



13 N. Madison St.  
Quincy, FL 32351  
www.gadsdenarts.org  
850-875-4866

- EST. 1994 -

## Unscramble Activity

Use the word bank to match the scrambled words below.

**GOOD LUCK!**

|            |        |
|------------|--------|
| vernacular | spirit |
| artistic   | vision |
| scripture  | angel  |
| missionary | jewel  |
| door       | window |

1. ANERCLARUV \_\_\_\_\_

2. GLAEN \_\_\_\_\_

3. EWLEJ \_\_\_\_\_

4. ITIRSP \_\_\_\_\_

5. OROD \_\_\_\_\_

6. NVIOSI \_\_\_\_\_

7. SMISYAONR \_\_\_\_\_

8. USIRCETRP \_\_\_\_\_

9. DNIWOW \_\_\_\_\_

10. TCIAISRT \_\_\_\_\_



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Sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture. • Funding for this program was provided through a grant from the Florida Humanities Council with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this guide do not necessarily represent those of the Florida Humanities Council or the National Endowment for the Humanities.



# Mary L. Proctor

Vernacular Artist

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Written & Designed by Zhiju Liu

Born on July 11, 1960 in Jefferson County near Tallahassee, Florida, Mary L. Proctor was the first born daughter of her 11-year-old mother. Though she never knew her father, she believed that he was an artist like herself who painted in the local church. Proctor was raised by her grandmother and other close relatives, as her mother was still so young.



Proctor married a fireman from Tallahassee at 17. She used to collect odds and ends which she accumulated and turned into a business, Noah's Flea Market. Proctor's biracial background led to much scrutinization in her still racially segregated community. Despite the difficulty, her mixed heritage nurtured her spirit and opened her heart towards people. Her life was strapped in between economic, social, and emotional hardships. Her grandfather lost their farm and later died, which was coupled with the loss of her grandmother, aunt and uncle in a tragic fire in 1994. This was the turning point for her artistic journey. Proctor claims that she had a vision before the fire having seeing light going all the way up into heaven.

Falling into a deep depression after her loss, Proctor sought comfort in prayers and religion. During one of her prayers she had a vision that told her to start painting doors since she believed doors were the passageway to freedom, peace and comfort. Since then, Proctor instills her paintings with passages from scripture and glittering angels, signing most of her work with the name of **"Missionary Mary L. Proctor"**.

Being known for **door paintings**, Proctor is not restricted by the surfaces she paints on. Embellishment being one of her signature attributes, she fills doors and window frames with scrap cans, glass, fabrics and fake jewel-encrusted figures.

Today, Proctor owns the **American Folk Art Museum and Gallery** in the Centre of Tallahassee, where she sells a variety of folk art.

## Where has her work been shown?

Mary Proctor's work has been exhibited and collected by museums throughout the US including the Morris Museum in Augusta, Georgia; the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.; the Zora Neale Hurston National Museum of Fine Arts in Eatonville; the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland and House of Blues locations in Orlando, New Orleans, Florida, Chicago and Louisiana, Illinois; and the Museum of Florida History in Tallahassee.



Despite suffering great difficulties, Proctor says she started to paint because of love and healing which has sailed her through dark times creating and selling her visionary work.

Mary L. Proctor, *St. Matthew 4-4*, 1995, paint on plywood, 12 x 27.5 inches, Gadsden Arts Center & Museum Permanent Collection, 2007.1.4



This painted plywood and cloth sculpture was created by Proctor in 1995. The assemblage is hand lettered with religious text that reads: "St. Matthew 4-4 – Man shall not live by bread alone. But by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Mary Proctor."

## Glossary

**vernacular artists** - artists that are untrained, often living in isolated settings, who create art in response to their environment and experiences

**missionary** - a person undertaking a mission and especially a religious mission

**plywood** - a strong board that is made by gluing together thin sheets of wood, most often used in construction