

A&E

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An exhibition of natural beauty

One month of fine art photos

By Dalia Davies
Echo A&E Editor

More and more, there has been an open appreciation for the natural beauty of women of African descent in America.

It's found in rap verses, the lyrics of love songs and urban clothing designed for our shapes. Displayed on billboards, in the top magazines, and on television; it can even be seen in new cosmetic products focused on enhancing black loveliness.

From Oct. 3 through Nov. 9, the appreciation travels even closer in the “Women of a New Tribe” exhibit and is featured just seconds from N.C. Central University at the Hayti Heritage Center.

The exhibit presented by photographer Jerry Taliaferro, is a study and celebration of natural women offering a fresh viewing of images from “the many faceted physical and spiritual beauty of a very unique group of women” who carry a light around them.

“They are the glue that holds people together,” said Taliaferro. “There is something beautiful about every woman. You can’t over look them.”

You can’t miss the diverse and alluring women portrayed in the two floors of artwork featuring approximately 50 photos from a collection of over 200. The photographs highlight angular to curvy body types and from permed, braided to kinky hair.

This fine art photography is completely shot in black and white film and developed in large formats. The pictures are in homage and “reminiscent of the high glamour photographs of the 1930s and 40s” through use of dramatic lighting and bold poses.

Taliaferro began his collection of still shots with models in 1998. The portraits exercise an interesting use of lighting and shadows adding grace to the images. Photos like “Washing Hair,” which was hung sideways, gives an essence of women from all different counties and backgrounds.

Some photos, like “Kim with Mask II,” feature a double exposure technique where the models faces have been spliced symmetrically and morphed with ancient African masks, artwork and still images.

“Poet 1,” “Poet 2,” and “Poet 3” captures the writers’ mood and words etched into the photo saying “Me black woman, Cause it’s all I know, Mysterious, Only because you don’t know me.”

Another set of photos include a range of women, over age 40 who have made measurable differences in their communities. From housewives to professionals, lawyers to students, these women carry the beauties we see around us daily.

Enthralled by the local beauty that surrounded him, Taliaferro’s goal was “highlighting not just the diverse physical beauty, but also the inner beauty of the subjects,” and show “women who can meet any standard of beauty.”

“If you seek the soul of a people, look to its women,” said Taliaferro.

“It’s about seeing and its more than seeing with your eyes, but with your heart”

The Hayti Heritage Center is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and on Saturday from 10 a.m. through 3 p.m. Admission is free.

If you would like to see the entire collection visit Taliaferro’s website at www.blackartphotoart.com.

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