

# Paintings from the Jim Craig and Randy Johnson Collection

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formed of red and blue concentric circles, "Mandala IV" looks like it might be the work of Kenneth Noland, The famous Washington, D.C. color field painter of the 1960s. Actually it's by a lesser known contemporary artist, John

McCracken, which does not take away from our viewing pleasure.  
A tall, handsome painting, "Fresh Season," by Jane Wilson features a cotton candy textured sky above ground that looks almost liquid.  
The collection is also

interesting because it is so diverse from contemporary optical art by Richard Anuskiewicz, student of Josef Albers, founder of Black Mountain College which operated in Black Mountain in the 1940's until 1956, to works from the 1800s.

The collection includes artists who started in our region like Frank Faulkner and his gold three-dimensional work "Untitled," who was born in Sumter and Romare Bearden, who was born in Charlotte.  
This show encourages us to trust our taste and our interest. The two collectors

have a pet beagle, Scrappy, and the exhibit also includes paintings of beagles. And Craig studied to be a violinist and there are paintings of musicians.  
This collection encourages us to live the good life at whatever level we can.  
The exhibit continues through June 3. Hours are

Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Free admission on Tuesdays from 5-10 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and on Sunday from 12-5 p.m.  
For additional information, call The Mint Museum on Randolph Road at (704) 337-2000.

# Keite Young took long road

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no means is Young an overnight sensation or a flash in the pan. He's been working on his craft for 10 years.  
"This is my third revision of this album. A lot of hard work went into completing this," he said.  
It took almost five years for the project to get done, Young said. But he isn't resting on his laurels. He's completed a second CD and is working on a third.

The music, Young said, will appeal to everyone. But the first people who catch on are those who don't let radio dictate what's hot.  
Want to go?  
When: Keite Young's performance  
When: Friday at 8 p.m. & 10:30 p.m.  
Where: The Jazz Café, located at 2127 Ayrslay Town Blvd.  
For more information: log on to www.thejazzcafe.com

# Nikki Giovanni simply an 'acolyte'



Poet Nikki Giovanni.

By Stephani-Maari Booker  
MINNESOTA SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. - In 1968, Nikki Giovanni self-published her first book of poems. By 1972, she had received her first honorary doctorate, from Wilberforce University in Ohio. Over the past three-and-a-half decades, Giovanni has accumulated more than 20 honorary degrees and a dozen-plus keys to cities, including New York and Los Angeles.

Giovanni's most recent work alone, the children's book *Rosa* (Henry Holt and Co., 2005), has earned her at least five more honors, including the Oppenheim Toy Portfolio Best Book Award and the Child Magazine's Best Children's Book of the Year.

So how does Giovanni view being one of the most famous and honored Americans in the literary arts, credited with bringing the Black Arts Movement to the mainstream and being a godmother of today's spoken word movement? How does she view herself with all the mounds of praise heaped upon her, from public awards to individuals telling her that her poetry saved their lives?

"I've had people who've been very complimentary, yes," Giovanni responded in a telephone interview. "And I'm glad, but I'm not a priest; I'm an acolyte. I'm not trying to do anything to anybody but bring a point of view. I'm not running for office. I'm not trying to lead. I'm just trying to say does this make sense, or isn't there some truth that we can obtain from this?"

Acolytes (William Morrow) is the name of Giovanni's new book of poetry. When told to explain the significance of the word for her, she said, "We traditionally think of acolytes in a religious context, but the world needs acolytes at this point; good people need acolytes at this point. It's the people that help you create your rituals. And all I'm trying to say is that we need some new rituals. We don't just need people following along because somebody tells you something."

Giovanni appreciates the accolades she has been given, but she asserts her right to be a human being,

period. You can't let the fact that people like you make you make a fool out of yourself. It sounds funny, but if you stay humble - that's what the old gospel song that says 'live a humble life' and 'humble' is not [that] you're poor and you wear dirty clothes; don't misunderstand. But that you have to keep putting the work in perspective, and the work has to be true, and you have to answer to, in my case, to my ancestors. I always feel like my grandmother is going to read this, even though she's been dead 40 years. And so I want it to be as truthful and as beautiful as I can make it. But I'm not a Pied Piper."

When Giovanni was told that she's often credited as the godmother of spoken word, she expressed great delight. "I love the kids. I love the spoken word; I love what they're doing. I am disenchanted that people actually complain about the hip hop generation. They're great kids, and I think that they have struggled [to create something] with nothing."

"[My generation] had segregation at least; we understood that was wrong. Now the kids don't have segregation, but they don't have band, they don't have school plays, they don't have a school paper, they can't work on the yearbook. And these kids have found a way to express themselves. It's an ancient way that they found, because they found it through music, as did our ancestors in 1619. I think that they're a great group, and I'm glad to feel that I have been a part of helping to bring their voice out."

The status Giovanni has earned through her long work history brings the responsibility to keep doing good work: "You're fortunate; you get to do something that you really love and that's meaningful; and that's good, but you have to do it again. You have to come back again, and writers, I don't think, have the same flexibility like [the music makers]. The people who sing songs sing the same song. They get a hit, and then they sing another one just like that, and they get another hit. But writers, we have to keep pushing that envelop. You have to learn some-

thing; you have to learn to listen, you have to keep pushing yourself to the edge a little bit."

"Learning, listening and pushing" describes Giovanni's life of surviving more than a decade past a lung cancer diagnosis. She wrote the introduction to "Breaking the Silence: Inspirational Stories of Black Cancer Survivors" by Karin Stanford (Hilton Publishing, 2005), and she's in the process of writing a "slow and painful book" about the impact of cancer in her life: "My mother and my sister both died of lung cancer. But you don't fight cancer - you have to find a way to live with it. That's what I feel about my cancer, that it and I have made a deal that we're going to live together a little bit longer. It's been 12 years, and I'd love another 20 or 25. There's no reason for it to kill me, and I'm not trying to kill it; I'm just trying to stay alive."

Giovanni also credits her ability to "tune out" doom-saying from healthcare providers "because you don't need anybody telling you why you really are sick and why you're going to die. I fired one of my oncologists, because he was looking at my x-rays and he said, 'Well, you know, according to this, you'll be dead by June!' And I said 'Am I paying you, or are you a volunteer?' He said 'No, you're paying me.' I said, 'Then you're fired. I don't need this.'"

"And I went and got a second and a third opinion. You have to do things like that, because as a friend of mine who is a nun says she's wonderful - That's a call that you have to answer. The Lord dials your number, you're going, but you want to make sure that that's what is happening, not that you have some incompetent or some indifferent person killing you!"

People must be assertive when it comes to their health, Giovanni insists: "You've got to take care of yourself. Any time you're feeling like something's wrong, something is. Go see about it. Don't wait. The first time I went to see the doctor, because I knew something was wrong, he said, 'Oh no, it's not.' Well, I couldn't accept that; I knew something was wrong, so I had to go find somebody who that's going to find out what's wrong. And so when people say, 'Well, I don't see anything; maybe you got a little high blood pressure or something,' you can't accept that. That'll kill you!"

"You knew something was wrong; you've been dreaming something was wrong. In my case, my father started to appear in my bathroom; when I was brushing my teeth, he would be in the mirror. And I kept thinking, 'Why am I seeing my father?' He's been dead and he died of an intestinal cancer - and he wasn't talking to me. It just, it bothered me. But I said, 'Something's wrong. Why is he in my mirror?' And I still don't understand that. But it's a lot of stuff. And I don't fight it."

# The Charlotte Post

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Mar. 18 at 2:30pm  
Mar. 22 at 7:30pm  
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