



Ghanaian student's art explores identity through mixed media



Nathanael Davis Associate Editor

The "Frame of Mind" gallery is on display in the Faulkner Performing Arts Center as part of NWA Art Ventures' Black History Month celebration on Feb. 4.

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Living in the U.S. has been a turning point in Eric Andre's life, as well as his art. In Ghana, art is rarely a means for expression, but after living in the U.S. for the past two years, Andre has been able to use his art for more than aesthetic value.

Andre, a UA graduate student, displayed his artwork portraying his immigration to the U.S. at the opening night of the "Frame of Mind" gallery at Faulkner Performing Arts Center presented by the Northwest Arkansas nonprofit, Art Ventures on Jan. 30.

Andre draws a lot of the inspiration for his art from his experiences from moving to the U.S. and feeling displaced as an immigrant, he said.

Andre first came to the U.S. in 2018 to attend the UofA for

his Master of Fine Arts. The culture in the U.S. was very different from what he was used to in Ghana, he said. This culture shock made Andre question how he spoke and presented himself in the U.S.

"I did not know much about (the U.S.) and my perception about this place was completely changed going around the country," Andre said.

Though all of Andre's pieces tell stories of his immigration from Ghana to the U.S., he thinks that his drawing "Visible Unseen" perfectly represents his struggle to find comfort in the U.S.

"Whether I feel like I am home or not is defined by me," Andre said.

However, Andre thinks that his wooden sculpture of a rifle, "The Pulling of a Trigger" represents the pressure and judgement he faces being an immigrant. By carving the sculpture out of wood it represents him trying to carve

his own path and place in the U.S., he said.

"I made that gun for myself, for security, but the question still remains of: 'Do you feel secure?'" Andre said.

Andre tries to encapsulate how systems in the U.S. are used to control and displace immigrants in his pieces, he said.

"You always hear news about immigrants of who is coming and who is going, it is always so fresh on your mind," Andre said.

Though Sharon Killian, board director of Art Ventures NWA, had only met Andre a month and a half ago, she had heard about his art work through friends who visited him in Ghana, she said.

After seeing Andre's art work Killian, knew that she had to feature his art in the gallery showing at the UofA, she said.

"We talked about which pieces were very intriguing and had a message that was very pointed," Killian said.

Killian thinks it was

important to show Andre's pieces, because that they have messages of displacement and change that everyone can relate to, she said.

"We all start out in the same place of having to make a space for ourselves intellectually and physically," Killian said.

Killian tries to have a diverse group of artists for all of Art Ventures monthly shows, she said.

"(Diversity) is the basis of all of our shows," Killian said.

Art Ventures has hosted gallery showings focused around black artists during black history month since 2016, Killian said. She thinks shows such as "Frame of Mind", which highlights black artists, are important due to how underrepresented the black community is in the art scene.

The "Frame of Mind" gallery will be on display in the Faulkner Performing Arts Center until March 6.

Interstate 40 proves hub for human trafficking

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Hotline are higher because human trafficking is not always reported.

Into the Light focuses on prevention initiatives with high-risk youth, specifically youth in the juvenile justice system.

Smeltzer said she has seen trafficking including children trafficked by their parents, gang trafficked or have run away with their trafficker.

The organization has a long-term advocacy mentorship program that started in 2017 and now has 118 children who will continue to receive support after they turn 18.

Initially, mentors meet with their mentees once a week, Smeltzer said. Eventually, they will meet every two weeks where they discuss life goals, mental health, education and trials.

The organization has eight full-time advocates who carry a caseload of trafficked kids. Smeltzer said all youth are at risk of being trafficked to some extent.

The advocates mentor victims and help the victims find ways to cover expenses for education and medical needs.

"We try to show them what real love looks like," Smeltzer said.

"If a kid disclose things that have happened to them or they're sharing indicators of sexual exploitation, it's really important to intervene," Smeltzer said.

In January, J.B. Hunt Transportation Services began training truckers to recognize signs of trafficking.

"Anywhere you have an interstate, you have traffickers," Sorey said.

Partners Against Trafficking Humans, or PATH, is an Arkansas-based organization that advocates

for female victims of sex trafficking, 80% of which are from Arkansas, Sonia Vinson, PATH Community Education Director, said.

PATH works with victims ranging from age 7-60 and offers training on how to identify suspected trafficking, Vinson said.

Interstate 40 is one of the largest trafficking routes in the U.S. and is the main source of trafficking in Arkansas, Vinson said.

Connor Hagan, a public affairs officer for the FBI office in Little Rock, said the FBI has different task forces that investigate human trafficking, specifically sex trafficking, labor trafficking and child trafficking.

Over the past decade, FBI officers have arrested more than 2,000 human traffickers, Hagan said.

The FBI also has an anti-trafficking coordination team where they consult subject matter experts, including former trafficking victims, Hagan said. The closest anti-trafficking coordination team is in Memphis, Tennessee.

The FBI investigates human trafficking through undercover work and investigating citizen complaints and referrals from law enforcement agencies and hospitals, Hagan said.

Into the Light has locations in Springdale and Mountain Home that provide services to kids in 13 counties. Smeltzer said the organization's officials hope to expand its services to more counties in the future.

There will be an Into the Light fundraiser with an anti-trafficking speaker, a dinner and a silent auction at The Ravington in Centerton on Feb. 27.

The National Human Trafficking Hotline can be reached 24 hours a day at 1-888-373-7888.

First black UA professor remembered for humility, devotion to students

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Colbert, who has taught and been an administrator in FPS for 43 years, thinks what made Morgan's teaching style special was the way he made students feel engaged and comfortable asking questions or coming to him for advice about school and life, he said. Morgan's inclusivity inspired Colbert's own methods when he became an educator, he said.

"He talked with you and not at you, and that was always important to students," Colbert said. "When I became a teacher myself, I wanted kids to know that I was talking with them, not at them, and for them to feel comfortable in the conversation."

In his early years at the university, Morgan paved the way for black students to be fully incorporated members of the university community. He aided in the late stages of residence hall integration and helped black students organize governing bodies.

Morgan co-founded the university's Black Student Association, of which Colbert was a member. Dan Ferritor, professor emeritus and former chancellor of the UofA, started working alongside Morgan in 1973 and shared an office with him in 2014 and 2015 after both had retired. Ferritor thinks Morgan was a perfect



He was a trailblazer. The one who would stand up and speak his mind. The one who would support and provide that guidance for African American students. The one who would be there to help out and make sure that students of color were respected and that they had the right to be here.

- Fayetteville Public Schools Superintendent John L Colbert

Phi Alpha, of which Colbert was a charter member.

Dan Ferritor, professor emeritus and former chancellor of the UofA, started working alongside Morgan in 1973 and shared an office with him in 2014 and 2015 after both had retired. Ferritor thinks Morgan was a perfect

example of what a good faculty member should be, he said.

Ferritor said he admired Morgan's humility, devotion to his students and commitment to advancing the field of sociology. Morgan was a compassionate, hardworking professor who went above and beyond for his students and

never stopped researching and writing, even late in life, Ferritor said.

"I think he saw his job as being a mentor to students and helping them with whatever problems and concerns and opportunities they happened to have, whether it was in the classroom or outside the

classroom," Ferritor said. "He had a constant stream of students that were lined up in front of his office to talk to him."

Colbert said he thinks Morgan's living legacy is the thousands of students, like himself, whose lives he touched.

"He was a trailblazer,"

Colbert said. "The one who would stand up and speak his mind. The one who would support and provide that guidance for African American students. The one who would be there to help out and make sure that students of color were respected and that they had the right to be here."