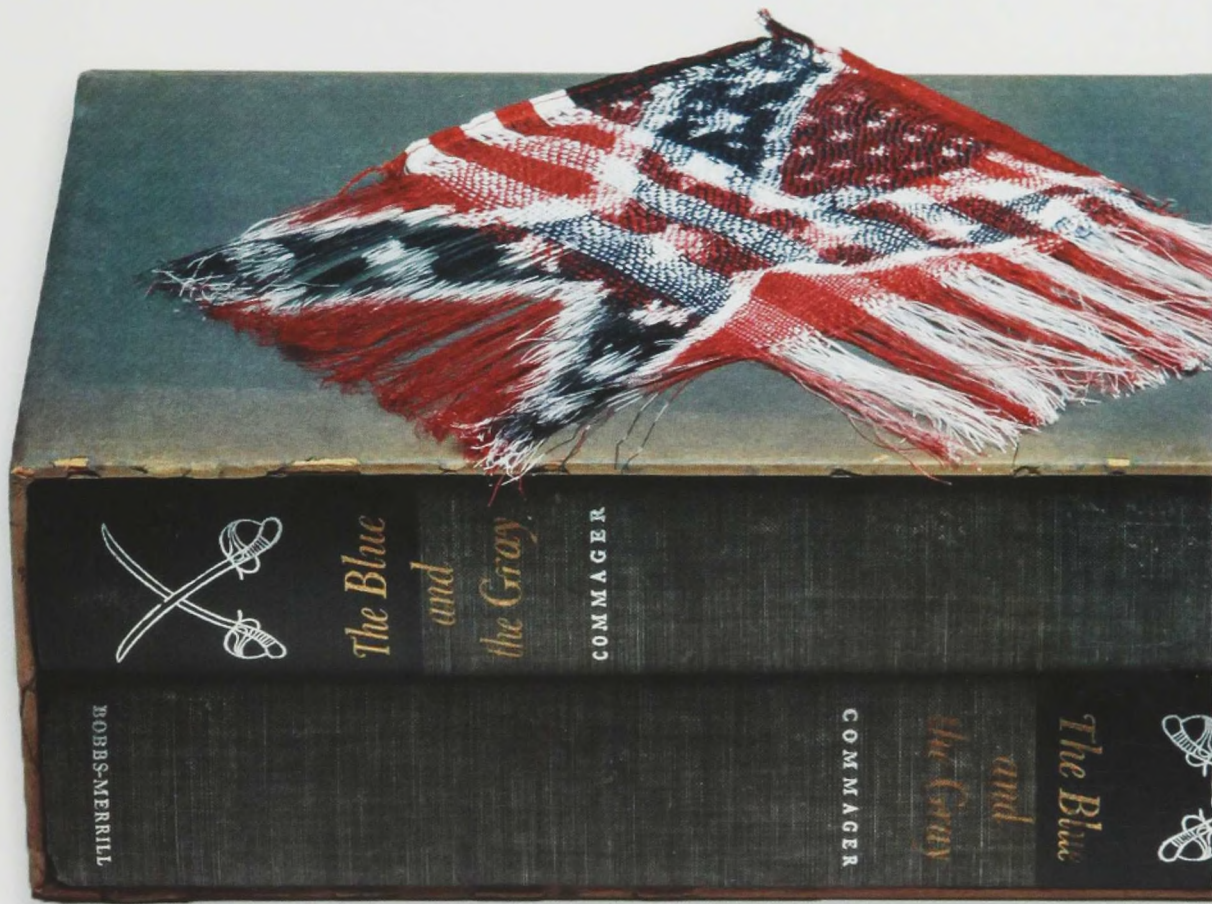


Both Sides Now: Joyce J. Scott & Sonya Clark

August 4 - September 24, 2017



108 | Contemporary is a non-profit organization created to support Oklahoma's contemporary fine craft artists.
Design by Hannah Hudspeth | Third Floor Design | The University of Tulsa School of Art, Design, and Art History.
Front Cover: *Interwoven*, Sonya Clark

Both Sides Now: Joyce J. Scott & Sonya Clark

August 4 - September 24, 2017

We are grateful to our generous sponsors
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John and Robyn Horn Foundation

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Robin Ballenger

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

108|Contemporary will be celebrating Five Years in our beautiful gallery in the Brady Arts District in March 2018.

The fine craft artists whose works have graced our gallery since our inception are makers of the highest caliber. They have helped shape our identity as a much-loved part of Tulsa's cultural landscape. Joyce J. Scott and Sonya Clark continue this legacy in *Both Sides Now: Joyce J. Scott & Sonya Clark*.

These two master artists come into our community each with a personal story blended from a familial heritage and lived experiences. Their narratives combine in *Both Sides Now* to create a dynamic dialogue that boldly explores communal character – theirs and ours. Community is, in fact, central to both Scott and Clark's practices, and in this exhibition objects that are thematically universal also resonate for our city.

