

VISUAL ARTS: Past inspires mixed media

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REVIEW

"Praise Songs: William Buchanan, Danny Bruce Campbell, Malaika Favorite"

Through July 13. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesdays-Fridays, 1 p.m.-5 p.m. Saturdays-Sundays.
Prices: \$400-\$30,000. Hammonds House Museum, 503 Peoples St., Atlanta.
404-612-0500; www.hammondshouse.org

Bottom line: In a pleasurable group show, Danny Bruce Campbell's mixed media paintings and installations shine, offering historically and socially informed works that range from provocative to lyrical.

In a three-person show at Hammonds House, William Buchanan, Danny Bruce Campbell and Malaika Favorite present vivid artworks in diverse mediums. While each artist has something of interest to offer in "Praise Songs," Campbell's contributions show particular breadth, with 24 works running the gamut from installation to sculptural painting.

The Arkansas native anchors his showing with "The Gospel Truth #2," a meticulously arranged set of 19th and 20th century artifacts collected from friends and family. The two-wall installation includes kitchen utensils, quilts, rags, photographs, signs, flags — each item imbued with personal and cultural history. These elements are punctuated by areas of painting in Campbell's time-traveling style, which ranges from near caricature to carefully finessed abstraction.

While his installation works address racial stereotyping and historical struggle, the 39-year old artist doesn't dwell in the past. He uses it, carrying threads forward and building on his commentary as he creates richly layered and collaged surfaces.

"Noir Interior-Sunday Dress" is a chilling (and irresistible) example, a cleverly titled figurative portrait of a girl in her Sunday best. The subject wears a mask-like expression, posed in an edgy palette of reds, yellows, blues, and black. Pieced cloth heightens its unsettling quality, as surgical, zigzag stitching reinforces an image of painful deconstruction and reconstruction.

Campbell is adept at using materials to achieve a balance of visual impact and symbolism. Found objects, yarn, glue, enamel and acrylic are just part of his tool kit. His penchant for mixed media applies equally to abstract compositions, as in "Art #5," a tumbling, colorful collage of painted paper and fabric.

The colliding planes and gleeful hues in his work reflect a kinship with the art of Sam Gilliam, a friend and mentor since Campbell's days at Howard University in Washington.

But Campbell's narrative remains his own — from the celebratory reds, blues and pinks in diminutive upbeat works to "No More War," a large sculptural painting in dusty tones. With its crumpled angles, collapsing curves and sharpened points, this is no theoretical anti-war statement. It's personal. Campbell

was in the Army Reserves for years, and was sent to Kuwait prior to Sept. 11. He describes his time in the Middle East as "an awakening."

As he maneuvers through diverse time periods and creative traditions, Campbell's artwork sings from very different registers — at times haunting, at times light-hearted, but always closely observed and candidly articulated.