

Donated mosaic celebrates peace, human purpose

Wolseley

Charleswood

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Being blind doesn't mean one still can't feel, touch and experience a piece of art.

On Oct. 17, local artist Yisa Akinbolaji donated his massive mosaic work *Peace and Purpose* to the Manitoba/Saskatchewan chapter of the Canadian Institute of the Blind, located at 1080 Portage Ave. in Wolseley.

At 16 by 3.2 feet, the mosaic is made up of more than 10,000 tiles in 42 different colours and is valued at \$25,000.

"There are a lot of messages embedded in this mosaic," said Akinbolaji, whose works hang in homes as far away as Chicago and the United Kingdom.

Akinbolaji, who immigrated to Winnipeg from Nigeria in 1997, said art was suppressed in his home country.

After creating the mosaic and mounting it in the front yard of his St. Vital home for two years, Akinbolaji said he wanted to donate the piece as a way of showing appreciation to the country and city that took him in.

"I felt that the people who are challenged by sight would probably benefit more from this mosaic. I want them to be able to come in and be able to touch and feel the effect of the tiles," he said.

"Even though they cannot see me, they can feel my love and my thank you through the work I have created. It's my only way to say thank you."

The mosaic's texture and use of colour form various symbols including a dove



Photo by Matt Preprost

Yisa Akinbolaji (right) donated his mosaic *Peace and Purpose*, valued at \$25,000, to the CNIB.

and the nighttime sky. The use of colour was deliberate to illustrate harmony, that each tile wasn't out of place and had a purpose in the greater whole.

Feeling the mural sends the same message, he said.

"They can sense the tiles are of the same size," Akinbolaji said. "There is just a little space in between those tiles and if they are put together, there is acceptance, there is harmony."

That message isn't lost on the blind, said Wanda Mills, associate director of corporate and

community development for CNIB.

In fact, art is celebrated by the organization, which hosts the Eye On The Arts auction every year.

"People who are blind or partially sighted are very visual individuals," said Mills, a Charleswood resident.

"They visualize in their own minds what a piece will look like. They have an understanding that I said to them what red is and tried to explain the emotion of red, they would visualize that."

The unveiling also showcased Akinbolaji's newest exhibition, *Unconventional*, a breathtaking collection of 45 of his mixed media works that will be shown in New York next May.

For more information on Akinbolaji, visit www.yisagallery.com.

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