

# The Real Estate Studio

continued from Page 4

quality that reflects his emotions. Other times they simply represent the serenity he experiences while creating.

Peabody says, "Painting is an adventure for me, having spent my entire career in the business world. In painting, I find peace and serenity. I am drawn by everyday subjects in my life from people to places to things. My challenge is to capture the beauty of these subjects in my paintings and infuse them with emotion, mystery and a dash of drama."



Work by Frank Peabody

organization every six weeks. The Studio routinely hosts special events and receptions for area non-profits and artists.

For further information check our SC Commercial Gallery listings, contact Susan St. Hilaire at 843/722-5618 or e-mail to (ssthilaire@dunesproperties.com).

## Red Piano Too Art Gallery on Saint Helena Island, SC, Offers Works by Sonnell Thompson for Heritage Days

The weekend of Nov. 8 – 11, 2012, will witness fifteen to twenty thousand visitors to Saint Helena Island, SC. The visitors will be in the Lowcountry to commemorate one hundred and fifty years of Penn Center History. This will all occur during the 30th annual "Heritage Days" at Penn Center.

For the past 20 years the Red Piano Too Art Gallery has hosted an exhibit during Heritage Days. This year the gallery is featuring its latest "Rising Star," Burton native, Sonnell Thompson. The exhibit will be on view through Nov. 30, 2012.

Thompson, born in 1977, graduated from Battery Creek High School. It was at Battery Creek that he first became aware of his desire and ability to paint.

A memory painter, Thompson's work is a study of the exuberance of the Lowcountry regions flora and fauna. This he intermixes with the indigenous richness of the Gullah people and culture.

Thompson's art combines his love of painting marine life and the ocean with his childhood memories of the Gullah Lifestyle. Central to his work is his study and love of books on marine life. His use of fish in his compositions along with a very prominent bright orange sun can be found in most of his paintings. Thompson says, "I

love nature - I guess I'm just a naturalist by nature."

Thompson's work is influenced by that of Lowcountry artist extraordinaire Jonathan Green. He sought Green out and scheduled an appointment to visit with him in his Daniel Island Studio. He said Green encouraged him to "paint what you know - paint from your memory - establish your style and develop it." This advice can be clearly seen in Thompson's newest works. His paintings have become much more cohesive with a centrality to them.

In addition to painting, Thompson enjoys writing poetry and hopes to one day publish a book of his poems with his art as illustrations.

Thompson resides in Beaufort, SC, with his wife Elaine who he describes as, "My inspiration for what I do." Both he and his wife are pursuing degrees through online enrollment at Everest University. He is working on a degree in business and computer applications. Thompson describes himself as "a devout church-going man" and his serenity is reflected in his paintings.

For further information check our SC Commercial Gallery listings, call the gallery at 843/838-2241 or e-mail to (RedPiano-too@islc.net).

## Historic Penn Center on Saint Helena Island, SC, Offers Works by Robert Claiborne Morris

The Historic Penn Center on Saint Helena Island, SC, will present the exhibit, *Slavery By Another Name: Paintings and Assemblages*, featuring works by Robert Claiborne Morris, on view at the York W. Bailey Museum, from Nov. 8 through Dec. 31, 2012. The exhibit opens with a reception on Nov. 8, from 4:30 to 7pm, during the 30th Annual Heritage Day Celebration, "Penn Center: Celebrating 150 Years - A Legacy of Education, Leadership and Service," taking place from Nov. 8 - 10, 2012, at the Center.

Heritage Days is a time that visitors from all over the country will converge on St. Helena Island to revel in a unique Gullah experience: an exciting three-day event that includes food, music, performances, seminars, arts and crafts, a parade, and cultural demonstrations by the Gullah descendants of former West African slaves in an historic setting, formerly known as the Penn Normal Agricultural and Industrial School.

*Slavery By Another Name: Paintings and Assemblages* is the current result of Morris' lifelong passion for art. This forty piece collection was inspired by Morris' friend Doug Blackmon, who wrote the book that won a Pulitzer Prize in 2009: *Slavery By Another Name: The Re-enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. Blackmon and



Rock Breaker, by Robert C. Morris

Morris conferred during the process of his writing, and then coupled with Morris' art, their joint venture, further enriched by Sam Pollard - Producer, Director and Filmmaker Producer/Director of the PBS Documentary, *Slavery By Another Name*, combined and this period of history was brought to light.

All sorts of images and adjectives come to mind when viewing this body of work which focuses on re-enslavement after the Civil War: thought provoking, compelling, tragic, are a few that come quickly to mind. But when you are actually in the face of any of these paintings and compilations, there are no words that can glibly or easily describe the wash of emotions they invoke. If you can stand still with yourself, with the history of this

continued above on next column to the right



country as you thought you knew it, then you will, most probably experience a chill, a shudder, disbelief, a feeling of darkness and void, and then - profound sadness. "Re-enslavement wasn't a word that was used," Morris explains. "The force of the myth that slavery was over after the Civil War will persist if art doesn't object, interject."

When *Slavery By Another Name: Paintings and Assemblages* first opened in Washington, DC, in 2010, Morris explained his motivation, "What happened is that freed African Americans were re-enslaved through a systematic corrupt and venal system that bought and sold men to corporate interests throughout the South. This exhibition seeks to reawaken the souls of those who were never given proper burial, voice or acknowledgement of their unbridled suffering so clearly documented by Doug Blackmon."

War crimes are nasty little secrets hidden in the folds of humanity; "little" being an operative word because they are little known, not little in scope. Morris' art exposes those secrets of post Civil War slavery. First, one must understand that the enslavement of Africans will never, ever be forgotten in the South, if not nationwide. Although the Emancipation Proclamation purported to set those people free, that's not quite what happened. In a nutshell, there were several entities at work in the system such as sheriffs, judges, corporate interests. The corporations needing labor would contact the local law enforcement and they would round up Black men, charge them, find them guilty, exercise a hefty fine that could not be paid and then put those men on a wagon train and send them off on a journey from which they would never return. No one knew where they were, they simply went missing. They were not sent back because those who colluded to take them, and use them, didn't want witnesses, so they worked them, literally, to death. The conditions were brutal and this practice continued until the onset of World War II. Morris asks a compelling question: "When the men are gone, what happens to



Long March, by Robert C. Morris

the women in that society?" Breathtaking in not only their intent, but also their composition, Morris' assemblages include instruments of bondage such as shackles, ropes, locks and chains, newspaper articles and advertisements, maps and images. Some of the pieces are paintings - acrylic and/or oil on canvas or panel, such as *Fields of Fire*, *Rock Breaker* and *A Slave with Daughter*. *Resurrection Trilogy* is three pieces of driftwood found along the Savannah River bank, representing the torsos of Africans brought in on that river. *Coal Miners* is a compilation of a "Convict" mine map, Confederate blood money, a letter to the Department of Justice begging for mercy, painting, found objects, and newspaper articles. The newspaper ads and articles harken to Morris' background in media, but the history goes back further and much deeper than newsprint.

There is a full circle'ness for Morris in this process as well, one which was churning in his own gut and begging release. "When Doug Blackmon's book came out, I felt the need to revisit our family history." Morris elucidates: "I would be remiss if I didn't mention a remarkable and I hope relative connection to the Carolinas and my art. In November of 2007, one of my closest and oldest friends came to my home in the Historic District of Savannah, GA, and began going thru boxes full of family documents as, at that time, I was working on the painting *Long March*, which is mixed media on panel

continued on Page 34