

AKILLIAN GALLERY PRESS RELEASE

Date: February 17, 2012

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photos by Jim Lynch

Massasoit Community College, 900 Randolph St., Canton, MA
The Jacmel Project: When Our Brushes Shook.

Akillian Gallery in Canton Celebrates Haitian Art and Culture

By Bruce Thomas Hammond

Greater Brockton Society for Poetry and the Arts (GBSPA) was proud to collaborate with the Haitian Artists Assembly of Massachusetts (HAAM) and Massasoit Community College to bring Haitian art and culture to The Akillian Gallery on Massasoit's Canton Campus. Canton was treated to a full day of art, information, culture, music, and most importantly, people making positive connections. The events took place on Friday, February 10th.

The Lecture Hall was the first stop for both audience and event participants. At Noon, Brockton Artists Arnie Danielson (GBSPA) and Fritz Duchaine (HAAM) started by holding a discussion on the subjects of Haitian Art, culture, and spiritual beliefs. History was a major touching off point going back to the 15th century explorers and culminating in the tragedy of Haiti's recent earthquake. Art was discussed with the visual impact strengthened by Fritz's amazing art surrounding the speakers. Arnie, who has an eye for

finding meaning in artwork, asked Fritz about the links in his art including vivid colors, spirituality, and nature.

An afternoon's open house followed in the gallery. Event participants, students, and staff taking the opportunity to share their thoughts on the many interlaced subjects touched upon over the course of the day. Visitors were interviewed as well and we found some common ideas and themes in the art. Ellyn Moller, Coordinator of the Akillian Gallery, offered her thoughts first, saying, 'There seems to be, in all the work, a very personal statement from the artists. The overarching link among all the works, I would say, is the vibrant... almost shocking, use of color.' George Wharton, who heard about the event only recently said, 'I was in Haiti years ago for a few weeks and I am finding all of the emotion and feeling of the country coming back to me through the art here today.'

The evening's reception and meet and greet with the Artists got underway at 6:00 P.M. An impromptu jam session by Fritz and fellow featured visual artist Nixon Leger on various size drums was an early highlight. The guys just seemed to want to enjoy themselves in the background but the crowd was transfixed and the musical part of the evening transformed into dancing and some low accompaniment to the poetry. Have we mentioned the poetry?

Some of New England's star poets of the Haitian community were the next to join us. It was interesting to note that there was no hand-off of the stage, as it were; the musicians, dancers, audience, and the art itself on the wall really became one entity in the room. Arnie was master of ceremonies, introducing Charlot Lucien, head of HAAM, who helped introduce poets and artists, explaining what Haitian poetry is really about before reading some of his own work. A great line from his poem "The Hand" was, "The hand is moving away the rubble." Tontongi, Editor of 'Tanbou Magazine' and 'Liberation Poetry an Anthology', read in English, French, and Haitian Creole. Arnie read Haitian themed works by our friend Sheila Twyman. Charlot returned with a game. Anyone who was there will always remember "Krik Krak," a guessing game which seemed to have more laughs than actual questions or answers. This was fine with all in attendance.

Tradition was in evidence to be sure, but the future made a late appearance. High School student Youveline Joseph, the youngest artist in the show, and Charlot treated the crowd to an informal, informative give and take discussion on the wonderful triptych 'Conformity' that was Youveline's contribution. This was fascinating also because we got an inside look as art was dissected as a technical craft. The feelings were never far from the surface though. To be sure this is not in fact an isolated event. It is part of the 'Jacmal Project' a traveling, living, art exhibit which aids Haiti itself through and with its artistic community.

Those who missed the day are welcome to view the exhibit through February 28th. As we have mentioned only some of the artists let us also hasten to mention the remaining participants. Valentin Iviquel, Andrelite Fleurimonde, Isaac Pierre, and Laurent Olivier joined Fritz Duchaine, Nixon Leger, and Youveline Joseph to bring us a stunning show and a wonderful event.

Please make it a point to see this exhibit. You will be moved.

Akillian Gallery Hours: Monday – Friday, 10:00 to 2:00pm, or by appointment. Restrictions may occur due to campus events scheduled in the gallery. For more information call 781-821-2222, Ext. 2124. www.massasoit.mass.edu