

## FOR THE COMMUNITY, BY THE COMMUNITY ART SHOW

Local Gallery and Social Impact Group Come Together to Pay Homage to Charlotte's Historically Black Neighborhood

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9/18/2020

To be released immediately

SOZO Gallery collaborates with the Brooklyn Collective to produce an exhibition honoring the Brooklyn neighborhood. The Brooklyn Collective (inclusivity and upward mobility initiative) is housed in 3 historic uptown buildings on the corner of 3rd and S. Brevard which was once the main street of the Brooklyn neighborhood. This collaboration is a dedication to the history and culture of the neighborhood through the elevation and promotion of artists. Each Of these artists has made their mark through their powerful and provocative work. These talented artists who happen to be of color and part of Charlotte's local talent. In addition to this collaboration, local business, studio 229 on Brevard, and emerging curator, Jordan T. Robinson of JTR Presents, are offering their services and contributions to the exhibition.

Of the three artists, we are highlighting, among them is a quilter, storyteller, and mixed-media fiber artist, Beverly Smith. She has been using her craft and relying on her African-American and southern roots for over 20 years. Her personal connections to her ancestors referencing to the Antebellum era in the south and people in her life are expressed through the collage-like styles of her quilting. This calling originated from her grandmother in South Carolina who had patchwork quilts that comforted her during her visits. Recently, Smith has been selected for an exhibition "Coined in the South" by the Mint Museum and has been brought as a guest speaker at the Mint as part of their programming as well.

The next artist whose name we want to elevate is Percy King, a former NFL player who we had the pleasure of exhibiting and having a conversation with local curator Janelle Logan. He originally started making work out of his passion for carpentry which he was exposed to from obtaining his first house at the age of 23. Since then, he has been contributing portraiture to the greats and to notable people from 2 Pac and Biggie to Aminah Robinson, Elijah Pierce, and William Hawkings. Mr. Kings's first exhibit was a group show at the Columbus Museum of Art.

Lastly, we are honored to incorporate the work of Dr. Dimeji Onafuwa, a designer, speaker, and researcher with Microsoft. Dr. Onafuwa has many talents and painting is among them. He incorporates Yoruba principles in his work, with some having the form embellished called Ona (the embellishment of the form). Other principles, like Ara (creativity), Ere (improvisation), Pipe (completeness), and Tutu (coolness) are also included. His work is inspired by the 1960s Figurative expressionist artists who resided in the Bay Area and the renowned Henri Matisse as well as Mark Rothko. We are lucky to have him in this show and to feature his work as he will also feature in an upcoming exhibition with the Mint Museum's Uptown location in October.

The nexus of this exhibition that ties these three artists together is inspired by the Brooklyn Collective mural between the Mecklenburg Investment Company building and the Grace Church, painted by Abel Jackson commemorating the legacy of the historic Brooklyn neighborhood. This predominantly African American neighborhood was once recognized as a city within a city as was a center for economic and social reform since the 1880s. This exhibition is focused on elevating and celebrating the legacy that this community has had in Charlotte, NC as how it continues to inspire the artists of today. Of the rich history, culture, and heritage that reside in the Charlotte area, this is a significant part of Charlotte that must be preserved, acknowledged, and heard. A large part of this exhibition is to help facilitate community conversation, an activation in reflecting on how we can better serve our community and beyond.

The exhibition will open October 9th with programming that includes the artist talks as well as art sales. The reception will be held in Studio 229 on Brevard at 5:30 pm until 9 pm. Please contact SOZO Gallery for any inquiries, reservations, and purchases.

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