Scott and Clark use textile techniques to address the need to highlight, challenge, uncover, and discover race, identity and injustice. The artists fearlessly portray their own histories and realities in a way that nudges us towards a more compassionate approach to the African American experience at large.

Bringing these two artists to a regional audience is of national significance in a way that could not have been anticipated. Scott is a 2016 MacArthur Fellow and Clark is a 2016 recipient of the Anonymous Was a Woman Award.

108|Contemporary is a nonprofit community arts organization that supports Oklahoma's contemporary fine craft artists by connecting them to audiences and opportunities through education, recognition, and exhibition programming. We hope you will find that the extraordinary craftwork presented in *Both Sides Now* challenges you and expands your understanding of our rich and varied Oklahoma culture.

Sincere thanks to our Presenting Sponsor, the John and Robyn Horn Foundation, and to Robin Ballenger for her generous gift. This exhibition is supported in part by a grant from Friends of Fiber Art International.

To our Board of Directors, which is made up of dedicated Tulsans passionate about sharing their love of fine craft with others, and to our stellar staff and interns—thank you.

Many thanks to our partners for programming on this exhibition, including the **Oklahoma Center for Community and Justice**, **John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation**, **All Souls Unitarian Church** and **Rudisill Regional Library**.

As always, we enjoy the very best supporters and visitors imaginable – thank you for making 108|Contemporary an important part of your life for Five Years – and for many years to come!

—Kathy McRuiz
Executive Director



Sonya Clark

Blackened and Bleached

Dyed and bleached cotton Confederate Battle flags

80" x 36" x 60"



Joyce J. Scott
War Woman 2
African sculptures, fused and painted mosaic glass, glass/plastic beads, thread, wire, metal keys and cast glass guns
24" x 18.5" x 18.5"

TAYLOR RENEE ALDRIDGE | CONCEPTUAL KINFOLK

Artists Joyce J. Scott and Sonya Clark were both respectively introduced to craft making by elders in their family. For Clark, it was her grandmother, who she affectionately refers to as her “chummy.” Chummy was a tailor who would invite a young Clark to come stitch with her during her youth. She recalls that her grandmother would often tell stories while they stitched together. As a result, narrative and fabric became an organic coupling for Clark. These memories instilled in her early on that textile could serve as an apparatus for storing collective memory and a vehicle for narrative sharing.

Joyce J. Scott also comes from a lineage of craft. She shared in an interview for *Craft in America* that her earliest memories of beading were with her mother, Elizabeth Talford Scott, who was a Baltimore based textile artist. As central as craft is to both Clark’s, and Scott’s practice, so is the element of community, ancestry, and storytelling. The two artists are driven by how community can be framed by art and craft. There is an intuitive aspect in the practice of both artists that bears the responsibility of sharing content and the dissemination of knowledge.

It is with this kindred desire that the two artists came together to present two bodies of work for 108|Contemporary, in an exhibition entitled *Both Sides Now: Joyce J. Scott & Sonya Clark*. The exhibition reveals current subjects that both artists have explored throughout their respective careers until the present. It also platforms and makes public a dialogue between two friends, who share an interest in craft. Through this presentation, we discover that Clark and Scott are indirect sources of inspiration for one another. Sonya Clark describes her friendship with Scott as a relationship of “conceptual kinfolk.” There is often a “meeting of the minds, and sometimes a meeting with material” -- between she and Scott.

The works that are included in *Both Sides Now* are imbued with dichotomy. There is the obvious duality between the making and presenting of work by two artists who are friends, who are crafters, and who are storytellers. Too, there is a binary of lineage. The two artists explore both the African and American aspects that inform Black culture.



For several decades, multidisciplinary artist Joyce J. Scott has worked with a range of material from performance to printmaking. More specifically, she is known for elaborate glass beadwork and sculpture. Throughout her long career, Joyce J. Scott has explored taboo issues relating to race, gender, and sexuality.

She has maintained a prolific practice for more than forty years, creating sculptural elements out of different types of beads. In particular, she often incorporates clear glass beads in her work. The beads are translucent and receptacle to light, projecting a luminous effect off of many of the artist's bead pieces. This illuminated mimicry serves as a metaphor for her approach to storytelling. Scott uses constructive provocation and sometimes humor to enlighten her audiences to painful truths, and a counter-narrative. "For me it's important to impute the work with something that will resonate and follow somebody home," says Scott.

Included in the exhibition is a floor to ceiling installation work, *Lynched Tree* (2011-2015) by Scott, which depicts a life-sized three-dimensional figure hanging upside down from the ceiling by string. The figure is gauntly portrayed. Its stomach is mutilated, revealing the figure's interior components. The intestinal and organ shaped blown glass elements pour out from the flesh-toned plastic made figure. Two limbs hang from the 'ceiling while two more lay horizontally on the ground. The organic interior elements flank these two parts of the bodily figure. *Lynched Tree*, originally conceptualized for the 2011 Prospect New Orleans Triennial, resembles a tree that has been excavated from the earth. The legs and arms of the figure could also be viewed as tree limbs. Here, Scott suggests an inevitable fate; the destruction of nature and society.

