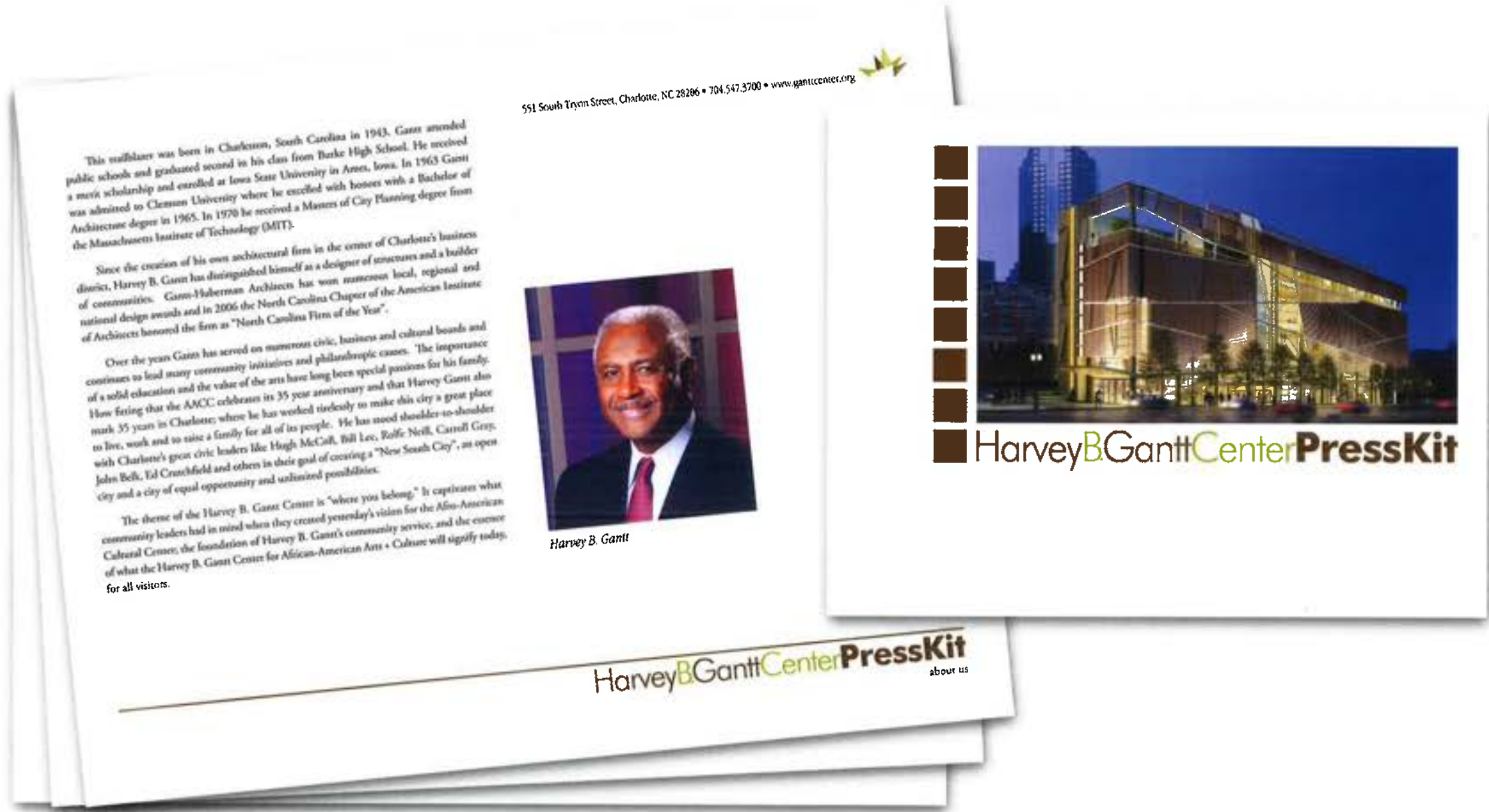




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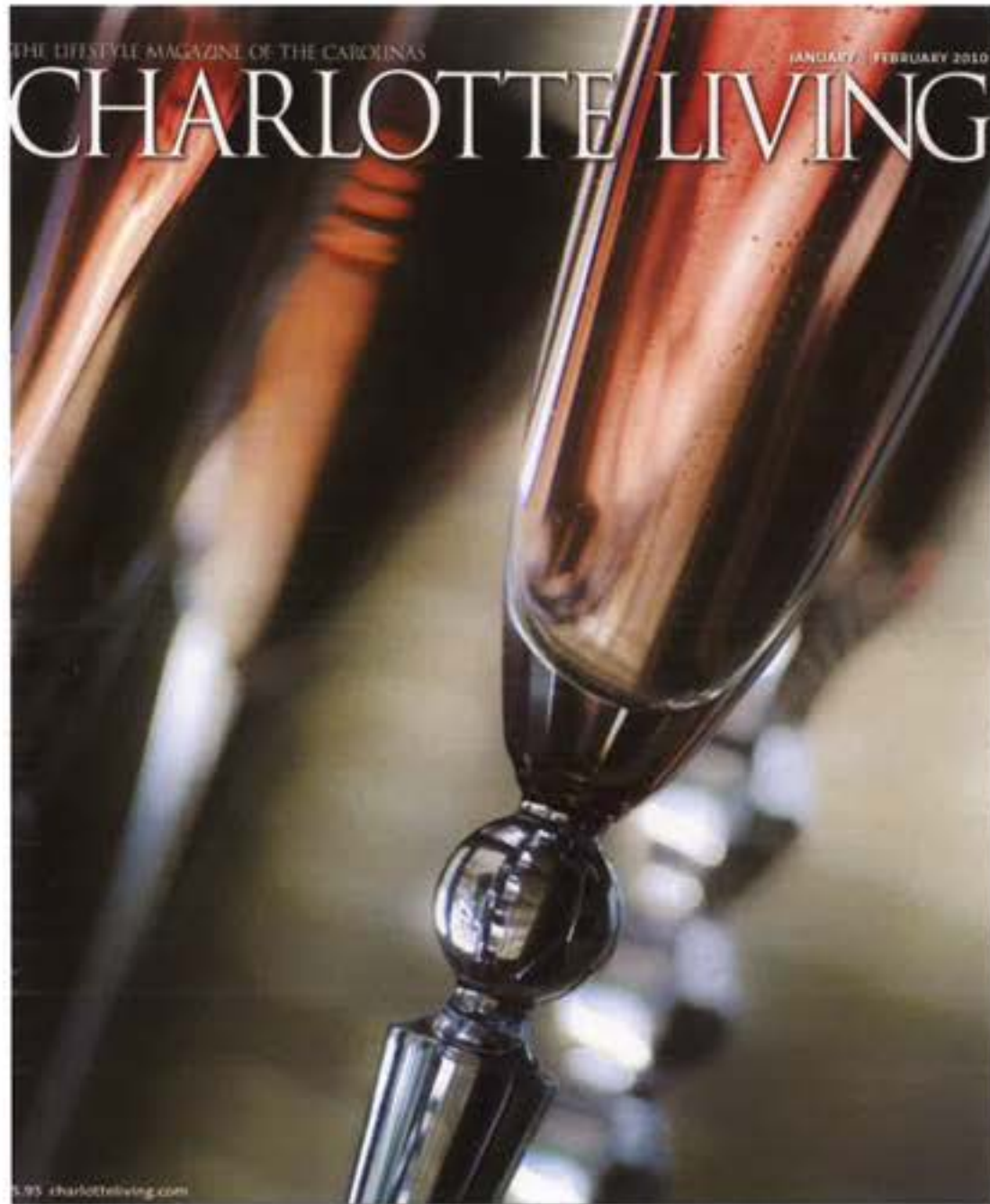
Inaugural Exhibition Book



Harvey B. Gantt Center

500 page exhibition book

Cover Stories and Features



VISUAL ARTS

Harvey B. Gantt Center

FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARTS + CULTURE

TEXT BY MARY MARSHALL PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERIE CHOINIERE A COURTESY OF VIVIAN HEWITT

A NEW CULTURAL OPPORTUNITY HAS COME TO UPTOWN CHARLOTTE. Since there is a bit of continuity in each of us, exploring it is a must, and when we do, we'll make a discovery that's bound to enrich our lives.

The Harvey B. Gantt Center for African American Arts + Culture opened in October 2009, one of the components of the Wells Fargo Cultural Campus. From the dramatic exterior design featuring patterns of quilts reminiscent of the Underground Railroad era and West African woven textile patterns, to the unique location that was once home to the Brooklyn neighborhood, a thriving center of the African American community, the Gantt Center is another jewel in Charlotte's growing treasures.

Highlighting the exterior of the building is artist David Wilson's *Dissected Discards: Local Materials*, located on the South wall (street side) of the building. The colorful abstract glass mural spans 150 square feet and draws its meaning from the power and importance of quilts in the African American community. The murals are symbols of the community members—each one different, colorful, and unique, yet intertwined to create a patchwork of beauty and shared meaning.

