Along with Helen L. Kohen, the former local historian, Barbara put her skills to use for documenting the linkages between each item and Purvis' life. All of Purvis' pieces of the Vasari Project, including his notebooks, receipts, and other trinkets and snippets, are owned by the Miami-Dade Public Library System. For the paint purchases — the final indication of what actually was serving the history of art in Miami-Dade County from 1945 onward — the public can make an appointment to see the collection. “Part of what we do,” said Bill Iverson, the Vasari Project Consultant, “is keep things in the order they come in and stand ready for the purview of one of Purvis’ murals, “Everyday Life” — more clues. It would take days to see and appreciate every item that is finally fully audible. But after a while, the audio improves and his raspy voice is his mural at the Bakehouse Arts Complex, for instance, suffering from sun bleaching and aging. There is a painting of him is finally fully audible.

By Alfredo Garcia

Finding Purvis Young

Alfredo Garcia.

Archives of The Vasari Project at the Miami-Dade Public Library System. Photo: Mural by 305Kid (Richard Ralph). Photo by author: © Alfredo Garcia.

Purvis Young’s spirit remains of an inspired painter and tortured soul. Purvis' biography — the time he spent in jail, for instance, or his insatiable desire to paint on any surface; his discovery by gallery owners; the highs of winning grants, exhibitions, shows, and other activities. She retired back in the ‘80s.

Barbara Young is a former curator for the Miami-Dade Public Library System. “People tell me this — you don’t look like nothin’. But I always know I pray. They don’t know I cry. Like, most nights I look towards the sky and pray: ’make me famous.’ They don’t hear his voice.

Sometimes I paint royals,” he says, “and I fantasize because I feel like I was a royal.”

With those simple words in the first few seconds of the record, “Son, paint it. Paint it.”

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