

By: Gemma Nicholson

The beauty and creativity of the art on display has much more to do with the vision and hope of its people—this is Haitian Art. The vibrant colors of its people, the turbulent history of its land, the oppressed, the hungry, the poor, the sad eyes, and yet the smiles we see when they are eating a mango or catching fish that will feed many mouths—this is Haitian Art.

My father, Jean Pierre-Nicolas Gaetjens (1934-2008), was a very generous man. He loved his country; he loved everything and anything Haitian. His charity was well known and touched so many people. Countless charitable organizations in Haiti were blessed by his donations. So many people have testified to his kindness although he himself never talked about the people or the organizations he helped. He lived as described in one of his favorite poetry verses... *Quand un pauvre a pitié d'un plus pauvre que lui, Dieu veille sur sa demeure et veut qu'elle prospère...* This translates, "When a poor has pity on one poorer than him, God watches over his home and makes him prosper."

My father was instrumental in teaching me to respect the true beauty of what an artist is saying through its canvas, but most importantly he taught me to generously help people make a decent living by putting them to work by purchasing many, many works of art. Throughout the decades, he did just that. He saw Haitian art as an economic opportunity for talented artists and a way of offering opportunity to the less fortunate in an effort to give them work and build their economic situation.

My hope is that once people see these paintings by known and unknown Haitian artists, they can appreciate and understand the spirit of them and realize that they are not linked to poverty. All these works of art are works that open up opportunities for Haitian artisans to obtain a livelihood and be self-dependent. We all need a helping hand once in a while, but we can all prosper together from it.

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The Mesilla Valley Onion Festival presents the opportunity for your helping hands in its SILENT ART AUCTION on Sunday, April 25, from 4-6 p.m.

Everyone will have an opportunity to bid on Haitian works of art as well as other art works from the students of Alma d' Arte Charter High School.

A portion of the proceeds of ALL art and posters sold will go to several Haitian relief organizations.

Bidding will start at \$250 unframed or \$300 for framed art.

Limited-edition Haitian poster prints will be available for \$25.

Limited-edition Onion Festival poster prints will be available for \$25.

We hope to see you there!