

JACKIE MERRITT

“MEAN MAMAS”

A CONTEMPORARY PORTRAIT OF THE BLUES

A series of paintings portraying women blues musicians,



Self Portrait o/c 11"x14"



Brief Bio:

I am an artist/musician from Hampton, VA.

Degrees/Art:

I have a BA, Bachelor of Arts in Education from Norfolk State University and a MA, Master of Arts in Painting from the University of Wisconsin in Madison. I have taught undergraduate and graduate painting/drawing classes at several universities: Norfolk State

University, Elizabeth City State University, Virginia Commonwealth University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

I was a book cover designer for Random House Publications, in New York city for two years. In 1984, I returned to the Hampton Roads area, upon receiving a one year grant to serve as the “Visiting Artist” for the VA Beach School System. In that capacity, I taught high school gifted students in painting and drawing. I’m employed as a Visual Information Specialist, ie: “Graphic Designer,” for an engineering/architectural branch of the Navy, NAVFAC Atlantic.

I have received numerous awards and exhibited in galleries and museums nationwide. In 2004, I exhibited the first series of my Women of the Blues paintings, at the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, VA. “**Color Me Blue,**” the title of the exhibit and performance, showcased not only my paintings, but also my music.

I’m a member of M.S.G.-The Acoustic Blues Trio. The performance at the Chrysler included original songs that I wrote in the traditional Piedmont style of blues. In 2005, my art was featured in a one-woman exhibit at the Cultural Arts Center Gallery in Smithfield, VA.

Please note that the titles of the paintings are taken from songs that are usually associated with the artist.



Etta James

In 1953, Jamesette Hawkins was singing Gospel music in church. In 1954, Jamesette took the name Etta James and became a teen singing sensation. A pure blues singer, a jazz smoothie, a soulful ripper - Etta can sing it all. She takes the deepest emotion of blues singing and administers it to any song she chooses. She has influenced Tina Turner, Janis Joplin, Gladys Knight and countless other legendary vocalists.

Etta James is one of the great belters of the blues, carrying on the tradition of the brassy, sexually liberated blues singers begun by Bessie Smith. Etta was the most successful woman to come out of the '50s and '60s blues scene and in today's music scene, she is only getting better with age.

At Last oil/gator board 10 1/2"x12"



Ann Rabson

Ann is a member of "Saffire-The Uppity Blues Women." She also performs solo and with various other bands.

The year 2005 marked Ann's ninth nomination for a W.C. Handy Blues Award for Traditional Blues Female Artist of the Year. In 1998, her first solo album, *Music Makin' Mama*, was nominated for Album of the Year in both the Traditional Blues and Acoustic Blues categories. In 1992, her composition "Elevator Man" was nominated for Song of the Year. Now in 2006, she has been nominated for a Blues Music Award as Traditional Blues Female of the Year.

Ann has often said she plays guitar better than piano, which is amazing, since she's considered one of the top boogie woogie pianists in the country.

This painting was featured on the cover on her latest CD in 2005, *In A Family Way*.

Music Makin' Mama o/c 14"x11"



Odetta

"Her favorite audiences are college students ('TV babies and rock concert devotees,' she calls them) because she feels that their 'listening muscle needs development.' If they are not responsive, I tease them and ask if they have ever been with a non-responsive lover. I'm up here making love to you and it's no fun if you don't respond. But they do. They always do.

- World Folk Music Association

BLUES, FOLK, AND GOSPEL

Odetta is one of the most influential artists of the 20th Century. Artists interviewed over the last two years by Folk Music Archives credit Odetta as the single most important influence in their musical career. She has always been my favorite.

Midnight Special
oil/gator board
6"x8"



It's not about the Melody
oil/gator board 6"x7 3/4"

In Homage to Betty Carter

a Jazz Singer with a Blues Attitude

1930-1998

"After me, there are no more jazz singers. What I mean is that there's nobody scaring me to death. No young woman is giving me any trouble when it comes to singing jazz. I'm not even worried about it and that's a shame. It's sad there's nobody stepping on my heels so I can look back and say, 'I better get myself together because this little girl is singing her thing off!'"

