

Art

The Red Eagle: inspiration and reverence through art

BY DANNY BELL
OF THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Samuel and Judy Bryant are proprietors of a unique art gallery called The Red Eagle located on SW. 11th and Taylor (across the street from the main library).

The Red Eagle is a reverent and spiritual endeavor that connects African art with cosmopolitan art. Samuel, an accomplished painter, photographer and videographer, said the evolution of the gallery was a mixture of revelation and serendipity made possible by God and Jesus Christ. In brief, the journey

to the creation of the Red Eagle started in '93 when Samuel's son married a young woman from Zimbabwe. Consequently, Samuel and his wife (who is also a fine artist) traveled to Zimbabwe.

In the course of this, the Bryants became exposed to the Schona tradition of excellence. The Schona tradition is a highly regarded, internationally recognized form of sculpture. The technique is taught through apprenticeship. The style is unfettered and natural with strong overtones of spirituality. One might interpret it as having elements of Impressionism. Samuel says that



Samuel Bryant, owner of The Red Eagle Gallery displays museum quality stone sculptures and batiks from the Schona people of Zimbabwe.

the Schona sculpture are imbued with originality. The artists who create these sculptures draw from their own environment and cultural perception unique to lower Africa below the Sahara.

Although sculpture is prominently featured at Red Eagle, the gallery offers a variety of art forms including szadza batik, photography, applique, masks and paintings. Samuel brings a passion to educate and share the spiritual and Bantu vitality of the art of the African continent.

For those of you who appreciate art that is highly emotive, one should visit the Red Eagle for a refreshing experience in the world of art.

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brought us a song we loved, but the words weren't right. There was vulgarity that I couldn't deal with. We couldn't sing those words. So we refused until the lyrics were transformed into something positive. Positive messages, giving lovers positive feedback, making positive statements — those are the sentiments we want to express. When it comes to women, praise is still the aphrodisiac that works wonders."

One might wonder how the mix of various producers on EAR RESISTIBLE resulted in such a seamless effort. "Each producer," Otis explains, "understood our musical integrity and built the songs from that base. 'I'm Here,' for example, was produced by Joe, one of the hottest names in pop music. Listen to the song — the first single off EAR RESISTIBLE — and you'll hear how he utilized all our voices, especially Terry Weeks' pleading tenor. Terry has developed into a premier balladeer."

Narada Michael Walden, the man behind a hundred hits — for Aretha, Whitney and dozens of others — was responsible for "Kiss Me Like You Miss Me" and "Party." "Narada did 'Stay' from Phoenix Rising," remembers Otis. "He was the one who opened it up for us. Or I should say, re-opened it. Naturally I wanted Narada to be part of this new project. He'll take his place alongside Smokey and Norman Whitfield as an important producer in the history of the Temps. He's a man of deep spirituality and wonderful humor. 'Party' reflects the kind of get-loose get-down fun we have when Narada's at the controls. We could work with the man forever. His funk has finesse."

The same could be said for Gerald Levert, producer of "Selfish Reasons" and "Proven and True." "Gerald brings so much to the table," Otis affirms. "Being part of a legacy himself — he's the son of Eddie Levert of the O'Jays — he understands and honors the tradition. Because he's a singer as well as a writer, his songs are geared to bring out the beauty of the vocal. In 'Proven and True,' he brings out the beauty of the high tenor of Ron Tyson, who is celebrating his 19th year as a Temp. Ron has proven himself worthy of the legacy of Eddie Kendricks. Few singers could achieve such a feat. Tyson also co-wrote 'Proven and True.'"

Otis is equally enthusiastic about the newer Temptations. "Terry's lead continues to knock us out. He's a wellspring of emotion. And Barrington — we call him Bo — is one of the best baritones out there today. When it comes to the bass, I never thought anyone could replace my closest friend and soulmate Melvin Franklin. Well, no one can. But Harry McGilberry, Jr., gives us a bottom that has a distinction and clarity all its own. Harry is a gem."

"The fact that peace has finally come to the Temptations is a blessing for which I will be eternally grateful. This group has gone through it all. Man, we've seen it all. The highs have been incredibly high, the lows incredibly low. Through it all, I've been comforted by one idea — that no one man is greater than the sum total. The proof is that we're still here, forty years later, still singing pretty, still climbing the charts, still creating cutting-edge projects like EAR RESISTIBLE. So if I call the Temptations God's group, you'll understand why."

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