Wilson sees glass as the perfect medium to provide a "visual" connection of the present to the past. Geometric shapes and sharp colors represent the highs and lows of the Old Brooklyn neighborhood. The



wall provides the different elements of the community—the visual language and interpretive styles—eyes witness. It's about the viewer's view and how they are inspired by the image. The perspective is critical, paying homage to our ancestors, to give them a visual language of life and love of those who

20 | CHARLOTTE LIVING

Cover Stories

VISUAL ARTS

"Love what you buy. You don't have to be rich - just have that passion for art and the desire to support artists."



came before us. Glass gives it a clear, bright, hiem effect making us mindful of each person's role in society. Look closely and you'll discover a female head representative of the matter of the community: her cellphone, her nurturing, her strength. The viewer can see any woman regardless of race, size or country. The dancer represents that component of

the arts - its freedom, movement and expression." The interior consists of three museum galleries: two visiting artist galleries and the permanent Hensell Collection. In 1998 Bank of America then NationsBank purchased 58 pieces by 20 artists from the collection of the late John Hensell and his wife Virginia. For the next few years, the exhibit toured the country. Mrs. Hensell

has been a vital part of the Collection, traveling to many of the venues. "It was a wonderful experience," says Hensell. "I feel as if I am a part of the bank's extended family, their ambassadors without a portfolio. Through these exhibits, thousands of people, of all ages and races, have seen the Collection. For some, it was their first exposure to it."

A SYMBOLIC STRUCTURE

BY JENNIFER HARRIS

WIRE GANIT CENTER'S ARCHITECTURE INSPIRED BY AFRICAN AMERICAN OBJECTS AND MORE

When you look back on the late Harvey B. Gantt Center for African American Arts and Culture, it's hard to believe how the space is so much more than just a building. It's a place of power, a place of pride, a place of joy and more.

There's the building's program, designed by renowned architect Frank Gehry. There's the collection of African American art and objects that fill the building's galleries. There's the community that has gathered around the building, and the way it has become a place of pride and joy for the city of Charlotte.

The building's program is a mix of art, education, and community. It's a place where people can come to learn, to grow, and to connect. It's a place where people can find inspiration and hope.

The building's architecture is a mix of modern and traditional. It's a place where people can see the best of both worlds. It's a place where people can see the future of architecture.

The building's design is a mix of form and function. It's a place where people can see the beauty of architecture. It's a place where people can see the power of design.

The building's construction is a mix of old and new. It's a place where people can see the history of the city. It's a place where people can see the future of the city.

The building's opening is a mix of excitement and anticipation. It's a place where people can see the start of a new chapter. It's a place where people can see the beginning of a new era.

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Harvey B. Gantt Center

Charlotte Living

Media Coverage

SCOTT FOWLER:
'SMITH HAS A
VALID POINT' SPORTS



10 things to
know about
breast cancer
CAROLINA LIVING

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Formerly Charlotte City

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DOORS OPENING ON 'AUDACIOUS' VISION



Executive Director David Taylor stands with works by artist Jean Legros in the new Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture, where doors open Saturday. Taylor hopes to attract 250,000 visitors annually in a few years.

A calling to culture

BY MARK WASHBURN



"Dead Builders II" by Ann Taylor is part of the World Collection in the new center.

David Taylor vividly recalls his reaction when a friend suggested in March that he consider running Charlotte's African-American Cultural Center.

"You're out of your mind."

As a former chairman of the center, he knew the challenges. And with more than 30 years in financial services, he knew it would be a daunting undertaking.

The center was in the midst of an ambitious fund drive to a poor economy.

It was preparing to move from cramped quarters at a 99-year-old church to a sleek uptown building.

It was struggling for a leadership vision after going through six directors in 10 years.

The organization was at a turning point, but the more Taylor thought about it, the more it appealed to him.

Taylor was at a turning point, too. He was weary in despair from the murder of his son and, at age 53, was looking ahead at the last decade of his career.

In July he took the job.

On Saturday the doors swing open on the \$46 million Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture, expert-

Plans keep age-based premiums

Critics say health care legislation's lack of cost protection is discriminatory.

By Steve Lippman
WASHINGTON — The idea you are the more you usually pay for health coverage, and that's a difference likely to persist under the sweeping health care legislation that Congress is now considering.

The House of Representatives would permit insurers to charge older Americans more what younger people pay. The bill also passed the Senate. In the most House and Senate measures would not what every credible number, including, discriminatory practice — being rates on gender, which is now allowed in most states.