"They're all doing what everybody else is doing, and as I'm not doing what everybody else is doing I'm not even worried. It's a crime that no little singer is socking it back to me in my own field. To keep it going, to keep it alive, because I'm not going to live forever, I'm going to die eventually and I don't want it to die with me. I want it to live on."

- Betty Carter to Art Taylor



Head Study
o/c 5 1/2"x6"



Head study
oil/canvas board 5"x7"



Since I Fell For You o/c 20"x16"

Resa Gibbs

Resa, a well known vocalist in the Hampton Roads Area, has been the featured artist with the Archie Edwards Blues Heritage Foundation in Washington, DC for several years.

Resa sang background vocals on national recording artist Gaye Adegbalola's *Bitter Sweet Blues* CD. She also sang background harmony on Julie Clark's well received debut CD, *Feel Free*. She was the lead vocalist for the very popular "Fever Blues Band" (vocals/percussion) and is now the primary vocalist with "M.S.G.-The Acoustic Blues Trio." She is known for her silky, soulful and heartfelt sound. Recently, Resa is being featured in a "Women of The Blues" Showcase in Falls Church, VA.



Toni Lynn Washington

Queen of Boston's blues scene, Toni has a lovely, deep, smooth voice that exudes strength and self-assurance.

Steeped in the Gospel and R&B tradition of the South, she grew up in Southern Pines, NC. Toni began her professional singing career in New Orleans in 1959.

Blues with a Feelin' *oil/gator board* 9"x12'



Andra Faye

Andra Faye, a member of the trio "Saffire-The Uppity Blues Women," plays fiddle, mandolin, acoustic bass, guitar and vocals.

Andra performs with her husband Chris in her new band called "Andra Faye and the Mighty Fine Men."

Andra has been nominated for 2004 & 2005 W.C. Handy Blues Awards in the Instrument/Other categories for her outstanding proficiency on the mandolin and fiddle.

Crazy *oil/gator board* 13 1/2"x18"



Beth Jarock

Beth was the most popular blues singer in the Hampton Roads area during the 1980's. Her band, the "Blues Defenders," performed as far north as Wilmington, DE and as far south as Wilmington, NC. She was known for her deep tone and raw vocal quality.

She retired from singing in 1988 due to health reasons, but remains active with Blues music and musicians as the editor for the Natchel' Blues Network's newspaper, *Blues News*.

Wang Dang Doodle *o/c* 13"x18"



Gaye Adegbalola

*"Adegbalola possesses a classic blues singer's talent to breathe life into mere words. It's the combination of prodigious singing, timely material and exquisite production (courtesy of Block) that raises this effort above any mere "women's blues" label. . . Her identification with humanity's daily struggles--and her ability to articulate them--secure Adegbalola's place within the tradition."
- Blues Revue*

Gaye, an entertainer/musician, is a founding member of the Blues trio "Saffire-The Uppity Blues Women," and she also has several solo projects.

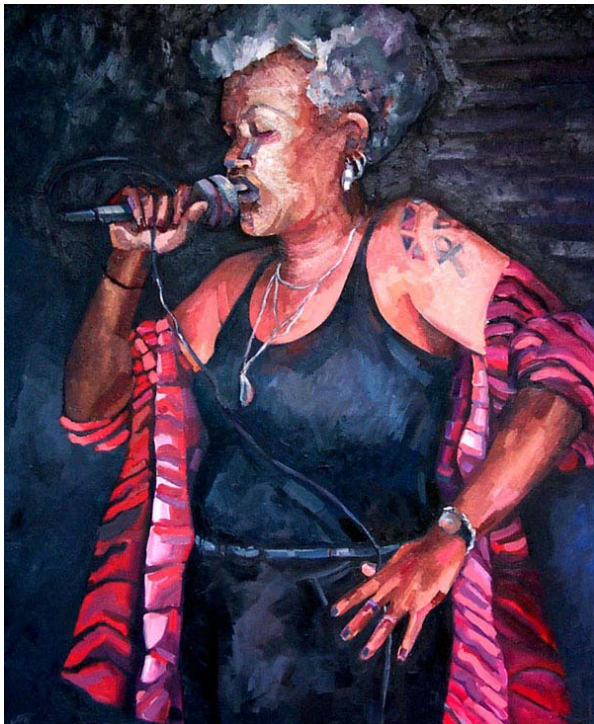
She won a W.C. Handy Blues Award for composing Blues Song of the Year, "The Middle Aged Blues Boogie," in 1990.

