



Gathering of writers

Indiana Jones author and Florida documentary maker among presenters at TWA conference.

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"Jeans 12 - The Point," by papermaker and artist Dene Ross.

Art for architecture

New York pulp painting artist will exhibit at Spring House to help raise money for restoration

Pat Posner
Special to the Democrat

When New York photographer, papermaker, and artist Dene Ross met treasured Tallahassee doyenne Clifton Lewis in 1990, they instantly fell in love, as both did with so many people. An art lover, people-person and patron of artists of all kinds, Lewis promoted Dene's latest works, which were created at a studio in south Georgia. The "pulp paintings" would be displayed for visitors at Clifton's home, Spring House, the only private residence in Florida designed by

the great American architect Frank Lloyd Wright and built under his direction.

Spring House will again be the venue for a display of Dene's work, at a fundraiser for Spring House Institute on Thursday.

"This exhibit is dedicated to Clifton and her vision for Spring House, which is being realized by Spring House Institute," said Dene.

"My parents wanted Spring House to be owned and managed by a nonprofit organization for the benefit of the public," said Byrd Lewis Mashburn, only daughter of Clifton and George Lewis II. "That's why my mother founded Spring House Institute."

Byrd grew up in the unique space, and has been

president of SHI since her mother became too frail. Clifton died in February, 2014. Byrd inherited her parent's mission to use Spring House as an educational center fostering the arts, environmental stewardship, and social justice.

About her art work, Dene Ross says: "My newest landscape tapestries are made of 100 percent cotton jeans pulped in a Hollander beater, a machine that circulates water through a roll of steel blades to macerate cloth into pulp. Working primarily with the muted palette from the various shades of jeans as the background, I add pigment to a white cotton pulp to create a vibrant detailed foreground."

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IF YOU GO

What: Spring House Institute welcomes Dene Ross: Pulp Paintings

Where: Spring House, 3117 Okeechepkee Road

When: 6-9 p.m. Thursday

Tickets: \$10 student, \$25 individual, \$40 couple, children under 12 free. For more details go to www.preserve.springhouse.org and select "SHI & Dene Ross Event." Payment can be made in advance online or with cash or check at the door.

Art

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“Making a pulp painting is labor-intensive. Applying pulp directly on the papermaking mould (either 22”X18” or 37”X47”), I build each piece from its underside to its face, so the work is saturated with pigment. Water is drained and vacuumed from the completed piece, which is dried with fans and weights to make an even, flat finished work of art.”

The exuberant landscapes embody an esthetic and philosophy shared by Clifton Lewis, Dene Ross and Frank Lloyd Wright: a deep respect for the complex beauty of the earth, expressed in a talent for inviting the natural world into our daily lives.

In the mid-1970s Dene was a printmaker and photographer who had studied with photography pioneer Barbara Morgan. Paper was the base of her work, so when Harvard librarians discovered that the highly acid wood pulp paper used in books since 1900 was decomposing, she determined to make paper that would last.

Her research revealed that the first handmade paper, used for keeping court records, was made in China in 105 A.D., from mulberry bark, hemp, jute and clothing rags. Papermaking soon traveled around the world. In the 1500s, animal skin paper such as parchment and vellum was too difficult and expensive to use in the newly-invented printing press. Rag paper became widespread.

The invention of the Hollander beater in 1680 greatly reduced the time it took to make cloth into pulp, but paper did not become readily available



COURTESY SPRING HOUSE INSTITUTE

Artist Dene Ross and Clifton Lewis around 2010.



"Study for Jeans 12 - The Point"

to the masses until the end of the 19th century when the Fourdrinier machine began making it from wood. Unfortunately, without a buffer, wood paper self-destructs.

Using paper as the medium for creating images is a relatively new art form. Dene began to experiment and spent a summer with Navajo blanket weavers learning natural dyeing techniques. Her first paper works were a mixture of cotton and linen pulp and used Chinese techniques of embedding flowers and leaves, along with naturally dyed

yarns and threads for line and design.

Dene has shared her knowledge and expertise at school and community papermaking workshops and demonstrations in the US northeast, Athens, and Rome. She also taught a graduate-level course for art educators and art therapists in the use of papermaking as an educational and therapeutic tool. These are the sorts of workshops Clifton Lewis had in mind when she founded SHI.

Pat Posner was a founding director of Spring House Institute in 1996 and is currently vice president of Spring House Institute.