

# FORT GANSEVOORT



## Arts Playlist: Biggs Museum highlights HBCU marching bands

Martin Matheny – August 22, 2025



Keith Duncan, Grambling State University Marching Band, 2022; acrylic, marker and fabric on unstretched canvas, 73 x 102 inches, Image courtesy of the artist and Fort Gansevoort.

This weekend marks the beginning of college football season, and for many, a big part of any college football experience is halftime.

That's when college marching bands take center stage - and some of the best in the nation are marching bands at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, like the Approaching Storm at Delaware State University

This fall, the Biggs Museum of American Art in Dover celebrates that HBCU band tradition with a new exhibit called "Battle of the Bands," with art by New Orleans-based artist Keith Duncan.

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And in this edition of Arts Playlist, Martin Matheny talks to the Biggs Museum Director of Learning & Engagement Kate Huffman, and Chief Curator Laura Fravel about this exhibition.

Artwork from a New Orleans native celebrating the tradition of HBCU marching bands opens soon at Dover's Biggs Museum of American Art.

The exhibition, called "Battle of the Bands," portrays 15 southern HBCU bands, including Howard, Grambling, and Florida A&M. Each band is featured in a large mixed media work, says Biggs Museum Chief Curator Laura Fravel.



Keith Duncan, Howard University Drum Major, 2023;  
Acrylic, marker and patterned paper on paper, 24 x 18 in.  
Image courtesy of the artist and Fort Gansevoort.

"15 of those pieces are over 10 feet wide," she says. "They are huge. They are painted on fabric. They have collaged elements, but they focus on the pageantry of the marching band." She says the large works put the viewer in the center of the spectacle.

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"When you stand in front of these, you feel like you're enveloped in the action," she says. "You are part of it. You see figures coming from all directions, and they are brightly colored."

The exhibition also presents portrayals of the drum majors.

"And for Keith Duncan, the artist, this is really the star performer," says Fravel. "He grew up loving comic books, loving that feeling of the exaggerated action of the moment, where you can tell how a figure is moving."

The exhibition opens on September 4, with a reception on September 11. The museum also plans two special events in October for middle and high school musicians.

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