

Artist's work is a true 'Revelation'

Daniel Ruben Wynn infuses paintings with energy, symbolism

By **TANYA PEREZ-BRENNAN**
The Times-Union

Daniel Ruben Wynn's hand flew across the white linen paper. He firmly grasped the pencil as his sketch started to emerge from the blank space.

"It just happens," he said, shrugging and smiling, as he turned back to his creation.

"An image will come forth and speak to you. It's almost like telling a story."

On the Plexiglas palette sitting on his work table, he mixed acrylic paints: blues, whites, yellows and reds. Occasionally, he would dip his thin paintbrush in water to rinse it.

"The paints all sort of speak to you," he said. He started with his signature checkered floor — a symbol of decadence — and then mixed white with blue to create a base coat for a sky that was the backdrop for a majestic horse and its rider.

With a darker blue he created some buildings in the distance, an orange sun looming behind. And with a black pen, he filled in the details: the horse's eye, its legs, the shape of the rider's boot. And suddenly, from nothing, a drawing came to life.

Wynn has been transforming his creative ideas on paper and canvas for more than 30 years. His first retrospective exhibit,



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Daniel Ruben Wynn's home, which is also his studio, is filled with art from more than 30 years.

"Revelation," will open tonight at the Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach and will run through Monday, Sept. 6.

In Wynn's home/studio in Springfield, the "artist-activist" rummaged through stacks of framed paintings and drawings. The exhibit will feature about 25 to 30 that span his collection of work from the 1970s to present day, he said.

Wynn is known locally for his colorful, Picassoesque paintings. Even some of the titles sound familiar, such as *Woman Seated*, one of his latest works, or *Reclining Woman*, an oil on paper that reveals the almost hidden faces of two men amid the colorful shapes.

There is a lot of symbolism throughout his work. In earlier drawings, Wynn said, he created a technique he calls "Danism" — a play off of his name — that he says means "surreal fantacism," which are surreal images based on fantastical elements.

"Symbolism to me is very important," he said, "because symbolism is universal in art."

Flowers symbolize beauty, he said. And the gaping holes interlaced throughout his work symbolize personal and social emptiness.

"All images I create are passed through me as a spiritual force," he said. "When I create, it's sort of like an emotional buildup. . . . That energy constitutes a major part of my creativity."

Wynn said his artistic pro-

gression is clear.

"There's less line and more energy," he said of his more recent work. "Simplicity in execution as well. Now, there's a different kind of freedom."

But Wynn has been at it a long time, starting from when he would watch his father do portrait sketches. There was a creative streak on that side of the family — his father was a jazz trumpeter until a health problem forced him to stop and work in the hotel business.

"It was through him that I got involved with art," Wynn said as he sat on a couch in his living room adorned with African art and his own works. "He encouraged me."

Wynn went on to have a prolific artistic career. After winning a scholarship to attend Howard University and graduating with both a bachelor's of fine arts and a master's of fine arts by 1973, he was selected from more than 700 artists to exhibit at the Center for International Culture in Paris just two years later. He even had his work shown in a private reception for Queen Elizabeth II for



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"It just happens," Daniel Ruben Wynn say about his creations, such as this recent one. "An image will come forth and speak to you . . ."