Some insurers are well-liked and older consumers pay less at age discrimination? Senate Finance Committee BY MICHAEL HALE, 14

Pol: Support grows

A new Washington Post-ABC News poll shows that support for a government-run health plan now was clear majority support from the public.

The poll of 1,004 adults found that 67 percent of Americans now favor a public insurance option, which 48 percent are opposed. Support for the plan rose mid-August, when a late majority, 82 percent, said they favored it.

If run by the states and available only to those who lack affordable private plans, under most circumstances, more a majority of Republicans, 56 percent, would be supportive, about double their level of support without such a condition.

The margin of sampling error for the poll, which was conducted Oct. 15-19, is plus or minus three percentage points.

DEATHS INVESTIGATED



Investigators still aren't sure what caused the deaths of three runners who collapsed at a Detroit half-marathon Sunday, but at least six runners have died while compet-

Friday • October 23, 2009

Saturday's Gantt Center events

Among the five activities for Saturday's grand opening of the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture at 551 S. Tryon St.

OPENING CEREMONIES

- 9:45 a.m.: Stanley Graham, "Follow That Sound" trumpet call to drumSTRONG drummers.
- 9:50 a.m.: Chuck Davis African American Dance Ensemble.
- 10 a.m.: Ribbon cutting ceremony.

ACTIVITIES

- Guided tours begin every hour on the half hour 11:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.
- 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.: Facepainting, outdoor pavilion creativity tent.
- 1 p.m.: "The Women Who Raised Me" book signing with Victoria Rowell, second-floor multipurpose room.
- 1 p.m.: Colag Green with Bearden and Denmark, outdoor pavilion.
- 1 p.m.: Shade Family Puppeteers, second-floor classroom.
- 2 p.m.: "The Art of Collecting," with Vivian Hewitt, second-floor gallery.
- 2 p.m.: Make Your Own Dance workshop, second-floor multipurpose room.
- 2 p.m.: Storybook corner with N.C. African-American storytellers, second-floor classroom.
- 2:30 p.m.: Shade Family Puppeteers, second-floor classroom.
- 2 to 5 p.m.: Architecture of the quilt, outdoor pavilion creativity tent.
- 3 p.m.: "The Artist's Voice" with Radcliffe Bailey, third-floor west gallery.
- 3:30 p.m.: Storybook corner with N.C. African-American storytellers, second-floor classroom.
- 4 p.m.: Shade Family Puppeteers, second-floor classroom.
- 4:30 p.m.: BrwTHINK Gantt Center Youth spoken-word group, second-floor multipurpose room.

MUSIC AND DANCE

- 11 a.m.: African dance and drumming, outdoor

- pavilion.
- Noon: Carolina Voices, second-floor multipurpose room.
- 12:45 p.m.: House of Prayer band, outdoor pavilion.
- 1:15 p.m.: A Sign of the Times, outdoor pavilion.
- 2:30 p.m.: Power House, outdoor pavilion.
- 3 p.m.: Charlotte Contemporary Ensemble, second-floor multipurpose room.
- 3:30 p.m.: Youth steel drums, outdoor pavilion.
- 4 p.m.: Gantt Center Teen Movement dance workshop, second-floor multipurpose room.
- 4 p.m.: Classical Interludes, Duncan Station, third-floor atrium.
- 4:15 p.m.: Luminare Collective and Maha's Dancers of India, outdoor pavilion.
- 5:15 p.m.: EAU Claire High School of Columbia Dance Ensemble, Chris Thompson Cultural Ensemble, outdoor pavilion.
- 6:15 p.m.: Latin rhythms with Tommy Lopez and Sindy Mendez, second-floor multipurpose room.
- 7:15 p.m.: Salsa Charlotte, second-floor multipurpose room.
- 8 p.m.: Sauda (jazz strings), fourth-floor rooftop terrace.
- 9:15 p.m.: Miles & Coltrane, second-floor multipurpose room.
- 10 p.m.: Sweet Dreams, second-floor multipurpose room.
- 10 p.m.: Mother Blues, fourth-floor rooftop terrace.
- 11 p.m.: After Touch, second-floor multipurpose room.
- Midnight: Storytelling performance, second-floor multipurpose room.
- 1 a.m.: Porter House, second-floor multipurpose room.
- 2 a.m.: Jam session, second-floor multipurpose room.

— The Charlotte Observer

Hewitt Collection was catalyst for building

GANTT
from 1A

and Charlotte native Romare Bearden.

It was purchased by Bank of America in 1998 with the understanding it would be displayed in the Afro-American Cultural Center when the group moved to a modern building. It took 11 years, but on Saturday the collection was home in Charlotte.

