

# Art bridges gap between past and present

*Artists gather to showcase artwork, establish connection between art and community*

**By Tanner Boggs**  
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When Garry Atkinson and Jaguar Perry moved to Durham, both artists noticed a huge difference in the art culture as well as the community in which they would become deeply embedded.

Even though Atkinson and Perry were not originally from Durham, both artists played a large role in the creation of the Durham Civil Rights Mural Project, a brainchild of documentarian Rodrigo Dorfman. Now, almost two years after the mural was finished, Atkinson, Perry, and Dorfman have joined together with 10 other artists to create MURALISTS!, with artwork from the 13 artists featured at the Carrack Modern Art Gallery in Durham. The exhibit opened on Feb. 11 with a multimedia project produced by Dorfman that set the scene for the rest of the exhibit.

“One of the challenges was how you document a social movement with all the individuality and communality involved,” Dorfman said. “Me, being a part of it as a documentary filmmaker, I’m just kicking that off by sort of doing my own take on it as part of the process within the context of all this, that’s the beauty of it.”

Like Dorfman noted, MURALISTS! is not simply just about featuring the artwork of the muralists. The exhibit also features workshops, panels and parties on cultural resistance and the power of art to engage and bridge communities. To many, including Atkinson and Perry, the power of art to engage and bridge communities and education is especially important to Durham and the surrounding area.

“The act of producing art is a learning experience in itself, you learn a lot

about yourself. It teaches you how to learn,” Perry said. “Using the arts as a medium for teaching, even if you aren’t an artist yourself, it teaches you how to look at things.”

Perry, who is originally from Charlotte, is a junior at North Carolina Central University majoring in fine arts. He has one piece featured in the MURALISTS! exhibit, an oil on canvas piece titled “The Boy and the King (The

who has two pieces featured in the exhibit, produces art with a large focus on history. He wants his art to speak to the history that many in today’s generation were not able to experience.

“A theme in my artwork is bringing that history in there to educate people through art,” Atkinson said. “A lot of that history has been altered and erased in a lot of different ways, strategically sometimes, and it’s forgotten. I feel like it’s my duty as an artist to keep those elements alive.”

The exhibit is composed of artists who are all residents of Durham. For Atkinson, the art scene in Durham is an important aspect of the community. The combination of those willing to teach and the historical remnants of the African-American community only further the importance of art and art as a means of teaching the vast



**Artist Jaguar Perry’s “The Boy and the King (The Boy Finds God)” is being featured as part of the MURALISTS! exhibit at the Carrack Modern Art Gallery in Durham.**

Photo by Tanner Boggs.

Boy Finds God”). His piece tells the story of how he learned through artistic means.

“It’s basically about my experience. About how I came into my own through the mural project,” Perry said. “Working through the project brought me to be the person I am today. I had never really painted on canvas or walls legally before that point, so this was kind of like my coming of age.”

Much like Perry, Atkinson grew up outside of Durham in Goldsboro, but attended high school in Durham at the North Carolina School of Math and Science. Attending high school in Durham helped him gain a different perspective on the impact art had on the surrounding community. Atkinson,

history of Durham.

“The art scene is really strong in Durham because there are definitely people here who are willing to collaborate with each other” Atkinson said. “There are just so many spirits here. Spirits of people that have been here. If you walk around, the spirit of people who have been here, those artists or anybody that you can be inspired by, you can look around and just see the remnants of our ancestors.”

The MURALISTS! exhibit runs through Feb. 27 at the Carrack Modern Art Gallery. A list of upcoming events can be found at <http://thecarrack.org/exhibit/muralists>.