"I'm angry about race," Scott shares in an interview with me. She sees her artwork as a way to not only discuss the perilous nature of racism and societal prejudices, but also a cathartic release, in an effort to prioritize her own healing from these realities. In this catharsis, Scott leads with provocation, humor, and insatiable delight. Her visual vernacular can be likened to the literary prose of Toni Morrison; it's honest, it's beautiful, it's ugly, but most of all it's rich with authenticity. The tensions in her work bear the thickness that is similar to molasses; it's dark, yet sweet, and leaves an indelible stain on its consumer.



For this exhibition, Sonya Clark subsumes herself in the binary of familial lineage by recalling her Jamaican heritage and Scottish colonial influences on Jamaica. To capture the dichotomy of collective and personal narrative, Clark has created a hand-woven McHardy tartan out of bagasse fabric, derived from sugar cane fiber.

In 1870, her Jamaican grandmother, a woman of mixed African Heritage, married a man of Scottish descent. The neat green, red and blue plaid cloth is a literal materialization of Clark's legacy, depicting the weaving together of cultural heritage. The work also emboldens the relationship between commodity and nationalism, a pairing that, historically, is central to nations' burgeoning economies. The tartan, which derives from the 16th century, represents an act of solidarity with Scottish patriotism when worn. Conversely, Clark's use of the sugar cane fiber, the biggest export of Jamaica, inserts a narrative of colonization, economic capital and exploitative labor -- foundational to Jamaica's sugar cane industry.



Symbols of nation and political virtue are perpetually incorporated into Sonya Clark's work. Since her tenure as an MFA student at Cranbrook Art Academy in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, she has critiqued the flag as a symbol of patriotism, and has gone so far as to deconstruct it to better understand the fabric of this nation. In 2015 at the Mixed Greens Gallery in New York City, she presented *Unraveling & Unraveled*, whereby she began to unravel the thread on a Confederate flag in an effort to understand the roots of racial injustice in America. She later invited audiences to participate with her, signifying a collective dissecting of a prejudicial history.

In *Both Sides Now*, Clark continues to work with the flag. In the piece *Interwoven* (2016), she platforms two small flags interwoven by thin red white and blue threads. The two flags, Confederate and contemporary American, overlap with one another at the corners of their rectangular shapes. The ends of the flags are unraveled, the threads are soft, brittle even, and indicate precariousness of what the flags may represent. The small flags rest upon a notable book by Henry Steele Commager entitled "The Blue and the Gray," a collection of testimonies on the Civil War people who were participants in it. Clark suggests here that the unraveling of narrative is essential in understanding this nation's history, and possibly that each thread is a metaphor for each person's story; each thread has a role in shaping our collective history.

Artist Jasper Johns presented the flag in the 1960's as a symbol "the mind already knows." He was interested in highlighting the ambivalence of its representation, further complicating its proclamations. If Johns aimed to complicate the symbology of the American flag by depoliticizing and creating multiples of it, Clark aims to do the opposite. She creates opportunity to engage the flag as an exercise in social commentary, collective deconstruction and dialogue -- further politicizing its associated proclamations.

American flags have the ability to assert declarations of nationalism. More specifically, the Confederate flag — representative of the American South that once championed the exploitation of slave labor -- asserts a variety of meanings in the contemporary that is associated with a nostalgic desire to make America great again. Similar to her comrade Joyce J. Scott, Clark decides to address these conflating symbols in her work.

To further explore the construction of the American history through fibrous elements, Clark has chosen to dissect a symbolic cloth that is much lesser known than the Confederate or American flag. Inspired by a visit she made to the National Museum of American History – Smithsonian Institution, Sonya Clark revives the



Flag of Truce for this exhibition. The original Flag of Truce is a white dish towel that was used as a Confederate flag of surrender at Appomattox in Virginia, which ended the Civil War. Half of the small white cloth belongs to the Smithsonian collection and is exhibited in a small casing in the National Museum of American History that is easy to overlook. The other half has been divided into smaller pieces and belongs to several private collections and confederate archives throughout America.

For *Both Sides Now*, Sonya Clark creates a replica of the quaint surrender flag that accomplished so much in the nation's history. She emboldens its role in our past and how the simple presence of this white flag yielded the joining of America's divided nation. If we think about the state of this powerful relic of peace in the contemporary, we are reminded that the cloth has been divided into several parts to be possessed by individuals, and organizations that still hold conflicting ideologies with one another. In this ironic fate, we too are reminded of America's perpetual divisiveness and dividedness, or more democratically put, its duality.

Comparatively, Joyce J. Scott ruminates on a period in time before the Civil War and even pre-colonization. In *Before Whiteness* (2017), Scott contends the geographic impact the construction of race and colonization had on the world. The work includes a small beaded map of the European colonizers and the countries from which they came as it would appear on an atlas. The Republics of France, Italy, Germany, Netherlands, British Isles, and Spain are depicted as they were, before they invaded other lands to colonize.