Gaye is a renaissance woman. She's a vocalist, songwriter, essayist, lecturer, political activist, guitarist, harmonica player and a never-ending source of ideas for my work.

Ain't Gonna Hush
oil/gator board 11"x16"



Celebration oil/gator board 9 1/2"x6"



Middle Aged Blues Boogie o/c 35"x30"



Wicked oil/gator board 20"x16"

Shemekia Copeland

Critics are praising Shemekia as the up and coming Queen of the Blues and comparing her to legends such as Koko Taylor, Etta James and Big Mama Thornton.

Since the 1997 release of her debut, *Turn The Heat Up* (recorded when she was just 18 years old), she's been setting the blues scene on fire with her powerful vocals.

Quickly conquering the blues community – she holds numerous W.C. Handy Blues Awards, Living Blues Awards, and Grammy nominations.

Shemekia is the daughter of the late blues legend Johnny Copeland.



Diving Duck Blues o/c 11 1/2"x16"

Eleanor Ellis

Eleanor Ellis, one of the founders of the Archie Edwards Blues Heritage Foundation, was a friend of Archie's for many years, and often went to the barbershop for his Saturday afternoon get-togethers and jams. She and the late gospel singer Flora Molton, who Eleanor accompanied, also traveled, played music and did shows with Archie, both in the U.S. and on an extended European tour in the late 1980's.

You can still find her almost every Saturday at Archie's Barbershop, sharing her music and soul with musicians of all ages.



Alberta Adams

"If you don't feel it.....Don't do it, Simple as that!"

The Grand dame of Detroit blues has been performing since 1930. She has a strong, rich voice with the tone and expressive quality that grabs a listener by the heart and won't let go.

Alberta must be in her eighties now; she has a granddaughter with her to help her up on stage and she has to sit down to perform. But once she opens her mouth to sing - you know she's the Last Of The Red Hot Mamas.

He May Be Your Man (But He Comes to See Me Sometimes)
oil/gator board 8"x6"



Rosie Ledet

Rosie hails from the rural town of Church Point, Louisiana, and learned to play the accordion by watching her husband and then practicing on his accordion while he worked during the day. With her self-penned tunes, Ledet provides a unique female presence in the male-dominated zydeco world. She sings in both Creole French and in English. Her songs are often sly and lusty and combined with her natural good looks and distinctive, bluesy singing voice, she wows audiences wherever she goes.

Wear it Out *oil/gator board 18"x24"*



The Blues Singer

A tribute to all "Blues Mamas."

Don't Boss Me Baby *o/c 23 1/2"x19 1/2"*



“M.S.G.-The Acoustic Blues Trio”

Merritt, **S**picer & **G**ibbs

Music:

I have been a blues musician in the Hampton Roads area for over two decades. My current bands are “Blues Xchange” (bass & vocals), “The Archie Edwards Blues Heritage Band” (harmonica & bones), and “M.S.G.-The Acoustic Blues Trio” (harmonica, vocals & bones).

Our new CD, *Meet Me In the Middle*, debuted in June 2006. It has received many favorable reviews and radio coverage.

For more information, please visit www.acousticbluesmsg.com

***Thank you**
for sharing my personal journey of the blues through art and song.*