

Keith Doles: truth in expression

My work is largely a reaction to events I personally experienced or events that have been described to me,” says Keith Doles. “I like to tell stories about modern people and social classes and show how they interact with each other.”

The visual story-telling started at a young age for Doles. The only child of a kindergarten teacher and railroad switchman, Doles remembers being fascinated by the landscape that zipped by along the highway as his parents drove from Jacksonville to Miami for Easter and Thanksgiving. Those journeys of almost 400 miles stimulated his imagination.

“I use to draw the houses and trees zooming past me. When we returned home, I would have a detailed drawing in crayon of the Turnpike and the streets leading up to my aunt’s house,” he recalls.

That was one of the early inklings that artistic expression was going to be his life’s calling, said Doles, a Jacksonville native who grew up in Carver Manor, a black neighborhood where his parents’ home, built in 1969, is on the site of a former country club for blacks during segregation.

His talent may somewhat be a product of genetics because his parents were doodlers. “My parents are artistic, too. They took art at the original Stanton High School on Myrtle Avenue,” he said. “Every now and then they would doodle while talking on the phone. After the conversation was over, I’d find a finished pencil drawing of a lamp, a plant, or something in the living room on the phone table.”

Today, at age 31, Doles is a graphic artist whose heart lies in capturing the human experience on canvas. He has a bachelor’s in graphic design from the University of North Florida and a master’s in business from Webster University in St. Louis, Mo. Doles currently teaches undergraduate graphic design at DeVry University Jacksonville Metro campus.

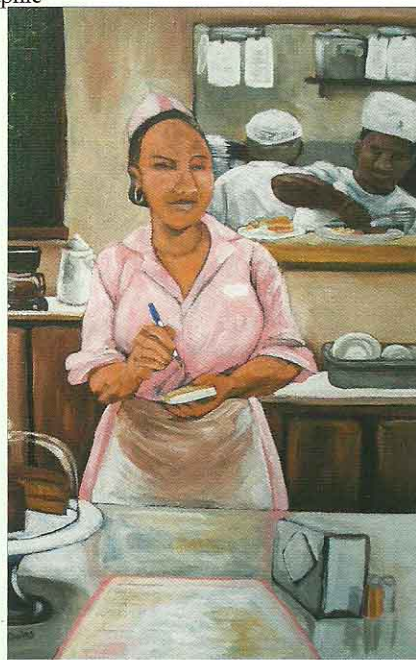
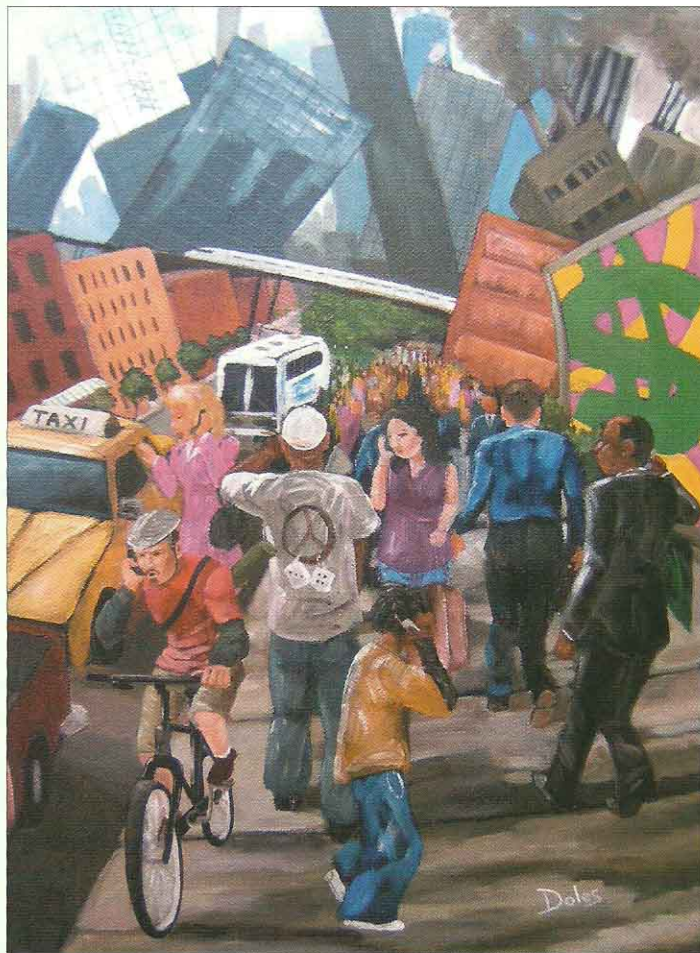
Much of his formative work expressed his sensibility of life in the community (like the painting on our cover, *Sunday Worship*) in which he captured snapshots of his subjects in their routines with bold, colorful brushstrokes on a plane with often elongated perspective.

“My art instructors from high school through college noticed my potential and advised me to speak truth about what you see and create,” Doles said. That truth he sees comes over in the work with a certain raw reality.

Although he has done commissioned portraits for pro athletes and minor celebrities, in recent years Doles has gravitated away from the literal.

“I work between traditional painting and Abstract Expressionism using African-American figures in everyday themes regardless of generation,” Doles says.

Exactly where his creativity is ultimately taking him Doles isn’t sure. But he hopes “to continue on this expressionism path and inspire others to feel free to communicate their voice or artistic style.” *



PEOPLE INTERACTIONS: The art of Keith Doles tells stories about people and social classes and how they intersect. It’s contemporary commentary as seen in the examples here. Top, *Man-Made Jungle*, below left, *The Waitress*, and right, *The Court*, boldly depict everyday life with a certain degree of exaggeration that helps convey his message. At left, Doles poses with Tampa abstract artist Princess Rashid at the June 17 opening reception as they shared an exhibition gallery this summer at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Jacksonville. The show featured abstract works by Rashid and Doles’ street scene paintings