These thoughts of pre-colonialism are prompted by the location of where *Both Sides Now* will be showcased. It was because 108|Contemporary's location is in Tulsa, Oklahoma, that Scott was compelled to present these particular works at this time. "My new pieces are an accumulation of Black Wall Street," she stated when sharing the inspirations behind this collection of work. She goes on to reveal that in the exhibition she hopes to provide an "aesthetic nod" to the legacy of Black Wall Street -- a 20th century microcosm of Tulsa with thriving Black owned businesses and neighborhoods -- and the erudition of those who conceived it. Prior to making this work, Scott took up residency at Venice Projects, Berengo Studio in Murano, Italy in 2011 and 2012. She expanded her craft through blowing glass and coupling Murano glass with traditional beadings. We cannot discount Scott's ability to subvert expectation of what an African American craft woman artist can and cannot create. Blowing glass in Murano is a practice that is not often associated (if ever) with Black women having autonomy over the technique. Scott is aware of her proximity to this technique as an anomaly and revels in her desire to upend expectation of who should and should not be creating certain types of artwork. Scott as well as Clark has been able to transcend expectation to much benefit.

As she summons people to recall this unprecedented legacy, Scott shares some legacy pieces of her own. She particularly does this through the *Ancestry/Progeny series* (2008) where she explores the relationship between lineage and cultural identity. One of the works from this ongoing series, *Prayers* (2012) use peyote stitched glass beads, cast glass votives and blown glass head.



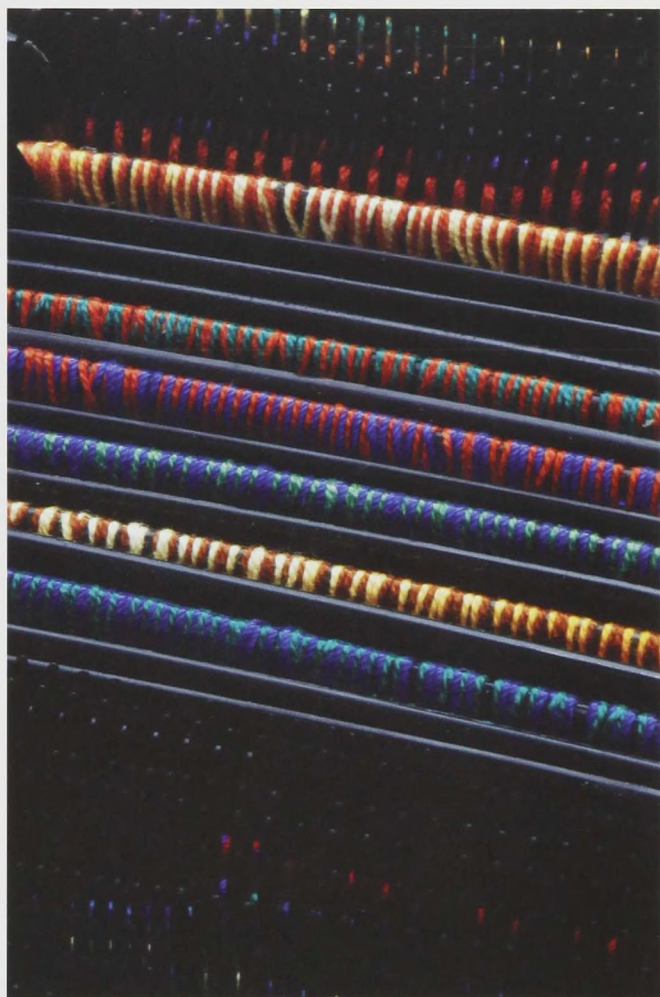
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Transcending expectation is a quality that both Clark and Scott share. Sonya Clark and Joyce J. Scott are both translators. Fabric, beaded, blown glass, oration and performance are some of their preferred languages. The works in *Both Sides Now* provide us with a vernacular experience of call and response between conceptual kinfolk. This group of works provides delightful insight into a relationship between two prolific artists. Too, it platforms a dialect that is centralized by the dichotomy of storytelling and craft.

Taylor Renee Aldridge is a Detroit based writer and curator. Taylor is the 2016 recipient of The Andy Warhol Foundation Creative Capital Arts Writers Grant for Short Form Writing. She received her M.L.A from Harvard University with a concentration in Museum Studies and a B.A. from Howard University with a concentration in Art History. Taylor has worked at the Ethelbert Cooper Gallery of African & African American Art (Harvard University), and has been awarded the Goldman Sachs Junior Fellowship at The National Museum of American History (Smithsonian Institutions). She has written for the Detroit MetroTimes, ARTNews, ContemporaryAnd, SFMoMA's Open Space and Hyperallergic.



