

Dale Washington's home

The artist's exhibit chronicles his journey in finding home in Portland

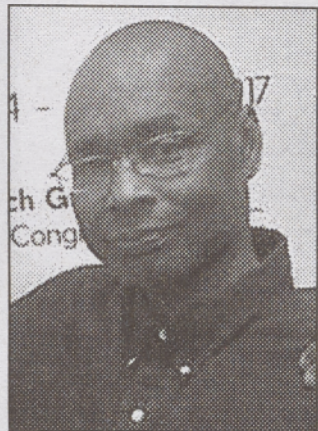
Art is woven through Dale Washington's speech, his eyes and his outlook.

"Art is the way we handle ourselves impeccably as human beings," he said. "It's how we talk, it's how we take care of our family, it's how we handle ourselves.

"It's called love. This work here is all about these beautiful places."

Those beautiful places are homeless services, dining halls, rescue missions, the streets of Portland. They are the anchor pieces in his exhibit, "Finding Home: The Portland Years," now showing at the Art Reach Gallery at First Congregational UCC. The exhibit will remain open for viewing through July 28.

A foster child, Washington grew up on the south side of Chicago. As an adult, he studied art and worked in advertising, essentially to support his artistic pursuits. His resume lists Chicago Public Schools and the Artist Resources in Teaching program at the Hyde Park Art Center among his credentials. Five years ago, tired of what he called the negative energy of Chicago, and with the support of his family, he made the move the Portland.



Washington arrived on an Amtrak train, stayed in a motel for a short period, and eventually became homeless, reduced to sleeping under a bridge. He had a run-in with the law and spent two months in the Multnomah County Jail, went through counseling and took advantage of social service programs. He knew nothing of homelessness until he arrived in Portland, he said.

Working with Central City Concern, this year he got a home. And through it all he was making art - drawing on the love he saw in the people and places he visited. Washington would sit in the back pews of the chapel at St. Andre Bessette because he enjoyed the sound of the harpist, and there he would draw.

"I did 25,000 peices in 5 years," he said. "That's out of love of knowing of where I was at and what I had to walk through to do them."

Among his work are images of the community gathered for a meal at The Blanchet House and sunsets from his year working on the Blanchet Farm near Carlton. The farm supplies food for The Blanchet House which serves meals to people experiencing homelessness. Washington's style is abstract, working in pastels, watercolors, brush and ink.

"My statement of purpose has always been that the power of creation is the act of doing," Washington said.

Washington wants people to leave the exhibit knowing that the people in this city care, and when he needed them, they were there. He gets emotional talking about it.

"It's just life," he said. "It happens all over the world."



Top, "The Holiday Dinner." Above, "The Farmers' Market." Below left, "Sunset: Farm Series" inspired by his year working on the Blanchet Farm near Carlton. Below right, a scene from Pottluck in the Park, a Sunday, public meal provided at no cost to people experiencing homelessness.

