



A slice of agate, colorful buttons, a shell and pieces of fabric compose Beverly Whiteside's mixed media artwork now placed around the Ohio Governor's Residence, a first-of-its kind winner featured in the autumn installment of First Lady Karen Kasich's "[Spotlight](#)" program.

Karen Kasich finds the Columbus self-taught artist's pieces as "joyful" folk art that she wanted to showcase in her office's quarterly program that highlights "the best of the best" of Ohio's artists. The Ohio Arts Council partners with the First Lady's office on discovering and displaying artwork each season at the residence, which receives about 8,000 visitors annually.

"I feel like I tend to gravitate toward self-taught artists," Kasich said. "What caught my eye about Beverly's work was the great color, the two-dimensional pieces that are joyful but show simple times in life."

Whiteside says her work, focused on daily life of contemporary and historical African Americans, is also about having a voice.

"It's a simplistic voice, but it's the best part of me. It's the best part of who I am, and it gives you a closer insight to who I really am," she said. "I know everyone wants to be heard, and the loudest voice is my work."

Her pieces include acrylic paint and fabric decoupage showing people going about daily activities, joined with additional items like buttons and shells. One depicts brothers going to church on Sunday, while Whiteside says another piece titled, "It's Time to Fly," signifies "what weighs us down." She noted, "Why do we not fly and let our spirits go?"

Using mixed media, especially cloth in her pieces, gives her room to play. Coming from a background of teaching dance to elementary students, Whiteside says she likes to incorporate creative movement into her art. Now, she says her upcoming work will focus on the abstract with "a little freedom, a little more movement in it."

Kasich said the artwork "represents for a lot of people their home life: the kids on a Sunday or the ladies going out to the library, or reaching out to be the best that you can be. These are all things people in Ohio can relate to."

The first lady also noted a friend taught her about appreciating why self-taught artists create folk and other art. "I learned that the individual behind the work is so much more important than just looking at the work. There's a story there," she said.

Whiteside commended the Spotlight program as a way to offer artists an opportunity to be honored.

"It gives you a chance to feel really appreciated. You work alone a lot, and you have to self-judge, and self-analyze and worry," she said, "... but at the same time, sometimes you need someone to say yes."

Kasich also announced winners of the youth arts exhibit from the Ohio State Fair will have their pieces displayed in the residence, as well: Heidi Gui, an elementary student for her painting "Nap"; eighth grader Henry Hess for his oil slick, "Birds Quiet Monsters"; and high school student Jacqueline Tu for her watercolor, "Sibling Love."

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