Joyce J. Scott
Rather be White than Free
Beads and thread
7.5" x 1.75"



Sonya Clark
Kente Comb Cloth
Combs and thread
3" x 72" x 25"



Sonya Clark

Melanin

Glass tube, glass beads in the genetic code for Melanin

36" x 3" x 2"



Joyce J. Scott
Flayed Albino Man 2
Glass beads, plastic beads, thread
5" x 4" x 1"



Joyce J. Scott
Symbols of Ethnic Numerical Approximation, Trail of Tears
Beads and thread
12" x 7.5"



Sonya Clark
Black Man (Invisible)
Copy of Ralph Ellison's "Invisible Man", glass beads
2" x 9" x 6"



Sonya Clark
Palm Masks
Glass beads
4" x 3" each



Joyce J. Scott
Milk Mammy 2
Hand-blown Murano glass processes, beads, wire, thread, plastic dice
28.5" x 7.75" x 7.75"

JOYCE J. SCOTT | ARTIST STATEMENT

MOANING THRU A TRAIL OF TEARS

How you gonna walk that far in that weather, weatherworn, coerced?
Screeching dry throated babies, livestock becoming dead stock,
While you're duressed and spiritually noncompliant?
Who you gonna call out to when your protectors and villains are one in the same?
Said their Gods had more power, verifying that so you won't ever forget their names.
Nobody can shield no one.
Pushing thru tears, so deep you slip into a self-made sea, so salty its melting the frost.
You're supposed to be the winner, promises were made, commitments.
And you dragging your living property, the cows and sheep and those upright walking,
Two armed and two-legged weed pulling, blacksmithing swaddlers of your young ones.
This is not your moonlight, your lightning bugs or breeze.
You're now equal to your striding human possessions of lower attributes.
Same size feet, no better or worse, same teary eyes, no wetter.
Where is the measure to differentiate fervor, scales not made for that?
Saving them, rescuing you, what little life left is precious.
This swopped master, he's the pale one on the horse, feeding it your food.
Close to the fire, reading his Bible by its light.
Soon this too shall pass, until you're having matches their wanting.
Actual shackles reappear on the once chatelled, who huddled for life right next to you, whiles
yours erase your dreams.

JOYCE J. SCOTT | ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Joyce J. Scott is a multi-media visual and performance artist who constructs sophisticated beaded sculptures incorporating glass, clay, fabric swatches, and found objects that address social topics including racism, violence, and gender inequality. Her work scales from a human-worn neckpiece to a ceiling-high installation. Her work has been exhibited over sixty times in the U.S. as well as Europe, Africa, the Americas and Asia.

Scott holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts/Education from Maryland Institute College of Art, and a Masters of Fine Arts from the Instituto Allende in Mexico. She has received honors from the National Endowment of the Arts, Anonymous was a Woman Award, the Louis Comfort Tiffany Award, US Glasgow Fellowship, 2016 Baker Artists Awards and the 2016 MacArthur "Genius" Fellowship.

Her work is represented in Public and Private collections internationally and has been exhibited at the Fine Arts Museum/ Boston, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Applied Art Helsinki, and Meguro Museum of Art Tokyo. She is also a vocalist, an actress and a writer. Scott performed original Social and Political Dramedy internationally with Kay Lawal as the Thunder Thigh Revue in the 1980s and currently performs popular and original music with Lorraine Whitlesey as "Ebony and "Irony" .



Photo by John Dean



Joyce J. Scott
Ancestry/ Progeny II
Fused/ painted glass with copper inclusions and mixed media
20.5" x 10" x 2.75"



Joyce J. Scott
From the Ancestry/ Progeny Series: Race Rattle
Ceramic Crockery, wooden African Sling Shot, glass beads, crab claws, and thread
13" x 7.5" x 4"