"I am so proud that the Hewitt Collection was the catalytic agent for getting this building built," Hewitt said.

Frugal but consistent

Though they were of modest means - he was a writer, she a librarian - the Hewitts managed to build their collection steadily over the years. At times, they would take out loans to pay for the works.

"We were passionately interested in art and in supporting our artists and paying them what they were worth, not trying to bargain them down," she said.

After her husband died in 2000, Hewitt went where the collection went: on a national tour. She lectured on the works in 30 cities.

Hewitt has strong North Carolina connections - her father is from Statesville, her mother from Kings Mountain. Among those packed into the gallery Saturday to hear her was her cousin, local congressman Mel Watt.

Though she said she loves the works, she doesn't miss them. "It's like the empty-nest syndrome. You're glad to see the children go and you're glad to go visit them."

Gantt suited at ceremonies

Harvey Gantt, the center's namesake, was honored earlier Saturday during dedication ceremonies for the \$18.6 million building at the corner of South Tryon and Stonewall streets.

"Former mayor to former mayor, you have been a great role model," outgoing Charlotte Mayor Pat McCrory told Gantt. "You are the best of Charlotte, and I am so glad to see your name on this building."

In all, the dedication had three generations of Charlotte mayors - McCrory, Gantt, who



Chuck Davis, the artistic director of the Chuck Davis African American Dance Ensemble in Durham, dances to beats provided by drumSTRONG before the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture in uptown Charlotte on Saturday.



People listen during the Founders Society gala Friday night for supporters who donated at least \$10,000.



Visitors file past Ernst Crichlow's "The Steers," one of the pieces in the Hewitt Collection. The collection was one of the sparks that led to development of the new center.

led the city from 1983 to 87, and Anthony Foxx and John Lassiter, the two candidates in November's election.

"This beautiful, awesome

building is far beyond my wildest dreams," said Gantt. "I feel good about what this magnificent building represents - how far we have come."

INSIDER

WE'RE TALKING ABOUT...

CHARLOTTE'S BURGEONING ART SCENE



LOIS MAILLOU JONES, "TWO WOMEN"

the city's first black mayor, the 44,000-square-foot megaspace (formerly known as the Afro-American Cultural Center) can accommodate concerts, weddings, lectures, and exhibits. It will also house the Hewitt Collection, a critically acclaimed assemblage of 58 paintings and works by artists such as Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett, and Jacob Lawrence. 551 S. Tryon St. Charlotte. 704.547.3700. harveyganttcenter.org —JESSICA DUPRESNE

Don't miss the **Mint Museum of Art's** newest exhibit, *Lois Mailou Jones: A Life in Vibrant Color*, a collection of paintings, textiles, and sketches from the pioneering African-American artist that spans her nearly 75-year career. Jones, who died in 1998 at age 92, was inspired by the social struggles she saw in this country as well as her travels, from Martha's Vineyard to Haiti. Those influences can be seen throughout her work, which will be on display here from November 14 to February 27, 2010. *Mint Museum of Art*. 2730 Randolph Rd. Charlotte. 704.337.2000. mintmuseum.org

October marks the opening of the much-buzzed-about **Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts & Culture** in Charlotte. Named after



HARVEY B. GANTT CENTER FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARTS & CULTURE

Media Coverage



Cultural kudos

Impressive new Afro-Am center opens this month ■ By Jarvis Hollday



STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN: The new Harvey B. Gantt Center is a work of art.

There's a thought-provoking catchphrase often spoken at events and initiatives that focus on diversity: "If you're not at the table, you're on the menu." This month, Charlotte's African-American community takes a big seat at a big table when the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts and Culture opens at the Wells Fargo Cultural Campus in Uptown.

This city has seen some ambitious projects take form over recent years, and the cultural campus — which is home to several recently and soon-to-be finished institutions including the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art, Knight Theater, and Mint Museum — is a significant one. Many feel it will speak volumes about this growing Southern city and how far it has come.

Thirty-five years ago, community leaders began efforts to build a center that would preserve African-American history, a concern that grew out of witnessing historic black neighborhoods, churches and businesses torn down or moved in the name of urban renewal. After labeling itself the Afro-American Cultural Center and opening a small office in 1977 in then-newly opened Spirit Square, the organization became known largely for the successful cultural festival it put on each year. In 1996, the center moved into the old Little Rock AME Zion Church on North Myers Street, where it operated two art galleries and a 130-seat theater until closing over the summer to prepare for its move into the brand-new 44,000-square-foot facility — four times the size of the place it left.

