 and available at Special Occasion, TES Engraving, the LaDeara Crest Community Center Office, the Delta Arts Center and Ervin's Beauty Salon. For more information, contact Naomi Jones at 336-724-3759 or Evelyn W. Sanders at 336-785-4272.

HELPline to shut down

The HELPline, a program of Family Services, Inc. will phase out services on July 31. Uncertain economic times forced funding cuts that resulted in a significant loss of financial support for the HELPline, a phone line that provides mental health assistance to local and regional callers.

The HELPline program began in 1970 through the efforts of community volunteers and has been funded by the United Way of Forsyth County since the late 1990s. The HELPline was a program of an inde-


pendent agency and became a program of Family Services, Inc. in 2001.

Family Services, Inc. will offer clients of the HELPline program a variety of options for their mental health needs during and after the transition. These options include outpatient treatment with Family Services, Inc. counseling staff and other community providers, access to other mental health telephone crisis services, and referral to other Family Services, Inc. programs.

Roland Martin in Greensboro

CNN commentator Roland S. Martin will provide the keynote address for the Aspire Foundation Awards dinner on Tuesday, July 28, beginning at 6 p.m. at the Revolution Mills Studio Event Center at 900 Revolution Mills Drive in Greensboro.

Founded by businessmen Jonathan Graham, president of Horus Construction, and Todd Baldwin, M/WBE Coordinator for Guilford County Schools, the Aspire Foundation's mission is to increase opportunities for minority-owned businesses in the construction industry by informing stakeholders about construction opportunities and promoting efforts of inclusion and collaboration among minority businesses. The event is open to the business community. Tickets are \$150, and the attire is business dress. To register for the event, purchase tickets or secure sponsorship opportunities, log on to www.aspireawardsfoundation.org.



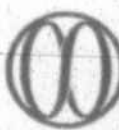
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