



JOHN J. TECKLENBURG
MAYOR

*City of Charleston
South Carolina*

OFFICE OF
COMMUNICATIONS

For Release: November 27, 2023

City of Charleston Office of Cultural Affairs Announces Upcoming City Gallery Exhibitions

Charleston, S.C.—The city of Charleston Office of Cultural Affairs today announced *Sleeping with the Ancestors* and *'Payne-ful' Business, Charleston's Journey to Truth*, a pair of upcoming City Gallery exhibitions that re-examine the lives of the enslaved by their descendants. The exhibitions will open to the public on Friday, December 1, 2023, and remain on view through Sunday, February 11, 2024, at City Gallery, located at 34 Prioleau Street.

Additionally, members of the public are invited to attend a free opening reception at City Gallery on Friday, December 1, 2023, from 5 to 7 p.m.

Sleeping with the Ancestors

Sleeping with the Ancestors uses more than 40 photographs by a collection of South Carolina photographers to highlight the work of the Slave Dwelling Project, a local non-profit that works to preserve and raise awareness of extant slave dwellings throughout the country.

Founded in 2010 by Joe McGill, the Slave Dwelling Project has reached more than 150 sites in 25 states and the District of Columbia, and engages with diverse audiences at historic locations where experts, including McGill, conduct programs, give lectures, and spend nights in the dwellings.

McGill and co-author Herb Frazier recently released their book, [Sleeping with the Ancestors](#), detailing the history of each location that the Slave Dwelling Project has visited.

'Payne-ful' Business, Charleston's Journey to Truth

John W. Jones, legacy preservationist and acclaimed artist, presents a powerful series of more than 40 paintings of the enslaved in the antebellum period. The work draws on the historical research of Margaret Seidler, fourth great-granddaughter of domestic slave trading auctioneer William Payne, and references descriptive text gleaned from newspaper advertisements from that time in history.

The artist takes Payne's newspaper ads offering for-sale blacksmiths, cooks, child nurses, brick masons and dozens of other talents, and transforms their trades, skills, and labors into a compelling visual narrative of the pervasiveness and magnitude of the contributions of the enslaved. Seidler's upcoming book, ['Payne-ful' Business, Journey to Truth](#), incorporates Jones' compelling images in support of her historical interpretations of her recently discovered ancestors.

Born May 11, 1950, in Columbia, SC, John W. Jones has been a freelance artist and illustrator for more than 25 years, and uses oils, acrylics, and watercolors for his painting.

Jones' goal is to paint the African American experience beginning with the slave trade in Africa and extending through the Middle Passage and pre-Civil War era, and to contrast it with the experience of African Americans today.

Mr. Jones is the artist and author of the book and traveling exhibition *Confederate Currency: The Color of Money, Images of Slavery in Confederate and Southern States Currency*. In addition, he has painted a series on the Buffalo Soldiers, the 54th Massachusetts and other African Americans in the military. He is currently working on a project focused on the everyday lives of the Gullah people and the struggles and issues they face trying to sustain their culture in modern day America. His paintings are available at the Rita Smith Gallery in Columbia, SC and Gallery Chuma in Charleston, SC.

Jones has received several awards, including merit awards for his works in the 1998 and 1999 Piccolo Spoleto Festival Art Show. Jones, who graduated from high school in 1968 and is self-taught, has been drawing since early childhood. Drafted into the U.S. Army in 1970, Jones served in the Vietnam War and took illustration classes in military school. Additionally, Jones has lectured widely as an artist, activist, and motivational speaker at various universities and colleges, conferences, and corporate events.

About City Gallery

City Gallery, located at Joe Riley Waterfront Park, is owned by the city of Charleston and operated by the city of Charleston Office of Cultural Affairs. It presents an annual program of exhibitions and events featuring the finest contemporary art from local, regional, national, and international artists, with a focus on the Lowcountry. City Gallery is located at 34 Prioleau St. in downtown Charleston, and gallery hours of operation are noon until 5 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday. For more information and holiday closures, visit www.charleston-sc.gov/citygallery or call 843-958-6484.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Chloe Field, Assistant Director of Communications
Media Relations/Public Information
(843) 735-8175
fieldc@charleston-sc.gov