

## **2016 OUTSTANDING ARTS ORGANIZATION**

### **Art in the Atrium**

Art in the Atrium began in 1992 after Victoria Craig's husband, attorney Charles Craig, noticed that no art works exhibited in the Morristown administration building were by African-American artists. Dedicated to exhibiting works by emerging and established black artists, Art in the Atrium is a nonprofit volunteer organization whose annual exhibit at the Atrium Gallery has become the largest of its kind in New Jersey, growing from a single floor to currently occupying four full floors of the County Administration & Records Building. Art in the Atrium has also expanded to include seminars, jazz brunches, collectors' workshops and co-sponsored artist residencies in the Morris School District, benefitting 200 to 500 students each year. Additionally, it awards an annual scholarship to a student artist, whose work is often exhibited in the show. "It really helps to expand people's idea of what African-American art can be," says Craig. "We have works in all mediums and genres. It's not just figurative paintings with a mask in them." Art in the Atrium's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary show was exhibited here at the Morris Museum, viewed by more than 24,000 art lovers. Now marking its 24<sup>th</sup> year, Art in the Atrium has expanded public

awareness and introduced generations of viewers to some of the finest African-American artists in the country, including internationally renowned quilt artist Faith Ringgold (whose works are in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, MOMA and the Guggenheim, among others); photographer and MacArthur “genius” Deborah Willis (who photographed First Lady Michelle Obama); artist, scholar of African-American art, David Driskell (whose works are in the Corcoran Gallery and the Whitney Museum of American Art); and artist James Denmark (whose works are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art). Its exhibits not only promote artists and their work but also inform, challenge, educate and inspire all viewers.

Co-Founder and Administrative Director of ATA, Harlem-born Victoria Craig had a 37 year career in early childhood education, capping her last decade with outstanding work as the Morris School District’s Superintendent of the Basic Skills Summer School. A founding member and former President of the Morris County Chapter of Jack & Jill In America, Inc., she was a member of the Black United Fund of New Jersey, the Morris County Chapter of the Links, Inc. and recently served as Assistant Superintendent of her church’s Sunday School. She and husband Charles, married 45 years, have two grown daughters, Simone and Lauren, and a granddaughter, three year

old Victoria Charleigh.

Therefore, for their nearly a quarter-of-a-century of pioneering work highlighting contributions by African-American artists to our cultural landscape, for their dedicated efforts in educating and enriching the broader community through exhibitions, educational programs and scholarships, and for opening doors to greater inclusiveness, it is our pleasure to recognize Art in the Atrium and founders, Viki and Charles Craig, with Morris Arts' 2016 Outstanding Arts Organization Award.

Will Viki and Charles Craig please come up to accept this award. March 30, 2016