Joyce J. Scott

Vaulted

Glass beads, blown and lampworked glass, wire & thread

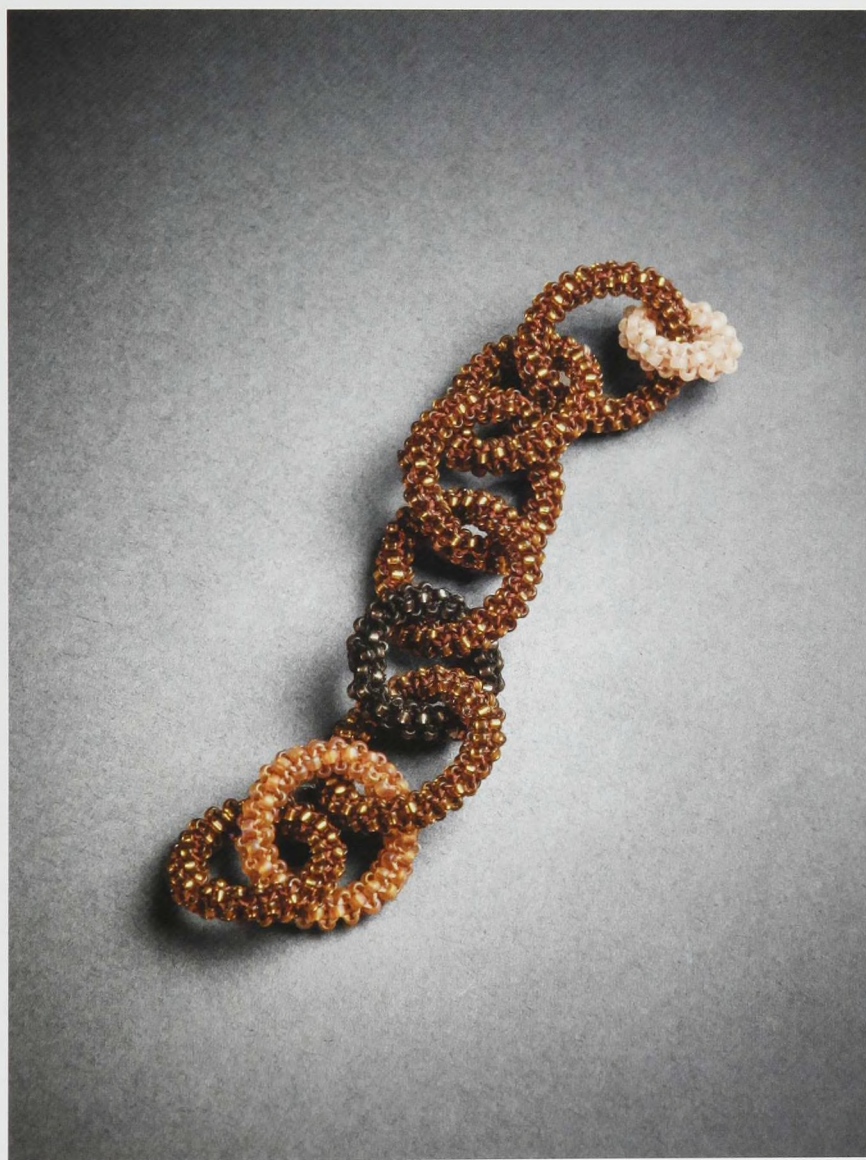
27" x 9" x 6.25"



Joyce J. Scott
Aunt Jemima Takes a Stand
Cast glass, glass beads
14.5" x 12.5" x 1.75"



Joyce J. Scott
Manifest Destiny
Beads and thread
3.5" x 1.75"



Joyce J. Scott
Bound, Trail of Tears
Beads and thread
5.5" x 1"

SONYA CLARK | ARTIST STATEMENT

Heads and tails
Tales and heads
Better and worse
This and that
That and this
Now and then
Then and now
Then and again
You and me
Them and us
Self and other
Other selves
Ourselves
Both sides now



I believe craft techniques and mundane materials connect us. Simple objects become cultural interfaces. Through them I navigate accord and discord. When trying to unravel complex issues, I am instinctively drawn to ordinary things: a five-dollar bill, a comb, a cloth, or a strand of hair. Charged with agency, these objects have the mysterious ability to reflect or absorb us. As a point of departure, I find my image, my personal story, in an object. But it is also the object's ability to act as a rhizome, the multiple ways in which it can be discovered or read by a wide audience, that draws me in. To sustain my practice, I milk the object, its potential, its image, and its materiality. I manipulate the object in a formal manner to engage the viewer in conversation about collective meaning. Can you find yourself in these objects? I trust that my stories, your stories, our stories collectively are held in the object. In this way, the everyday "thing" becomes a lens through which we may better see one another. A visual vocabulary forms a facet of language ranging from the vernacular to the political to the poetic.

