

Celebrate the Art of Living Black

By Sydney Barbara Metrick

“The Art of Living Black” is one of the few events in the Bay Area that concentrates exclusively on the work of local artists of African descent. Now in its ninth year, The Art of Living Black (TAOLB), is featuring the work of 103 emerging and established visual artists in a variety of free events including a group exhibition, artist talks, and a self-guided art tour.

Attend the February 13 reception at the Richmond Art

Center since 1998 to receive the Jan Hart-Schuyers Artistic Achievement Award. Last year’s honorees, Amana Brembry Johnson, Alix J. Magloire, and James Weeks, each have their work highlighted in the 2005 exhibition.

Oakland artist, Amana Brembry Johnson, primarily works in stone opal green stone and basalt spring stone from Zimbabwe, and Colorado alabaster though over the years she’s had her hand in drawing, carving, printmaking, jewelry, fabric art and clothes design. An installation called “Drops,” hangs in the corner of the Art Center’s main gallery.

“I’ve always had an interest in my ancestry,” explains Amana. “When my mom died, I inherited lots of family photos from the mid-eighteen hundreds. I wanted to make a family lineage. When I began to hang all those heads they looked like teardrops. It holds all those associations flowing water, the passage of time, memory and myth. I have a piece called “Vision Striker” at 6121 Hollis in Emeryville.

It’s a carved wooden figure

Center where you can meet the artists, preview a diverse array of work that includes paintings, prints, photography, sculpture, ceramics, textiles and jewelry, and hear music by Destiny Harpist from the Hood. Pick up a directory, with a map that will guide you to artist studios and host venues that stretch from San Leandro to Benicia and Vallejo, with openings on February 26 & 27, and March 5 & 6.

Co-founded in 1994 by artists, Rae Louise Hayward and the late Jan Hart-Schuyers,

about three feet tall with a stone face inset in the wood. The clothing is woven beaded fabric, and the whole figure is filled with amulets and prayers.”

Haitian born Alix Magloire, is a self-taught painter with a day job as an endocrinologist! The show features several of his abstract watercolors. “Abstract is the highest form of expression,” asserts Alix. “It’s the real reality. You have to go behind what you see.”

In addition to his watercolor and acrylic painting, Alix creates masks using papier mache, bark, burlap, glue and paint. He maintains they approximate the Songye masks of Zaire that hang in schools, marketplaces and other public places to maintain public order.

James Weeks uses photography to communicate emotionally and spiritually. Originally a news reporter, he used photographs to enhance his stories. Now, the stories are in the pictures. One photo in the exhibit, depicts Asheda Agbaye, “a priest and one of the most famous diviners in Nigeria.” Two years ago, James went for a spiritual initiation and re-



Amana Brembry Johnson
Moving On, 2004
Italian alabaster, 18" x 13" x 10"

TAOLB has been partnering with the Richmond Art Center, host to the exhibition, artist talks, and award ceremony. Three artists have been selected each year

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turned a priest, himself, and as he explained, “always a student.” He interprets his role as meaning he must be in a position to give people insights into themselves. “I think my art is the spiritual practice. I pay more attention to ordinary things and see them in different ways. Sometimes I’m able to take an extraordinary thing from an ordinary thing.”

For general information about The Art of Living Black, call 510-620-6772 or visit www.therichmondartcenter.org To contact TAOLB Program Committee, call Rae Louise Hayward at 510-724-9274. All events are free and open to the public. The Richmond Art Center is located at 2540 Barrett in the City of Richmond.

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