

Keith Duncan: *Brass Gods*

Exhibition Dates: August 1 – September 12, 2026
 Opening Reception: Saturday, May 2, 6:00–9:00 PM
 Gallery Location: 432 Julia Street, New Orleans, LA 70130
 Hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 10 am–5 pm
 Contact Info: 504.522.1999; www.arthurorogergallery.com

The Arthur Roger Gallery is pleased to present *Brass Gods*, an exhibition of paintings by Keith Duncan. Created between 2021 and 2022, the series examines the vitality, labor, and resilience of New Orleans' brass band musicians, whose performances animate the city's streets while navigating the realities of public space, tourism, and economic survival. The exhibition will be on view from August 1 through September 12, 2026, with an opening reception on Saturday, August 1, from 6:00 to 9:00 PM in conjunction with White Linen Night.

For more than three decades, Keith Duncan has built a practice centered on the lived experiences of Black communities in Louisiana and throughout the American South. His paintings combine expressive figuration with layered pattern, vibrant color, and densely orchestrated compositions that speak simultaneously to history, identity, spirituality, and contemporary life. Rather than documenting events, Duncan constructs psychologically charged narratives that invite viewers to consider the cultural forces shaping everyday experience.

With *Brass Gods*, Duncan turns his attention to the musicians who gather along Frenchmen Street, where the traditions of New Orleans brass bands continue to evolve before audiences of locals and visitors alike. These performances are celebrations of community and improvisation, but they also reveal the physical demands and economic precarity of making music in public. Duncan describes the series as an exploration of the "musical magic and madness" that unfolds on the city's streets, where a lone tuba call summons fellow musicians before the ensemble erupts into a spectacle of sound, movement, and collective energy.



Across the exhibition, musicians are compressed into tightly woven compositions, their bodies overlapping as horns, drums, and instruments converge into rhythmic fields of color and gesture. Duncan's dynamic handling of line and saturated palette conveys both the exhilaration of performance and the strenuous physical labor it requires. Blowing brass, carrying sousaphones, and sustaining relentless rhythms become acts of endurance as much as celebration.

The paintings also acknowledge the tensions surrounding street performance in New Orleans. While brass bands have become emblematic of the city's cultural identity, the musicians themselves often perform within systems that simultaneously celebrate and regulate their presence. Duncan captures this duality without sentimentality, presenting moments that embody joy, virtuosity, and communal pride alongside the structural realities that shape Black cultural production in public space.

Born in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, in 1964, Duncan received his BFA from Louisiana State University and his MFA from Hunter College in New York. He has exhibited extensively throughout the United States, and his work is included in the permanent collections of the New Orleans Museum of Art, the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, the Pérez Art Museum Miami, the Mississippi Museum of Art, the Flint Institute of Arts, and numerous private collections. *Brass Gods* follows the national success of Duncan's acclaimed *Battle of the Bands* series, which explored the pageantry and cultural significance of Historically Black College and University marching bands. While that body of work examined choreographed spectacle and institutional tradition, *Brass Gods* shifts toward the improvisational rhythms of New Orleans' streets, expanding Duncan's ongoing investigation of music as both cultural inheritance and lived experience.

ARTHUR ROGER | GALLERY

432 Julia Street | New Orleans, LA 70130 | 504.522.1999

ARTHURROGERGALLERY.COM

Throughout *Brass Gods*, music becomes more than subject matter—it becomes structure. Duncan orchestrates color, movement, and composition with the cadence of jazz itself, creating paintings that pulse with syncopation, improvisation, and collective memory. The result is a deeply personal meditation on one of New Orleans' most enduring artistic traditions and the musicians whose labor continues to sustain it.

For more information, please contact Arthur Roger Gallery at (504) 522-1999 or visit www.arthurrogergallery.com.

###