"I certainly recognize that whether we're in an

11,000-square-foot facility or we're here, we have an important task," says Carlyla Minne, who served as interim president of the AACCC for the past year and is now transitioning to a new role at the Gantt Center. "Of course, we're stepping up our game, and we have to be far better than we ever were on North Myers Street. And I know we can do that well, so we can do that small task lightly or for granted. Everybody realized how important the center was to the Charlotte community all along. It's just that now we have a larger arena in which to play and we'll have more eyes on it."

The Harvey Gantt Center, which, of course, is named in honor of Charlotte's first (and only) African-American mayor, is opening in a prime location that any visitors' attraction would envy. And it's something the center had long desired.

"The Afro-American Cultural Center is an organization we've partnered with frequently, and you could feel the frustration that they were not within walking distance of many of the other downtown cultural attractions," notes Tosi Hanchett, staff historian for the Levine Museum of the New South. "At the Levine Museum, slightly west of all our visitors are walking like who were downtown for some other reason, we got from Charlotte and discovered this museum, walked in, and fell in love. The new Harvey Gantt Center ensures that culture will have the same opportunity to attract people."

The Gantt Center building itself is a work of art. Durham-based architectural firm The Freelee Group created a "Jacob's Ladder" concept, drawing inspiration

from the Myers Street School that once stood in the old Brooklyn neighborhood, an African-American neighborhood that was lost to urban renewal and is where this center now stands. At four stories tall, the building is long and narrow, built on just a 45-foot wide plot of land. But inside, it's awe-inspiring.

With three large galleries and plenty of storage space, it now has room to house The Hewitt Collection of African-American Art. Bank of America purchased the collection for the center more than 10 years ago, but it never had space to show as many of the 58 pieces as it would have liked (Hewitt's wife has donated another 21 pieces). Also on display when the center opens, in separate galleries, will be *Brewers Two Worlds*, by Rodcliffe Bailey, and *Leisure Space*, by Juan Logan.

The building has meeting rooms, a large room for special events, and a terrace that overlooks the cultural campus. But to the staff, one of the most important components of the new center is the classroom space.

"We have an opportunity in the some extraordinary things here in the community and in the region," says David Taylor, who was named president of the Harvey B. Gantt Center in July. "We'll begin to expand our education and outreach programs. I want the public and independent schools — I want to see school buses pulling up to this building and kids coming in and having a huge educational experience while being inspired by the extraordinary works of artists who just so happen to be African-American. In the past, we had facility challenges that kept us from saying, 'Bring two school buses every hour on the hour.' So it's never been a consistent part of our programming, but it will be in the future."

Taylor, who was most recently a co-owner of Dillingham & Taylor Wealth Management and has a long career in the financial services industry, served as chairman of the AACCC's board from 2004-2006. This was the period when the AACCC initiated its ambitious plans to build a new facility. With partnerships with, and funding from, Wachovia Bank, the Arts and Science Council, the city, and others to overcome the \$18 million building, the center set out on a campaign of its own in 2008 to generate funds for operating expenses.

"We have a \$3.5 million campaign that's been going on for about 18 months now," Taylor says. "We're going to bring it to a close at the end of March; we extended it to March. We're currently at about \$2.8 million in terms of pledges and commitments, which we're certainly very proud of in this economic environment. As I've taken over the helm, I asked the board for the reassurance because I think we have a good chance — I want to make sure we've done everything possible to raise the \$3.5 million. I feel good about our possibilities of reaching our goal. And the thing I like about it most is we've had great corporate and individual support. African-Americans have certainly opened their pocketbooks and made significant investments in the future of the center."

