

Dallas artist's work at Paul Quinn College arouses memories, emotions



By **NORMA ADAMS-WADE**
COLUMNIST

Vicki Meek of Dallas describes herself as a visual arts activist. Indeed, she frequently uses her creative hands and vision to arouse memories of and emotions about significant experiences and historical nuggets important to local and national black history and culture.

Meek said that was her aim eight months ago when she began to research and create an art installation focusing on the contributions by Bishop College to the arts in Dallas. Her work was unveiled Saturday as part of the Nasher Sculpture Center's Nasher XChange, honoring the museum's 10th anniversary.

Meek, who is managing director of the South Dallas Cultural Center, is the only Dallas artist commissioned by the museum for the XChange. The exhibition includes 10 installations by 10 artists at 10 sites, and the public got its first look Saturday.

Meek's installation lines the entrance of Paul Quinn College at 3837 Simpson Stuart Road. The campus is the site of the former historically black Bishop College, founded in 1881 in Marshall. The school moved to Dallas in 1961 and closed in 1988.

The title of Meek's work — *Black & Blue: A Cultural Oasis in the Hills* — refers to Bishop's black culture and the blue of the college's school colors. Her exhibit consists of 15 porcelain enamel markers, each about 6 feet tall, with images depicting key cultural events and important people from the arts and Bishop.

The Nasher XChange installations will be in place through Feb. 16. The work at Paul Quinn is open during regular school hours.

Meek said she was pleased to highlight the illustrious period of Bishop before the school's demise stemming from a high-profile corruption and mismanagement court case. That sad ending overshadowed the college's years of positive achievements, particularly in the arts, and its many high-achieving graduates, Meek said. Some alumni who attended Saturday's unveiling became overwhelmed, she said.

“I am thrilled that I’ve been able to reconnect Bishop alumni to the pride they once felt for their alma mater,” Meek said. “I’m hoping the public will revisit the positive and invaluable legacy of Bishop.”

Dr. **Harry Robinson Jr.**, president and chief executive of the African American Museum at Fair Park, said he was struck by how much little-known history Meek captured in her work.

“Many people do not realize that because of Bishop College, Dallas now has the Dallas Black Dance Theatre and the African American Museum,” Robinson said, pointing out that both institutions started at Bishop.

Meek said Paul Quinn President **Michael Sorrell** has been supportive and she is talking with him about making the installation permanent and training students to be docents.

For more about Meek’s exhibit, visit bishopblackandblue.com or her blog, art-racenotes.blogspot.com.

To learn more about the Nasher XChange collection, visit nashersculpturecenter.org/exhibitions or call 214-242-5100.