

# 9th Street Rhythms

East Ninth Street Proposal by Stephen T. Johnson

I am fascinated by the overlooked and presumably unremarkable aspects of the East 9th Street neighborhood which include meandering abstract patterns in streets and sidewalks, the incongruously varied architectural details of private homes and businesses, local vegetation and trees, cables and wires on buildings and telephone poles that create rhythmic harmonies of parallel lines, and so on — imagery readily accessible to anyone who looks carefully at this visually rich Lawrence neighborhood at various times of day and during the cycle of the seasons.

As a source of inspiration for this project are the words and ideas generated by the great American Poet and former East Lawrence resident, Langston Hughes: "*Rhythm is something we share in common, you and I, with all the plants and animals and people in the world, and with the stars and moon and sun, and all the whole vast wonderful universe beyond this wonderful earth which is our home.*" This is the final sentence from his marvelous children's book *The Book of Rhythms* published by Franklin Watts in 1954.

There is rhythm everywhere on East 9<sup>th</sup> Street and for this project, I will explore, document and generate, a series of eighty-one colored pencil and monoprint works on paper that reveal rhythm through repetition, patterns, directional elements, colors, design motifs, etc. The choice of a total of eighty-one revolves around the significance of the number 9. Hence, I multiplied the 9 numerical streets — 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>t</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> streets with the 9 states streets — *Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Oregon* streets that form the parameter of the East Lawrence Neighborhood.

Each work will measure 3 x 3 inches, floated in acid free mats and protected by UV glass and black metal 10 x 10 inch frames to be exhibited at the Lawrence Art Center from October 25<sup>th</sup> through December 21<sup>st</sup>. 100% percent of the sales of these works will go to fund East Lawrence children of color and East Lawrence children in need so that they may take courses at the LAC for free. The Lawrence Art Center will be engaged in programing and advertising this project to the public through program guides, newsletters, website and social media.

Like Hughes, I look for visual rhythms everywhere in search for the ideas and associations they may elicit. My goal for this project is to celebrate East 9<sup>th</sup> Street and its adjoining streets and alleyways to encourage Lawrence residents past, present and future, to look at the East 9th Street neighborhood as well as their own surroundings in a fresh and playful way. In doing so they will discover for themselves, juxtapositions of scale, harmonies of shadows, rhythms, colorful patterns in surface textures, and joy in the most unexpected details of a neighborhood, by transcending the mundane and unearthing its hidden beauty.

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