African-American support on all levels is something

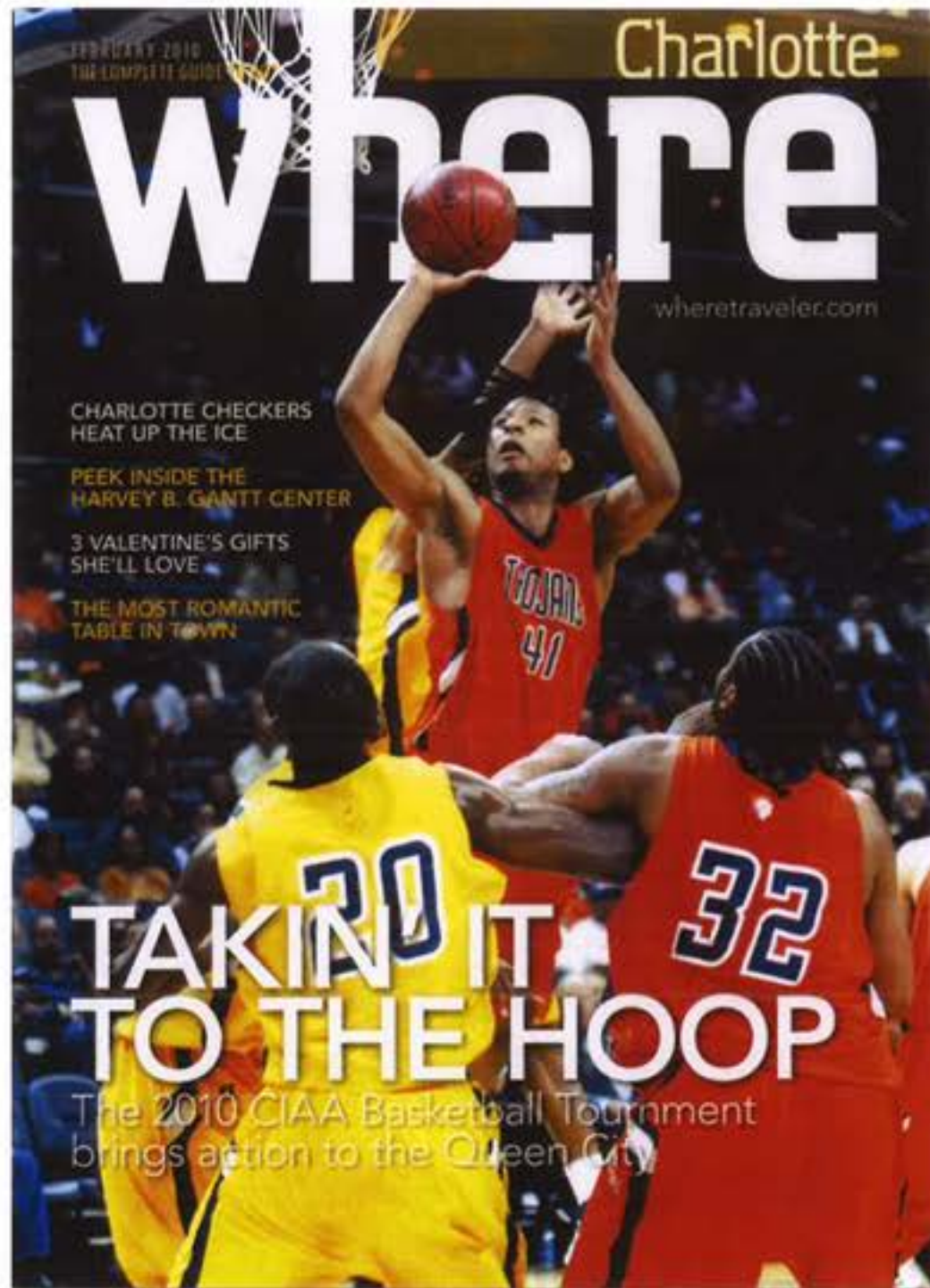
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Above: David Wilson's colorful, public mural "Divergent Threads, Lucent Memories." Left: "Composition" by Michael Platt, "Bakota Girl 1974" by David Driskell.

The center is currently featuring an exhibit of Juan Logan's work entitled "Leisure Space," which runs through March 28. His work explores the idea of recreation, and how commonly enjoyed areas (like private and public beaches) were often unavailable to African-Americans during the Jim Crow era, and thus leading them to seek leisure at rural lakes and rivers. The newest exhibits, opening in spring 2010, are "David C. Driskell: Artist and Scholar," which features sixty prints by a retired college professor and authority on African American art, and "Spirits and Spaces: The Prints of Michael B. Platt."

Holly Cooper, a marketing and public relations consultant for the Gantt Center, notes the impact that the new center will have on the city, bringing national recognition to Charlotte as a center for cultural influence.

"This new facility will establish Charlotte as a nationally significant place for the presentation of African-American visual and expressive culture," says Cooper. "The center has the unique opportunity to become a strong voice in the dialogue about the role and place of African-American art."

(OPPOSITE) COURTESY OF HARVEY B. GANTT CENTER; THIS PAGE: TOP: MICHAEL KEARNEY; (MIDDLE LEFT TO RIGHT) © MICHAEL PLATT; © DAVID DRISKELL

"The Hewitt Collection, which includes an additional 21 pieces donated by Mrs. Hewitt to the Gantt Center, is a legend in the world of art collection," says Holly Cooper, marketing and public relations consultant for the Gantt Center. "The Hewitts never realized they were building a national treasure. Touring the exhibit with Mrs. Hewitt at the opening Gala, she reminisced about each painting and what it meant to her. Her enthusiasm is catching, and her love for art a rich part of her personality."

