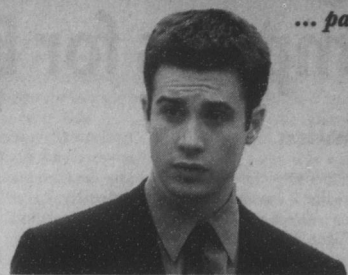


# diversions



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## Why the Caged Bird Paints



Michael Fullwood, an inmate on death row in Raleigh's Central Prison, painted the above work, "Lion," in 1998. He sells his art in order to fund his daughter's college education.

### Artistic Expression Helps Inmates Reform Themselves, Help Others

By BRIAN BEDSWORTH  
Assistant Arts & Entertainment Editor

The N.C. Correctional Institution for Women is an ugly place. Squat, red-brick buildings; tall, razor-wire fences; guards and gatehouses make for a gray landscape. But one woman has found beauty in this drab environment — a beauty that she says is helping her to become a better person.

Renee Morton looked at the projection slides laid out on the table and smiled. They are pictures of works of art she has done, one of which won her first place in the N.C. Department of Correction's art contest last year.

"I've always admired art," said Morton, 44, who is serving a 35-year sentence on drug charges. "I basically taught myself. It takes a lot of time, concentration and development. It takes a lot of energy, too."

Morton's work, brightly colored portraits of smiling family and friends done with colored pencils or paint, doesn't reflect her grim surroundings. But it does reflect the artist's increased confidence and sense of self-worth.

"Art has helped me to better my train of thought," she said. "It's helped my ability and my capability."

The therapeutic powers of art have long been recognized in prison systems around the country. Now various organizations are latching on to the idea that art can help rehabili-

tate prisoners and are using it to help the community at large.

"Art improves inmates, and if you improve inmates they are better citizens when they get out," said Lynne Vantriglia, founder of Art Behind Bars, a nonprofit organization in Key West, Fla., that helps inmates use art as a form of community service.

Vantriglia, an artist, started the group in 1994 following a tour of Florida's Monroe County Jail.

"I was appalled at the lack of anything productive for the inmates to do," she said, herself a victim of a violent crime.

Art Behind Bars offers art classes in the Monroe County Jail and supplies inmates with paper, paints, pencils or whatever else they need for their art.

The organization sells the inmates' work at art shows or donates them to charities who auction them off. In the end, all the proceeds go to charity.

Over the past six years, Art Behind Bars has raised almost \$30,000 for groups like Habitat for Humanity and the American Red Cross.

Chapel Hill's Restitution Inc. is another group helping inmates to help others. Lawyer Betsy Wolfenden and her husband, Michael Fullwood, founded the organization in 1998 to sell art by death row inmates, donating the proceeds to the victims' families or the charity of the inmate's choice.

"I felt that (inmates) had these gifts that they could use to give back to the people they had harmed," Wolfenden said.

Fullwood is on death row for the 1985 murder of his daughter's mother. He started drawing and painting after his sentence began, and realized he could use his new talent to help people.

"I was talking to him about his artwork," said Wolfenden. "One day he said, 'Well, I want to use it to make restitution.'"

By selling postcards of Fullwood's art, Restitution Inc. has started a fund to pay for his daughter's college education.

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Renee Morton, an inmate at the N.C. Correctional Institution for Women, hopes to pursue a career in art.

DTH/BRENT CLARK

### Exhibit Spotlights Art as Therapy for Patients

By SARAH KUCHARSKI  
Staff Writer

Pastel pink-and-green fish struggle against the canvas current; their leaf-like fins rub against each other. Perhaps they're running away from something, perhaps they're learning to move on. Either way, it's "Salmonella & TunaBaba in the Ascent Up Fish Mountain," a pastel-on-paper sketch created by one of the third floor's visiting artists.

Through a departmental initiative to encourage self-expression, patients in the Schizophrenia Treatment and Evaluation Program (STEP) on the third floor of UNC's Neurosciences Hospital are exploring their inner selves using the arts as their outlet. The initiative has culminated in "Brushes With Life," STEP patients' exhibit of their own mixed media art work.

Subject matter and style in "Brushes With Life" is as varied as that in any traditional art museum. The exhibit includes everything from birds without wings and pumpkins to verses about snow and abstract art in the form of collages, needlework, charcoal sketches, paintings and poems.

"Brushes With Life" was originally conceived by Wren Crenshaw, a senior recreational therapist at UNC Hospitals. "We were recognizing that in the past



DTH/EMILY NETZEL

Ramell Moore is a featured artist in the new art gallery located in UNC's Neurosciences Hospital.

(patients) had created what we considered to be really good artwork," he said.

In connection with the hospital's Facility Enhancement Committee, Crenshaw organized a group of doctors, nurses, therapists and designers who were interested in turning the patients' self-expressions into something more.

After several months of collecting,

matting and framing STEP patients' artwork, "Brushes With Life" was born, shedding new light on what is commonly viewed as a debilitating and frightening mental disease.

"A lot of people think that schizophrenia is split personalities or multiple personalities and really have no idea what people with schizophrenia really

suffer from," said Dr. Nancy Clayton, a psychiatrist with the STEP program. "An overwhelming majority of schizophrenics are not violent," she said.

In truth, people with schizophrenia are prone to many of the same symptoms associated with depression, including difficulty socializing and motivation problems. Patients often become withdrawn out of fear of their symptoms occurring in social situations.

Crenshaw believes that the positive attention drawn by "Brushes With Life" has improved several patients' self-esteem and self-concept. "Patients are learning more about themselves and what they can and can not do," he said.

The exhibit, located on the third floor of the Neurosciences Hospital, drew a crowd of almost 200 to its opening Jan. 9. Attendees included hospital staff, members of the surrounding community and several STEP patients who had contributed their work.

The opening allowed patients to socially interact with those interested in their projects and perhaps be recognized for their artistic accomplishments, rather than their disease, for the first time. Consequently, "Brushes With Life" is helping to destigmatize mental illness.

"If you've ever lived with a mental

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DTH/EMILY NETZEL

Robert Longmire's "Sunshine Horse" is featured in a show spotlighting work from patients in UNC Hospitals' schizophrenia treatment program.