

Moms Take Center Stage on Mother's Day

BY LUCY MERRILL

JOURNAL FEATURES WRITER

Mother's Day is more than cards and flowers. It is, or should be, a time to appreciate the lives of women who, quite literally, keep the world going. It is easy to take the quiet work of women for granted, and even on Mother's Day to make a perfunctory gesture of thanks. The occasion should, instead, be cause for wonder. With each birth, women participate in creation, bringing new life from old.

Three area artists, intent upon illuminating the miracle, have set a special art show for Mother's Day weekend. The show, titled "Woman...I will try to express," will open with a reception on May 11 from 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Art Alley in Homewood. Each of the painters—Thomas Andrew, Xander Booker and Tres Taylor—has created works especially for the show.

In addition, the artists have collaborated on a piece that will be offered for auction during the weekend show. Proceeds from the sale of the piece will benefit First Light, a shelter that offers a safe haven for homeless women.

"I thought it was a great cause," said gallery owner Jim Smith. "I have such respect for these guys, and I thought it was great opportunity to do something different."

The idea for the unique show came about through the artists' desire to do a show together, and they were casting about for an organizing theme.

"We realized that we paint about women and are inspired by women," Taylor said. "For one reason or another, we make art because of the women in our lives."

Naturally, all three artists recognize the effect their own mothers' had on their lives.

"My mother raised three boys by herself," Andrew said. "She was always so positive. She encouraged us to become good men and to use our God-given talents."

"The reason why I am an artist has to do with my mother, whose whole life was art," Taylor said. "She did everything so artfully. Her home was art. As a child, my four siblings and I would be running out the door to play, and she would stop us and ask us our opinions about a color she wanted to paint the walls. Without realizing it, we were being trained."

Booker has a special reason for expressing his respect for women through his art this Mother's Day. His own mother, from whom he



Area artists, from left, Thomas Andrew, Tres Taylor and Xander Booker have collaborated on a painting titled "Woman." The piece will be auctioned at an art show built around the theme of honoring women and scheduled for the weekend of Mother's Day. Proceeds from the sale of the piece will be donated to First Light shelter for women.

Photo special to The Journal

learned a deep respect for women, died about a year ago. In fact, Booker says he has a special ritual in which he periodically shows his gratitude for women.

"Once every couple of years, I give a 'goddess dinner' and cook a seven-course meal for my wife and sister and a few other women," he said.

Taylor, a former biochemist who is self-taught as an artist, describes his painting style as primitive, with a spiritual slant.

"I started painting eight years ago," Taylor said. "It was a spiritual awakening for me. A paintbrush fell out of the sky and hit me on the head. Painting saved my life."

His favorite subjects tend to be monks or country folk, all expressing a simplicity that is the essence of life. He considers his primary gift to be the use of color.

"My work has a child-like appearance but with a little more attention to color," he said. "Ultimately I am painting about love. Love is expressed in everything we do. I try to home in on that in (depictions of) the simple life."

Andrew's favorite subjects are angels who frequently bear a resemblance to his late mother.

"They are always women, very feminine and very dramatic," Andrew said. "They are not cherubs. I have noticed that most of my angels are dark haired, and that was my mother."

For Andrew, the gentle exaggeration of woman as angel is an expression of something he senses

about the nature of women, especially mothers.

"The love I see that mothers have for their children is something beyond what a man can give," he said.

For Booker, lotus blossoms express his feelings about the feminine force in life.

"The lotus is an amazing flower," he said. "It looks like a little altar. It symbolizes different things in different cultures, but since Buddha was supposed to have been born in a lotus pod, there is an allusion to the lotus being divine, and I think of women as being divine."

He seems especially awed by the spiritual connection women bring to family and community.

"Women have such an intuitive sense of how things should be," Booker said. "Women give us the aesthetics of life and that's important."

The painting that the three artists are collaborating on is called, appropriately, "Woman." Andrew created the feminine figure who sits on a lotus blossom created by Booker. The color for the work was done by Taylor.

"The idea of collaborating was to give something to an organization helpful for women," Taylor said. "We chose First Light, a shelter that helps women in a difficult situation in life. We thought that would be a great way to show appreciation."

For details on the Mother's Day weekend show, call Art Alley at 879-1105. ♦