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From Black Performance to Stuff on a Shelf, a Visit to Five Shows in San Francisco

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SAN FRANCISCO — It's summer in the USA, and that means it's group-show season on both coasts. Since group shows are a means of rounding up artists to make aesthetic and philosophical points, it seemed only fair that I do the same and corral a bunch of them (plus two solo shows) in this non-comprehensive review of a few San Francisco galleries and nonprofits.

A perfect pairing with *Radical Presence* comes a couple blocks down Mission Street at the Museum of the African Diaspora, which is hosting a [portraiture show from SFMOMA's collection](#). The exhibition focuses on the African American visage, and the show stealer is Fred Wilson's 1995 work "Me and It," which features a shelf packed with racist paraphernalia, flanked by two video screens. On one, Wilson mimics the gestures and stances of the black figures in the objects, his mouth becoming an ashtray, for example; in the other, a hand smashes the objects with a hammer. Around it, the show is a truly educational one, exploring the way black American identity is shaped by aspects as far-ranging as interior decorating, fabric design, television, and fashion (demonstrated in Mickalene Thomas's living-room installations), as well as the ancient traditions carried on by a formerly enslaved population, seen in Carrie Mae Weems's haunting "[Boneyard](#)" (1992).



Mickalene Thomas, "Sista Sista Lady Blue" (2007), chromogenic print, 40 3/8 x 48 1/2 in (102.55 x 123.19 cm), collection SFMOMA, gift of Campari USA (© Mickalene Thomas / Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York, photo by Katherine Du Tiel)

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