

FORT GANSEVOORT

NEW ORLEANS ART INSIDER

HERstory at Stella Jones; Keith Duncan at CANO's Myrtle Banks Gallery

Bookhardt



Twenty-first century life has offered quick access to information, but most of us have less and less time to make sense of it all. There is also less time for the ordinary rituals that traditionally held lives and families together. Depictions of such everyday rituals, called genre paintings, went out of style ages ago but have recently made a comeback. This *HERstory* show at Stella Jones features work by blue chip black artists featuring a number of genre scenes where women play a prominent role. Phoebe Beasley's *Fine China*, top, is an alluringly stylized view of an affluent family around the dinner table. The familiar family trappings are all present, but the cool, yet charged, body language suggests a short story where intrigues and ironies are subtly playing out just below the surface. Wayne Manns' *Grandma's Biscuits* is vintage view of a family having breakfast. Much earthier in tone, its powerful brushwork would make it look at home in a museum, so it is startling that his regular exhibition space is actually Jackson Square. Works by art stars like John Scott, Elizabeth Catlett, Gordon Parks, Faith Ringgold, Samella Lewis and Barbara Chase-Riboud round out this diverse and eloquent expo.

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Keith Duncan's genre scenes at the Creative Alliance of New Orleans gallery feature two series offering differing perspectives. The smaller works are initially reminiscent of cliché Nola postcard scenes right out of a glossy tourist brochure – until you notice the homeless and impoverished people subversively woven so seamlessly into the imagery that you have to look twice to see them. Duncan's major masterpieces are his two almost wall-size paintings, *Wedding Reception* (above, detail) and *Funeral Repass* -- complexly ribald works like modern Creole versions of the often hilarious yet quintessentially human interactions immortalized by maestros ranging from Breughel the Elder to Thomas Hart Benton and Archibald Motley. Amazingly evocative, flamboyantly painted stuff.

~ Bookhardt / *HERstory: Group Exhibition of Paintings by Diverse Black Artists*, Through July 28, Stella Jones Gallery, 201 St. Charles Ave., Suite 132, 568-9050; *New Work: Paintings by Keith Duncan*, Through July 31, CANO Creative Space, 1307 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd., 218-4807.