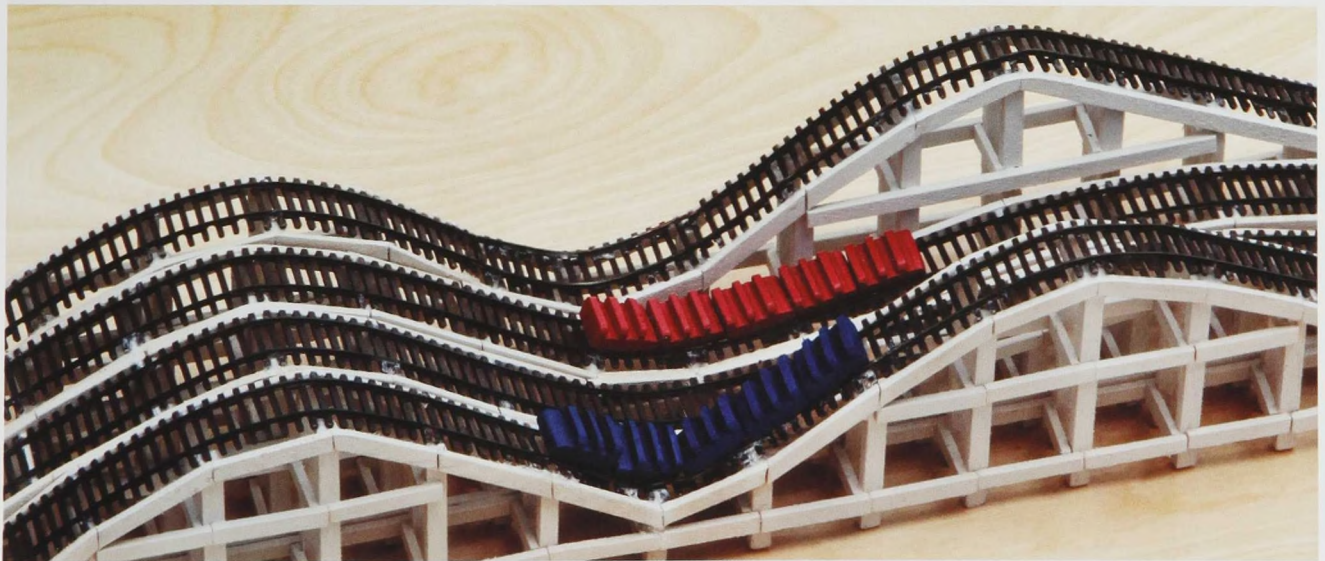
SONYA CLARK | ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Sonya Clark has exhibited in over 350 museums and galleries worldwide. Her work is in permanent collections including the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Philadelphia Museum of Art, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Indianapolis Museum of Art, and Virginia Museum of Fine Art. Critics have favorably reviewed her work in the New York Times, Art in America, Mother Jones, Time Magazine, Washington Post, Sculpture, Los Angeles Times, Hyperallergic, and Huffington Post. She is the recipient of awards including a Pollock-Krasner Grant, Art Prize for the Hair Craft Project, a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship, a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship, an American Academy in Rome Affiliate Fellowship, an Anonymous Was a Woman Award, and a United States Artist Fellowship. From 2006 -2017 Sonya served as Chair of the Craft and Material Studies Department at Virginia Commonwealth University. In 2016, she was awarded the Distinguished Faculty Award in Scholarship from the University. She holds an MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art. She earned a BFA from the Art Institute of Chicago. In 2015, she was awarded an honorary doctorate from Amherst College where she received her bachelor's degree and where she will be a Visiting Artist-in-Residence while on sabbatical in 2017-18.





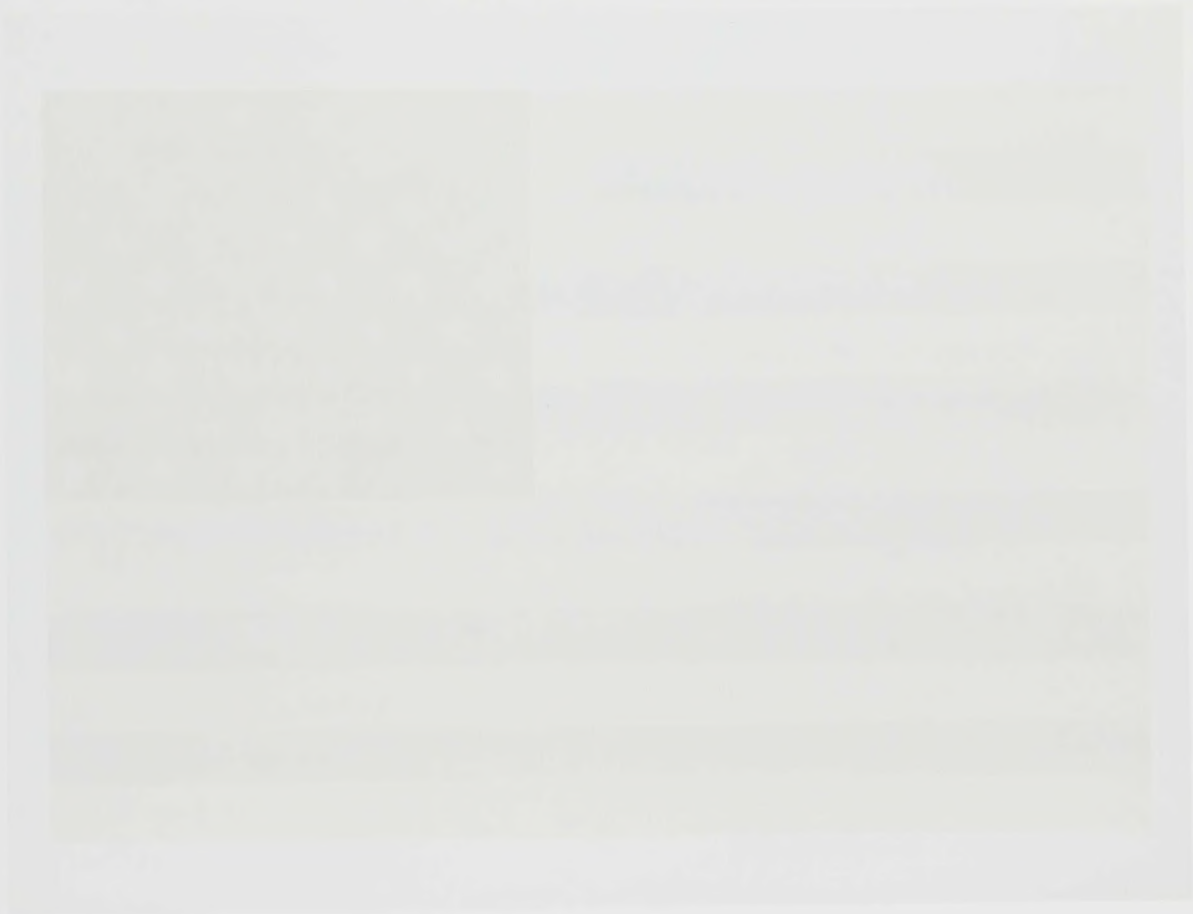
Sonya Clark
Rooted and Uprooted
Canvas and thread
10" x 26" x 10" and 10" x 35" x 10"



