

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

On NE ALBERTA ST Street

Art Hop Returns to its Roots

BY LEE PERLMAN

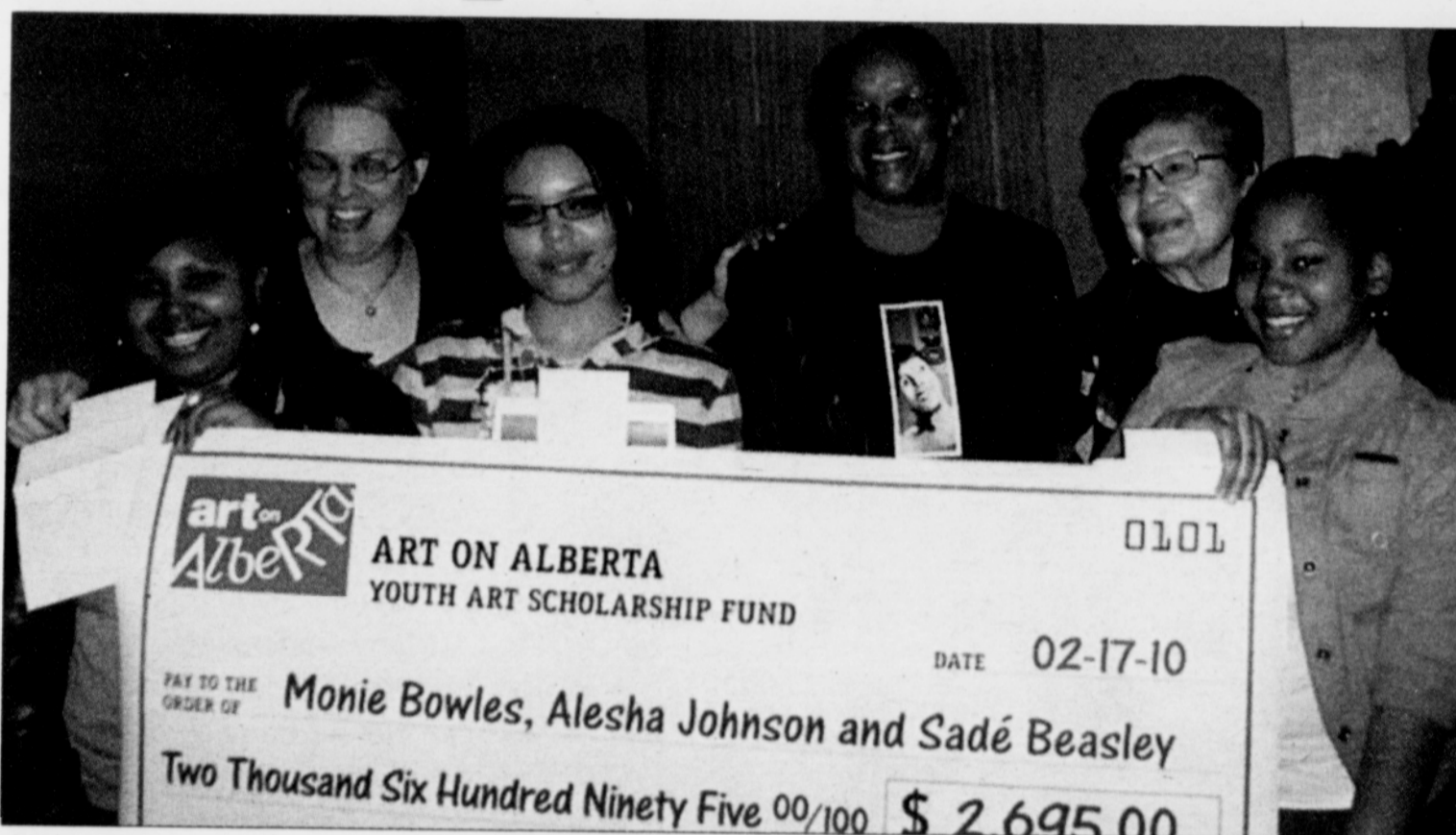
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The 11th annual Alberta Art Hop is returning to its roots as an Arts event and will feature five new murals with community connections.

Plans for the May 15 celebration will also salute Kathe Swaback, whose Art Up non-profit has been a key contributor to diversity on Alberta with multicultural mentoring opportunities to several young students.

At an Art Hop kickoff event at the Acadian Ballroom last month, Art on Alberta director Hilary Pfeiffer, participating artists and others presented plans for neighborhood murals, all on the theme of "Art Builds Community."

