

# THE HUFFINGTON POST

## BLACK FEMALE ASTRONAUTS, THE JUBLIEE, AND MINSTRELS!

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IMAGE COURTESY DELANO DUNN

Half Moon Bay

Tripping uptown to the Long Gallery in Harlem is always a pleasure... A reflection of gallery owner Lewis Long's ever evolving vision "to move the people on the street as well as the broader art community." He didn't get an art history degree from a university, rather his journey comes from the heart and soul of an art enthusiast, who became drawn to the truth, imagination, and stimulus which art, in its singularity of expression, from the heart to hand relationship of an artist, can reach into. Long ascribes to embracing all the changes which touch the senses and welcomes artists of every culture, though he is often talked about in art circles as one of very few black gallerists, I prefer to think of him as a gallerist who happens to be black and who often calls attention to the issues that define the lives of Americans, mostly black, and when white, not the broadest portrayal, but certainly accurate to the story being told, as for the rest of the melting pot, they are not there *yet*, but I am sure one day they will be. As my mother use to say, "See your own country

before seeing another.” “There is a certain responsibility to being a black gallerist since there are expectations that come with that.” Long says.



IMAGE COURTESY DELANO DUNN

### We Ain't Even Been To The Ocean

Like other gallerists or art dealers who come from one professional world and effectively breach an alternative, Lewis Long came out of advertising, specializing in branding, to embracing the expansive and sometimes biased world of visual arts. He does not see himself as a black gallerist per se, if an artist can speak in a relate-able language successfully, which reflects their authentic truth, he is sensitive to it, nor does he want to be known as a gallerist who will only display works exclusively by black artists. He welcomes all who make sense in the face of the dynamic he is trying to present, which from what I can see so far— is not abstract, but fully fleshed out storytelling, as much about the people who are there, as those who are not.

One of the loveliest shows he presented were the works of Elizabeth Colomba, who was recently lambasted for revising the American history of black women, which was a misreading of her work, and it is hardly just American, when for the most part her characters are mythological, legendary and biblical, and often seem like they are coming from another world. Those women whom she does portray are historic American figures authentic and true. If Kehinde Wiley can paint black men as kings and knights and women as

amazons, I see no reason why Elizabeth Colomba cannot create a story that is based on fantasy. This is art, isn't it? A chauvinistic viewpoint, I am not sure, but some have said so...



Long feels a responsibility to reflect the painful historic and present truths of the African American experience loudly and clearly, or celebrate the majesty of its cultural heritage and ever blooming dynamism that is distinctively and uniquely “Black” and “American”, he is totally there. Thus his journey is not a simple one; his mission is to drink from the same chalice as every gallerist who exhibits art, as a matter of fact, take a taste from what he pours into the jeweled cup, the wine is just as tasty, authentic and fragrant and will spoil you for drunk too. His mission is to present thoughtful and inspiring content. There is only one chalice in the Holy Grail which everyone searches for; astutely, he will pour from the most aromatic bottle he finds, but from multiple vineyards, red, white, or rose. As Long gallery grows, so too will his cadre of stories to tell.

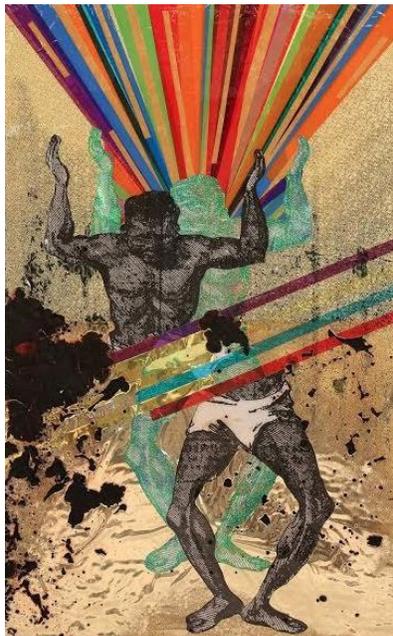


IMAGE COURTESY DELANO DUNN  
JUBLIEE!

On view now, is an exquisitely poignant and beautifully executed show by Delano Dunn, curated by Jasmine Wahi, NO ONE CAN BE THIS TOMORROW. A phrase Dunn's three year old daughter coined while looking at a rainbow. Though the constitution was written in 1776, the emancipation proclamation transpired on January 1, 1863, after a ferocious civil war and the lives of all too many were lost, but that is what it took to break the steeliest forged chains in US history. Dunn's haunting painting "Jubilee" could not have summed up Black Independence Day more accurately in his portrayal of freedom torn in two, to be

free but not, as hopes are betrayed and rainbows are not fully realized; the burden of having been slaves and the possibilities of the future are not streamline. The body of the man is broken in two pieces. There is not the steady path of equality that all may walk, but a jagged one for those who emerge from slavery. Though chains were broken, the ruins of their former incarnation have never completely been obliterated. Dunn retrieves classic prescribed images of “black folk” from timeworn Harper’s Bazaar publications and pictures he found in the archives of the Schomburg Center in Harlem. He meticulously sketches his images before painting and re-purposes old wallpaper, uses mylar and swipes black shoe polish on his work, which acts as a kind of wax seal displaying who the message came from, like a letter is often stamped on the back when closed. A well taken point that he makes with his earnest makers mark. His glossy resin finishes on most paintings have a fully finished glistening appeal, but not all of these multi-meaningful works dazzle with a shiny finish. Vivid colors are used to show his broken rainbows in their fully realized hopefulness...It is those rainbows that hurt so much for not being completely flawless, arching across a great open sky, rather emanating from one of his subjects dreams, from his head.

I cannot point to any favorite work, because I was enchanted by all of them. With a sense of irony, beauty and humor, Dunn is not obtuse... There is a great deal of nuance and thoughtfulness which goes into his work. He addresses the space race, having been exclusively white and male, also, by in large a Christian exploration, while the civil rights movement penetrated the headlines of the 60’s alongside it. His work “(SHE) Black Tron,” gives the black female her latent sci-fi place in the galaxy.

Dunn excavates the conflicted feelings of slaves who having been in servitude for so long, it seems like they developed a kind of Stockholm syndrome; becoming allies with their captors, or those who wondered which way to turn as freedom cast their lot into a new light. What would it mean? Or how black children saw the black minstrel performers who were mostly the affluent, among the many who lived in poverty. There is the affecting series, “The Ways of White Folks”, a series dedicated to black women which is beautifully rendered on pieces of a wall from a church a friend salvaged for him. Delano Dunn’s works are a joy to behold. Watch this artist as he continues to exhale his thoughts into the cultural breeze of these crazy times in which we live.



IMAGE COURTESY DELANO DUNN (She) Black Tron

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