The Hewitts began collecting after they married in 1949. "We loved art and wanted to support up and coming Afro American artists," she says. "I was fortunate to marry into a family of native New Yorkers who mingled with the cultural and intellectual elite of Afro Americans. My husband's sister had an art gallery in Harlem featuring Afro American artists. Through her, we met upcoming artists Ernest Crichlow, Norman Lewis and Vincent Smith. We purchased their works while we could afford them. We also became good friends and socialized together. They, in turn, introduced us to other artists, expanding our horizons and our collection. Many of these artists had ties to North Carolina, as we do."

The Hewitts purchased art as gifts for special occasions. At Christmas, they combined resources and purchased a painting for their home. "When we went to a gallery showing, we went our separate ways," comments Hewitt. "Nine times out of ten, we liked the same painting. Art is so very subjective. You bring to it your own experiences and what you see. *The Woman Washing Clothes* by Charles H. Alston is one of our favorites, as it brought back fond memories for each of us. As a child, I vacationed with my grandfather's family in Kings Mountain and remember my aunt and grandmother washing clothes in a large pot. John's relatives lived in Statesville, and he remembered wonderful family get-togethers where they deep fried fish in a large pot."

While on a work assignment in Mexico City in 1958, the Hewitts met Elizabeth Catlett and began collecting her works. In 1960, they traveled to Haiti and returned every year for 15 years, concentrating on building a Haitian art collection.

"John and I often went to Romare Bearden's home and studio. His wife, Nanette, who had a contemporary dance group, and I were good friends. All the Bearden pieces we purchased were through her dance foundation so we could support her endeavors."

"Art has brought great joy to our lives. We wanted to keep the collection together so it could become an educational tool that was seen by many and serve as an inspiration to others to collect works of art. That dream has come true."

Asked if she was still collecting, she commented, "Once a collector, always a collector. If I see something I want and just have to have, I buy it. We live with our art. The walls are never bare. Our collection is an eclectic mix of Afro American and Haitian art, signed posters and signed works given to us by artist friends."

Does she have a favorite? "My paintings are like my children—each is different, but I love them all equally," she responded.

When it comes to collecting art, Mrs. Hewitt offers this advice: "Love what you buy. You don't have to be rich—just have that passion for art and the desire to support artists. And finally, many times you'll find a special piece by a local artist. We happened to be very blessed to live at a time when many of today's major artists were just beginning their journey. Now many of their works have a wonderful new home for all to enjoy."

The Harvey B. Gantt Center for African American Arts + Culture is located at 551 South Tryon Street. For information call 704.547.3700 or visit ganttcntr.org.

Harvey B. Gantt Center

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N.C. artist on display at Gantt Center
By Lisa M. ...

Photo by A



If you've driven past the Harvey B. Gantt Center in recent days, you may have noticed a new piece of artwork hanging outside along the Stonewall Street side.

The 150-square-foot glass panel is the work of artist David Wilson, a Apex resident and Hampton University graduate best know for his murals.

Wilson (photo below) said the piece, called "Divergent Thread, Lucent Memories," is a colorful abstract that "celebrates and shares the history and culture for many who have contributed to Charlotte's success."

The work was inspired by European abstract artists such as Picasso and Matisse, and by native North Carolinian African American masters like Romare Bearden and John Biggers.

Wilson said he started with a quilt-inspired theme dedicated to the idea of preserving African American history, much the way fabric quilts have done. But as the creative process was tweaked, it morphed into the large tempered glass.

"I'm inspired by anything that's universal, like families, relationships and history, especially African American History," he said. "I like anything that requires me to use bold shapes, bright colors and lights."

Wilson said he started the project by creating a painting from his sketches. The painting was then digitally replicated so that a team of glass artists in Germany could create the panels and ship them back to Charlotte.

The entire process, he said, took a year to complete and was the biggest project he's worked on to date. He called it an artistic collaboration between him and overseas team.

Wilson has created other public artwork throughout the Carolina's and is influenced by artists such as Charles White, Ernie Barnes, Henri Matisse and Biggers.

Wilson said he has learned to perfect his craft. To aspiring artist he offers this: "Don't let anything get in the way of your imagination. Be happy with your talent as an artist. If your not happy with your work, try to improve it."

Wilson said he's pleased with the project but admits to losing some sleep over the last year. His original painting will hang in the lobby at Gantt Center, which opens Oct. 24.

Harvey B. Gantt Center

The Charlotte Observer

Media Coverage

