

The Paper FEATURES

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“John the Baptist preaching to a Levite and a Pharisee” (1506-1511), a bronze sculpture on display in Atlanta.



Courtesy High Museum of Art

A statuesque exhibit

High Museum of Art focuses on 3-D work by Leonardo da Vinci

By **TASHA BIGGERS**
Regional staff

ATLANTA — You probably know Leonardo da Vinci for his famous painting, “Portrait of Mona Lisa.” Or maybe it is his prized “Last Supper” that comes to mind.

But what you might not know about da Vinci is that he had a sculptor’s eye, and had detailed plans for many monumental sculptures — most of which did not come to fruition before his death.

But an exhibit now through Feb. 21 at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta highlights this other side of the master artist. “Leonardo da Vinci: Hand of the Genius” features sketches by da Vinci and sculptures by his instructors and students.

The exhibit, which includes 20 sketches by da Vinci, is the first to focus on da Vinci as a sculptor.

Included in the exhibit is “The Beheading of St. John the Baptist,” a relief which includes two warriors thought to be created by da Vinci himself.

Guest curator Gary Radke discovered the resemblance between a sketch by da Vinci and the two warriors, and presented the possibility that da Vinci would have made the two pieces as he worked under his mentor, Andrea del Verrocchio, who created the remainder of the piece.

Because each warrior was at-

tached individually to the work, it is possible that it was created by more than one artist.

Another piece, “Flying Angel,” a terra cotta relief, also is thought to have been created by da Vinci in collaboration with Verrocchio.

Radke said the “Hand of the Genius” came about backward, starting with the opportunity to display “John the Baptist Preaching to a Levite and a Pharisee,” three larger-than-life bronze works by da Vinci’s student, Giovan Francesco Rustici.

Radke said that opportunity gave him the idea to delve into how Leonardo’s teachers influenced him, and how da Vinci in turn influenced his students.

The “most exciting, most terrifying” part of assembling the exhibit, Radke said, was bringing in the Rustici works, which had to be placed on display by cranes.

Perhaps another daunting part of the exhibit was the Sforza Horse monument, which stands tall in Sifly Piazza just outside the High.

Visitors can see da Vinci’s plans for the 26-foot figure, assembled by a team on scaffolding with the assistance of cranes, once inside the exhibit.

Da Vinci did create a full-scale clay model of the horse, but it was destroyed by French soldiers, who used it for target practice before he was able to cast it in bronze.

Finding hope after horror



Two Liberian boys pose with bundles of plantains on their heads. Jefferson resident Michael Helms recently published a book exploring the Liberian civil war (1989-2003) entitled “Hoping Liberia—Stories of Civil War from Africa’s First Republic.”

Jefferson pastor recounts the journey of Liberia’s people through civil war

By **KATIE DUNN**
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Hope often survives in the unlikeliest of places. Liberia, a west African nation ripped apart by a 14-year civil war, is a testament to that.

Dr. Michael Helms, pastor of First Baptist Church in Jefferson, learned firsthand the resilience that the nation’s people embody following a one month visit to one of Liberia’s boarding schools, Ricks Institute, in 2006, just three years after the war ended.

The experience inspired Helms to write a book, “Hoping Liberia — Stories of Civil War from Africa’s First Republic,” which was published earlier this year.

In the book, Helms weaves his personal experiences in Liberia, the country’s history and the stories of its people to help relate the horrors of the civil war and the nation’s renewed hope for a better future.

“Part of my motivation in writing the book was to try to show to people what the Liberian people had lost and the depth of the devastation that the country had been through, and mostly the hope that the Liberian people have held onto through a 14-year civil war,” Helms said.

The country’s complex war began in December 1989 and ended in August 2003. Throughout the conflict, rebels from the country’s indigenous population fought against the Americo-Liberians who had controlled the country for over 100 years and whose ancestors were freed slaves sent to Liberia from the U.S. In 1817, the U.S. Congress created the American Colonization Society, which helped found the colony of Liberia and relocated freed slaves to its territory.

Helms’ book delves into the complexities of Liberia’s war and how its roots began in a foreign country, the U.S., more than 100 years before its outbreak.

The pastor’s introduction into Liberia’s tumultuous history was through Dr. Olu Menjay, whom Helms met and befriended while the Liberian was attending Truett-McConnell College in Cleveland. Menjay was able to attend college through the help of some family friends who were U.S. missionaries that lived in Liberia for a time.

The emotional story of Menjay’s escape from his country at the outbreak of the war and his return years later also are documented in Helms’ book.

It was with Menjay’s help that Helms first traveled to Liberia in December 1995 during a lull in the war to speak at the country’s National Youth Convention.

“At the time, I don’t think very many people would have been crazy enough to go and it might have been why Olu suggested me,” Helms said. “He might have thought, well, Michael Helms might be crazy enough to go.”

Helms has since returned to Liberia two other times, in 2006 and 2007, and he plans to again visit next year.

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Michael Helms
Pastor of First Baptist Church in Jefferson



Photos Courtesy of Michael Helms

Author Michael Helms, pastor of First Baptist Church in Jefferson, poses with a woman and her malta, a device used to pound food, in a local Liberian village.

Menjay is now the principal of Ricks Institute (www.ricksonline.org), the K-12 boarding school Helms visited in 2006. The school was closed when the war broke out and became a camp for refugees. Menjay has helped rebuild that school and, in the process, given many children the chance to further their education.

Proceeds from the sales of “Hoping Liberia” will go to the Bricks for Ricks Liberian Housing Foundation, Inc., which Helms founded. The money will be used to buy brick-making machines to help build homes for war refugees and to also assist Ricks Institute.

Helms will hold a book signing from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Feb. 13 at Downtown Interiors, located at 100 N. Public Square in Jefferson.

The author also recently sat down with The Paper to discuss his new book and the inspiration behind the story.

Question: Why did you feel this story needed to be shared with others?

Answer: What I saw in these people more than See **HOPE**, page 4B

Resident collects shoes for Haitians

By **CLAIRE MILLER**
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BRASELTON — The 7.0 magnitude earthquake that hit Haiti in January brought the city of Port-au-Prince to its knees, toppling buildings and killing and injuring thousands.

Though it’s been a few weeks since the earthquake first struck, local residents are still doing their part to help the devastated country.

Hoschton resident Cristie Romero saw the reports on television of the country’s struggle to rebuild following the earthquake, and decided to get involved.

“You watch the news and you see all the footage from Haiti. It’s so heartbreaking to see,” she said.

Romero went through Disney’s “Give a Day, Get a Disney Day” Web site, which connects people with volunteer organizations in their community, to find a charity that would help the Haitian people. Residents who give one day of service to one of the organizations working with Disney will earn a one-day ticket to either Disneyland Resort in California or Walt Disney World Resort in Florida.

She ultimately chose

Healthy Notion Kids, a group that “helps develop healthy communities by decreasing risk factors for children (ages 6 to 12) through educational, health (physical/emotional) and inspirational projects and initiatives,” according to its Web site.

“Healthy Notions’ program called ‘Show Your Love With Your Soles’ collects shoes that are going to be going to children in Haiti,” she said. “I thought this would be a great way for people to donate, especially for people who might not be able to give money. They might have shoes in their closet that they’ve grown out of.”

Romero set up boxes at West See **SHOES**, page 4B



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