Sonya Clark
Rebel Yell
Wood, plastic, paint and recording of Confederate soldiers' battle cry
7" x 65" x 16"



Sonya Clark
Encrusted (drowning in sugar)
Five-dollar bill and sugar crystals
Each 4" x 6"



Sonya Clark
Whitewashed
Sherman Williams house paint colors: Incredible white, Storyteller, Natural Choice
44" x 71"

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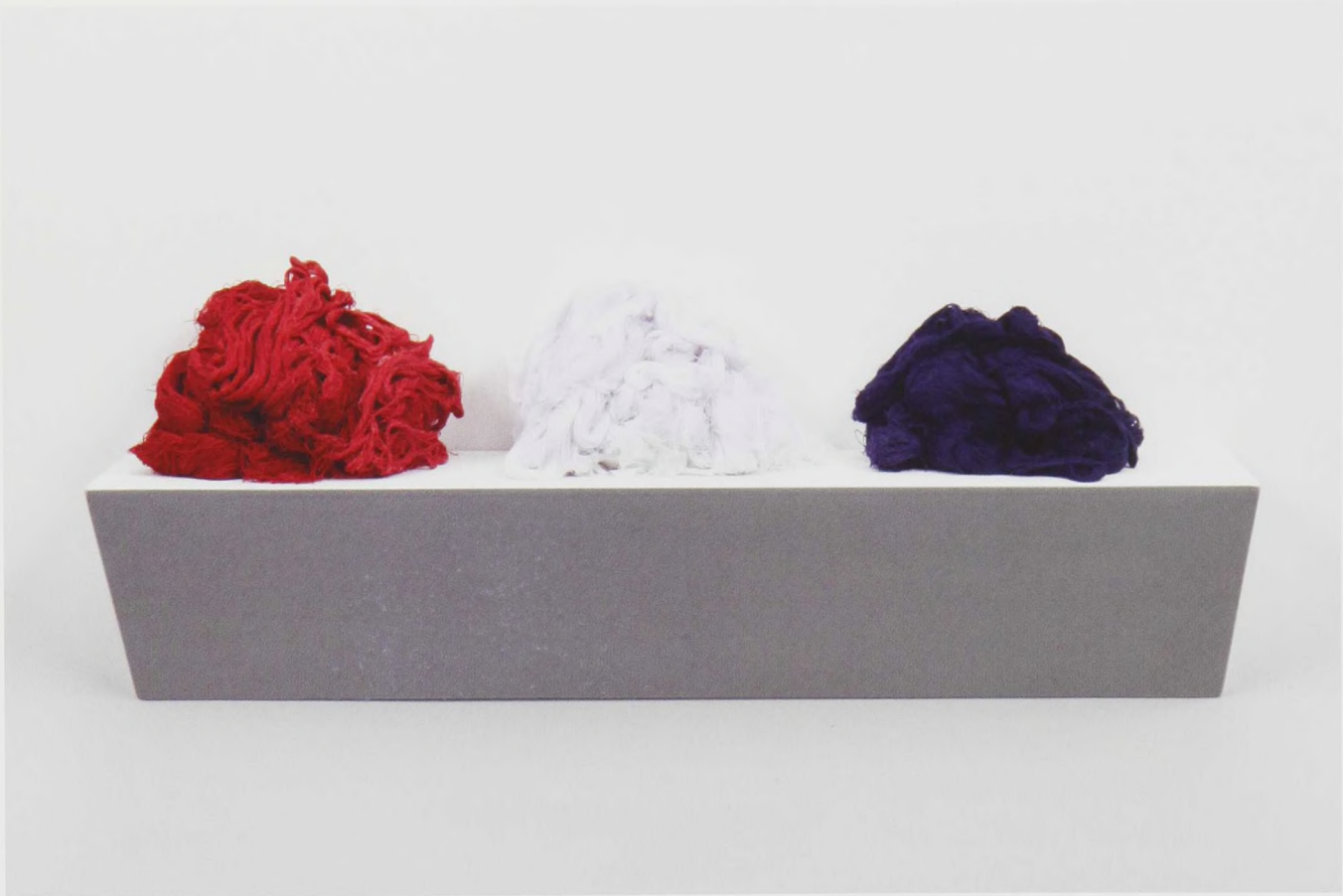
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Sonya Clark

Unraveled, 10

Completely unraveled cotton Confederate Battle Flag

14" x 30" x 7"

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