Adrienne Cruz, will adorn the walls of the Sabin Community Development Corp. at 1488 N.E. Alberta St. Another artist, Rodolfo Serna, will work with teams of young people from the House of Umoja, George School SUN program, and Girls, Inc. to both conceive and paint



Art on Alberta Youth Scholarship recipients Alesha Johnson (front row, from left), Sadé Beasley and Monie Bowles join their mentors (second row, from left) Kathe Swaback, Carlene Jackson and Lillian Pitt during a kickoff event.

murals on the walls of each of three Sabin CDC affordable housing projects. A fifth mural by Esteban

Camacho Steffensen will go on the walls of the Community Energy Project at 422 N.E. Alberta St.

Painting on all five murals will occur during the Art Hop celebration which takes into the Alberta Street corridor from Northeast 12th to 30th Avenues. In the case of Steffensen's work, passers-by will be invited to help fill in the colors.

As usual, Art on Alberta has space for 250 street vendors selling wares of all kinds. For those who would like to participate, contact Carrie Locke at 503-235-5025 or carrie@combustible-media.com. And as it has been for several years now, Northeast Alberta Street will be closed for the festivities.

The festival's art is not confined to the visual. There will be no fewer

than seven entertainment stages. Siren Nation, Bink's, Bitch Media and D.I.Y. will each sponsor a stage. Colleen Flanigan will provide information and interactive opportunities about the world's threatened coral reefs. Two additional community stages will be available for local people to do whatever they want, with the caveat that they must reserve times in advance; visit artonalberta.org.

All of this costs money and partially for this reason, the festival has let one annual feature — its parade — go this year. Organizers are also seeking additional monies in a variety of ways. There have been several benefit nights at local venues. A costume ball is planned April 17 at the Radio Room, 1101 N.E. Alberta

St. The theme will be "Black and White and Outrageously Bright"; participants are expected to wear clothes that are essentially either black or white, but with some extremely bright and colorful feature or accessory. The festival is also offering sponsorships to major donors, for cash and in-kind contributions.

Cruz, whose art work has been exhibited internationally and is part of the collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum and New York City Public Library, was born in New York and moved to Portland in 1983. She told the kickoff audience that her new installation will be "some sort of brilliantly-colored fabric design." She added, "It's great when the community's involved."

Steffensen was born in Costa Rica, moved to Eugene in the year 2000, and later came to Portland to study at the Pacific Northwest College of Art. "I'm hoping to create a mural to inspire people about sustainability," he said.

Originally from Chicago, Serna received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Portland State University. Since 2005 he has painted eight major murals, most of them in collaboration with youth groups.

"My work is about young people's creativity, and fostering a sense of community," he told the kickoff audience. "When art is done by youths, it gives them a sense of ownership; they can point to it and say, 'This is mine.' I made a major shift from doing things individually to only doing collaborative work now. I'm getting the kids thirsty for this opportunity."

Art Up Mentor Moves On

Art on Alberta mentor Kathe Swaback is saying goodbye while supporting the local teenagers she helped.

Swaback and her non-profit Art Up have been features of Art Hop for the short two plus years she has lived here. Her Women of Honor project recruited nine students of color to develop larger-than-life portraits of 12 prominent African-American women.

The project helped educate the young women about these heroines for the first time. The artwork was displayed at Art Hop and other venues, including the walls of City Hall. Last year, Art Up and Art Hop exhibited the works of the late artist and dancer Thelma Johnson Street whose lived and worked in Portland before enjoying national prominence.

Now, Swaback is selling many of the Art Up portraits with the proceeds going to the young artists who painted them, helping finance their ongoing education. Monie Bowles, who painted

the portrait of Street, has been accepted at Xavier University and is awaiting word on her application to the San Francisco Art Institute.

The sale "means we can go to college with a little more cash in our pockets," Bowles said.

One of the Women of Honor, former state Sen. Avel Gordly, purchased her own portrait and then donated it to the Avel Gordly Head Start Center for permanent display.



Teenage artist Antoinette Myers with "Divine Inspiration" honoring damali ayo, Dr. Ethel Simon-McWilliams, Kathryn Hall Bogle, S. Renee Mitchell, Senator Avel Gordly, and Willie Mae Hart.

The Portland Observer

HOUSING

2010 special edition
Available on March 31st & April 7th

Portland has become a very popular place to live, attracting buyers/renters from within the Portland region and from other parts of the country. It is one of the most beautiful cities in America, the rivers, mountains, and its resources are one of the countries finest.

If you have any question, please contact our Publisher, Charles Washington
phone 503-288-1897 or fax 503-288-0015
or email charlesw@portlandobserver.com

The Portland Observer P.O. Box 3137 Portland, Oregon 97208