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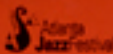
atlanta
jazz
festival

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For Immediate Release

Exploring Inner Space: The Art of Monica Tookes *Artwork of Atlanta Artist Chosen for Atlanta Jazz Festival*

Atlanta, GA (April 2, 2003) --- "This year we have chosen a brightly-colored, gorgeous painting of abstract musicians entitled *JAMMIN' WITH ME* as the signature artwork for the Atlanta Jazz Festival," states **Camille Russell Love, Director of the Bureau of Cultural Affairs**. "It's by Atlanta artist **Monica Tookes**, whose works are personal, evocative and extremely fluid. We fell in love with the painting and will feature it on our commemorative festival posters and t-shirts. We are proud to introduce Monica's work to a new audience."

"It is quite an honor to have my work chosen to represent the Atlanta Jazz Festival," says Tookes. "I am inspired by sounds and often listen to music while I paint...mostly instrumentals, jazz and European music."

Creating larger-than-life canvases of bold color and dramatic images, Tookes' often paints subjects who are desperately trying to express themselves, the emotion almost literally dripping from the works. Other paintings feature dancers and musicians in happy collaboration, dancing with abandon or playing furiously. This contrast speaks of Tookes' ongoing exploration of life's struggles and how different people react to them.

Tookes, who has been painting since the fourth grade, credits art with helping her to express her inner feelings, to explore the inner space of emotions and thoughts that it's sometimes difficult to express in words. "In my work I tend to explore all kinds of relationships...like the simplicity of loving another person, the depth in respecting them, and the courage it takes not to leave them," Tookes explains. "I am most interested in the way that people who are faced with great challenges can rise above their circumstances and become warriors for their passions."

A graduate of Spelman College with a BA in Studio Art, Tookes remembers her college days fondly. "I was deeply inspired by Dr. Johnetta B. Cole," she remarks. "She was an example of someone who has been through hard times and still presses forward. This inspired me never to give up, and also to realize that I was blessed to be able to give inspiration to others."

Three years ago Tookes read a newspaper article about a child in need of funding for an operation. She realized that she could use her art to help out. That was the impetus for her annual "Sharing Their Gifts" benefit art exhibition. Each year she finds a child with critical needs, and with the help of sponsors, she organizes an art sale and donates all the proceeds of the show.

An artist with a bright future, Tookes' has had her paintings displayed in galleries, museums and businesses throughout the country including: the Woodruff Arts Center, King & Spalding, the National Black Arts Festival, Apex Museum, Justin's, Caversham Financial, Sweet Georgia Brown (Detroit), and the Pan African Film Festival (Los Angeles). Her work will be featured in a special exhibition at Atlanta's Swissotel in September, 2003. For more information about Tookes, her exhibition schedule and related activities, visit her web site at www.monicatookes.com.

For more details about the Atlanta Jazz Festival, performance schedules and events, visit the official web site at www.atlantafestivals.com or call the festival hotline at **404-817-6851**.

The Atlanta Jazz Festival is presented by **General Motors**. Other support is provided by Michelob, Coca-Cola, BORDERS Books Music & Movies, Renaissance Atlanta Hotel Downtown, Caversham Financial, MARTA, Terry Manufacturing, Atlanta Livery, Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau, HPNOTIQ, Odwalla, PUBLIX Super Markets, Delta Airlines, Atlanta Journal-Constitution, JazzTimes, Atlanta Magazine, The Atlanta Tribune, JAZZ 91.9FM WCLK, Radio One's Smooth Jazz 107.5 FM, WSB-TV, Comcast, Creative Loafing, Mundo Hispanico, Rolling Out, Business to Business and Catalyst.

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