

NO CRYSTAL STAIR

Charlotte Riley-Webb



No People Comes Into A Culture Without Someone Having Paid A Heavy Price for It Acrylic m/m 36' x 24" 2010

December 5, 2010 - January 30, 2011
Hammonds House Museum and Resource Center
of African American Art
Atlanta, Georgia

February 13, 2011 - May 31, 2011
National Center for the Study of Civil Rights
and African-American Culture
Montgomery, Alabama

Charlotte Riley-Webb is an award-winning artist whose bold, colorful palette and rhythmic style distinguish her work. Incorporating the figurative and abstract genres of painting, “No Crystal Stair” highlights the continuing evolution of an artist in the prime of her career.

The exhibition is comprised of three major series of works from the last ten years of Riley-Webb’s career. The first series, “From Stories of My America” documents the essence of her African American cultural experience through the depiction of archetypal figurative moments. The exhibition debuted in 2001 and was shown in eight museums and fine art galleries throughout the South. Since that series, Webb has woven forms and a bold color palette into compositions of pastels and paintings that she calls “Earth Tunes.” The expressions in these works are as valid, she feels, and have as much emotional power as music, yet are found naturally in Mother Earth.

Her most recent series, “Still Running Lines through My Head,” highlights her memories and experiences, and were inspired by her lifetime interests in theater, poetry, and music. In this series, Riley-Webb explores how her maturity has given her thinking more clarity and new perspectives, and how it has helped to mold her character and spirit both as a person and an artist.

The three series of paintings that comprise “*No Crystal Stair*,” the title of a poem by Langston Hughes, serves as a metaphor for the struggles and resilience of African American people. Also included in this exhibition are several pieces dating back to the 1960’s and 70’s.

After closing at Hammonds House Museum, the exhibition will travel to the National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African-American Culture in Montgomery, Alabama. There, Riley-Webb will have a one-person exhibit of the works re-titled “No Crystal Stair, A Climb Toward Freedom” in celebration of the 50-year anniversary of the Freedom Riders of the Civil Rights Movement.

Curatorial Statement

The journey of an artist toward the perfection of his or her craft is always marked by risk and transformation, by the constant need to push boundaries and horizons. Charlotte Riley-Webb is an artist on that transformative journey. Her paintings over the years have been rooted in her desire to document the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspirations of her experience as an African American coming of age in an America grappling with issues of class, race, and its very soul. Her early figurative paintings captured the stories, parables, and myths of her life experience. In her work, these experiences as well as those of so many of her generation were marked by a compositional voice steeped in movement and elements of abstraction. Energy fields swirled around her figures like hungry spirits, holding up bodies as they danced around in joyous representations of kinetic motion. It was only a matter of time before those energy fields took center stage and became the core players in Riley-Webb's visual drama. When I look at her aesthetic move from the figurative to abstraction, I see an artist moving from the metaphoric sensuality and rootedness of the blues to the metaphysical ascendancy of avant-garde jazz – not that one art form trumps the other in some artistic battle of genres, but as two sides of a spiritual coin. It has been refreshing to see Riley-Webb's careful and studied move toward abstraction. As a student of history, she understands what so many who attempt abstraction do not – that it is not easy. Every compositional decision, every brushstroke, every color must adhere to an inner rhythm, an inner balance. Every finished work must succeed as a movement on its own as well as in a greater dialogue of movement with the viewer and with the artist herself. After looking over Webb's works of art, I was reminded of that wonderful novel of the Harlem Renaissance, *Cane* by Jean Toomer. Like that novel, Charlotte Riley-Webb's art jumps up from red clay, sunshine, and twilight to deep starry nights and transcendent meditations. Her paintings and sculptural works are chapters in a book still being written, each page moving closer and closer toward divine and colorful balance, with each narrative impulse keeping the culturally rich stories, dreams, and prophecies alive.

Kevin Sipp, Curator
Hammonds House Museum
and Resource Center
of African American Art
503 Peebles Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30310

Hammonds House Museum's regular hours are 10am to 6pm, Tuesday through Friday, and 1pm to 5pm, Saturday and Sunday. The museum is closed on Monday and National Holidays. Admission is \$4.00 for adults and \$2.00 for children, students, and senior citizens. Members are admitted free of charge. The museum is ADA accessible and offers free parking. For more information and directions, you may visit www.hammondshouse.org or call 404-612-0500.



No Crystal Stair. Acrylic, 48" x 76". 2010

**For more information regarding this exhibit
Please contact CHARLOTTE RILEY-WEBB
120 Sandy Dr. Stockbridge, GA 30281
Phone/Fax 678.284.1770
Email: cwebbart@bellsouth.net / website www.charlotterileywebb.com
Agent: E. Joyce Moore, jemiltd@aol.com**

Solo shows offer strong lineup of Georgia artists

By Catherine Fox

Atlanta Journal Constitution, December 10, 2010

The holidays are a time for gallery group shows, but you can also find some strong solo exhibitions, including those by the four Georgia artists highlighted here. Please check gallery websites for holiday closings...

Charlotte Riley-Webb. Recently refurbished and decked out with holiday decor, the Hammonds House Museum and Resource Center of African-American Art is just the setting for Charlotte Riley-Webb's exuberant paintings, pastels, collages and sculptures. The Atlanta artist is equally comfortable with abstraction, figuration and the continuum between those poles. Her thematic range is similarly broad, touching African-American family life and history, nature, and art.

Brilliant color and dynamic rhythms, the DNA of all the work, reach their apogee in the pastels in the back gallery. These dense tapestries of marks, curvaceous planes and passages of dense patterning alluding to African textiles are a sensual delight. Through January 30, 2011. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesdays-Fridays; 1-5 p.m. Sundays. 503 Peoples St. 404-612-0500. www.hammondshouse.org.