

Charles Smith

Side A

"Black governor of Louisiana, and this portrait here is a child going to be standing on this side of the river looking over the Algiers where I was born and seeing those steamships over since I was a child."

"When you design a piece of art, you aim straight at the heart, if you aim at that heart you gonna hit 'em. They'll say ooh... the base is green, black and red and with a gold high power. And all the elite black folk eat that up, that high power- red, black and green, they eat that up...That's a haitian voo-doo queen that comes to New Orleans."

"We don't do that kind of exhibiting where the people stand around, we explain in detail its purpose...the deep migrated shame of coming of our Mississippi and the rural south and then winding up here and holding in this hand the legacy of her heritage and in this hand all five of her grand children that were killed in gangs and drugs. You draw on a strong focus of a parenthood back in the days of ancestry and she's sitting there wondering what happened to our people."

"...This is on the African Queen Stripped of her royalty and placed in certain compartments of the slaveship and brought to special people in the northern part of America for sale. She wasn't scarred, beaten or abused. That's slave royalty. That's Chaka-Zulu's great-great grandson."

"...This here's a brother who just stay's on my nerves. His name's Benny and everytime you see him you say 'Man, we gotta go eat, it's time, brother be cool.' I wrote on it -Be cool Benny- I gotta finish it."

"This here is on the black family reunion, we gonna be the hosts at the museum (the art museum in Louisiana) ...focus on the culture of the time, it's gangs, drugs, crime, family deterioration. And anybody black that doesn't have a family reunion, doesn't have a sense of of decency from the root of the family. What we have now is in the gangs, killings, drugs and family deterioration is people that never had any family affiliations cause the word doesn't define their background see... we gotta be re-educated to a whole new value system in order to survive. You see, after a while in 2010 there won't be any black left except these in the yard and Indians will be explaining them."

"...That way you attack the mind of the child beginning very early, environmental learning by vision. See that Harriet Tubman and then she (a child) sees the railroad track and she says ' I know who that is, that's Harriet Tubman.' You're activating a sense that they've never used before and they learn from it."

Side B

(On his museum) "We working on a mission, the money coming in is to help these kids cross the street. They should be brought over with hotdogs, little cookouts on days like this, we need to learn how to get along together, help them so that they'll have memories of when they were children that somebody helped them."

See this shameful deed that's taken place in the paper today? Robert Sander -that was so shameful. They tell me that the gang shot him in the head after having him did their deed- you all shot him in the when he first went in the court system when he was a child.."

"What's the story about the *Schindler's List* piece out front?"

"You seen the movie *Schindler's List*? You see that's where you get your training for what is your schedule as an artist...my schedule as an artist is to be as dedicated as possible. I'm battling that, I'm telling God I'm so busy at four in the morning, working, I'm committed non-stop, like a train...I can't slow down so just get out the way."

"I believe in God in us as a people and I hate to have the spirit visiting me regularly that Dr. King, Malcolm X, and those men's Marcus Garvey, Ida B. Well, Fredrick B. Douglas, and all those people died for nothing to have us standing on this evening of shame and our race and our culture right now. I fight that harder than Vietnam, that's how intense the fight is here, it's facts that got to be accepted."

"The *Rwanda Teacher* here - it shows various phases of Africa and you are in a classroom by teaching it, Africa. Steven Biko, who was he? Cholera epidemic that killed so many, the children that were left over in their country. And the red always symbolic of the blood meaning the black and white that bring about apartheid and equal justice. That's deep. The scales that balance in there, one coming together out of their affiliation and death of these men. See, that's the message that's got to be taught right now to them young kids coming up. Sure you suffered a brutal past, 350 years of denial of democracy, but the evening has come, you are in the living - stop that killing..."

"As an artist you're always busy, mentally or physically completing or starting a piece."

(Referring to a sculpture) "When you hit them with that, that's all total weatherization and worked in painted beautifully and dropped in the African-American colors that draws attention and demands respect and identifies the culture. That's why it's sold among the black elite, that's what they want to set on their living room floor. That tells you the depth of the art."

(About figure with ribbons) "I grasp a significant person, that made a significant contribution to society of the African-American and this is the Louis Armstrong series. It is also a candle holder for late night concepts or dinner. He's blowing to you while you're eating."

(Referring to female sculpture in his house) "She's totally weatherized...You go at the features so that any African-American that looks at that piece will be able to immediately identify someone in their family or someone they know."