

# *UNFINISHED REPUBLIC: AMERICA AT 250*

Joyce J Scott • Kyle Hackett  
Elizabeth Talford Scott  
Sonya Clark • Paul Rucker  
Louise Fishman • Soledad Salamé



Image: Sonya Clark, *Unraveled*, 2015

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GALLERY



*UNFINISHED REPUBLIC  
AMERICA AT 250*

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# ***UNFINISHED REPUBLIC: AMERICA AT 250***

**Sonya Clark, Kyle Hackett, Joyce J. Scott, Paul Rucker,  
Elizabeth Talford Scott, Louise Fishman, and Soledad Salamé**

“We hold these truths to be self-evident...”—but do we? What, in fact, are our truths as a nation?

At 250 years, the American experiment remains profoundly unresolved. *Unfinished Republic* brings together Sonya Clark, Kyle Hackett, Joyce J. Scott, Paul Rucker, Elizabeth Talford Scott, Louise Fishman, and Soledad Salamé to examine a nation still struggling to define itself—morally, historically, environmentally, and politically. The project of America is incomplete not only because its founding promises remain unrealized, but because its most troubling histories have been repeatedly reshaped, minimized, or erased.

The art in this exhibition resists erasure. At a moment when efforts have escalated to suppress or sanitize narratives of enslavement, systemic violence, and dissent across cultural and educational institutions, these artists insist on confronting the full complexity of the nation and its narratives. Their work rejects the comfort of omission, addressing histories of bondage, lynching, sexual violence, misogyny, racism, hate and terror—not as distant events, but as forces that continue to shape American life. At the same time, it attends to beauty, to the plight—and profound contributions—of immigrants, and to those who have helped to build this complicated nation.

In many ways, the United States is built on fracture—contradiction, invention, violence, ambition, forced labor, and myth. These conditions are not incidental; they are structural, continuing to shift beneath our feet. The artists in *Unfinished Republic* probe our

entanglements: with land shaped by extraction and environmental neglect; with military service and the inheritance of war; with education amid a growing distrust of intellectual life and a long history of unequal access to knowledge; and with national symbols—flags, monuments, emblems—that may project unity while concealing deep division, or, as in the case of the Confederate flag, operate as enduring symbols of hate. At the same time, many of these artists also attend to the textures of daily life—tenuous, beautiful, and worth protecting. The exhibition invites a critical examination of cohesion, allegiance, freedom, and liberty, asking what it might take to move this unfinished experiment toward something more just.

Echoing Langston Hughes’ assertion that America has yet to become itself, the exhibition foregrounds the gap between national ideals and lived realities. “Liberty Denied” resonates throughout—in bodies denied autonomy, in histories rewritten or silenced, and in landscapes marked by both visible and obscured violence.

Yet *Unfinished Republic* is not an indictment; it is an act of witness. Through material, gesture, and form, these artists create space for difficult truths to surface—unsettling, necessary, and at times unexpectedly beautiful. They ask what it means to reckon honestly with the past, and whether a more equitable and harmonious future can still be imagined.

Amy Eva Raehse  
Partner & Executive Director  
Goya Contemporary & Goya-Girl Press



**Sonya Clark**

*Unraveled*, 2015-ongoing

Unraveled cotton Confederate battle flag, shelf

10 x 36 x 7 inches



In *Unraveling and Unraveled* (the latter, exhibited here), Sonya Clark confronts the enduring legacy of the Confederate flag through the slow and deliberate act of deconstruction. Using cotton Confederate battle flags, Clark painstakingly pulls apart the woven threads by hand — at times inviting visitors to participate in the process — transforming a charged representation of white supremacy into loose strands of red, white, and blue. The works examine how histories of racism, violence, and division are woven into the fabric of American life, and how dismantling those systems demands collective labor, patience, and sustained attention.

*Unraveling* refers to the ongoing participatory performance in which visitors join Clark in unweaving the flag thread by thread. The process is intentionally slow and generally unfolds in segments; over the course of an hour, only a small portion may come undone. For Clark, this measured pace reflects the difficulty of confronting and undoing generations of racial injustice.

*Unraveled* represents the aftermath — the fully dismantled flag reduced to separated piles of thread. Stripped of its original form and authority, the image dissolves into material, inviting viewers to reconsider the power symbols hold and the histories they carry. Together, the works shift attention away from destruction and toward transformation, suggesting that unraveling itself can become an act of reflection and repair.



**Sonya Clark**

*Confederate, surrender, 2022*

Mixografia print on handmade paper

43.75 x 23.25 x 0.75 inches

Edition of 30

*Confederate, surrender* centers a seemingly ordinary object imbued with profound historical meaning: the white cotton tea towel used as the Confederate Flag of Truce at Appomattox on April 9, 1865. Originally woven in Richmond, Virginia, the towel signaled the surrender of General Robert E. Lee's army and the collapse of a regime committed to preserving slavery. By reconstructing and amplifying this overlooked textile, Clark redirects attention away from the Confederate battle flag — long upheld as a symbol of white supremacy and racial violence — toward the modest domestic object that marked the Confederacy's defeat.

Clark first encountered the folded truce flag while researching at the Smithsonian Institution in 2011. Displayed quietly alongside more celebrated national artifacts, the object struck her as historically significant yet largely absent from public memory. Reflecting on the experience, Clark questioned what it might mean if national attention had focused less on Confederate battle flag iconography and more on the moment of surrender itself. Through this work, she reframes surrender not as reconciliation between equal sides, but as the necessary dismantling of a system built upon racial brutality and Black enslavement.

As a domestic textile, a dish towel is an intimate object — handled, folded, and worn through repeated labor. In Clark's dimensional print, the towel's woven structure and material presence are carefully emphasized, transforming a utilitarian cloth into a charged historical artifact. Rather than erasing historical tension, Clark preserves it through tactile processes that insist on both material and historical memory. Her work functions as what she has described as an act of magnification: bringing visibility to an object and history that have remained largely overlooked.

Through *Confederate, surrender*, Clark shifts national memory away from the glorification of Confederate imagery and toward the moment of the Confederacy's collapse. The title itself serves as a direct command for confederates, insurrectionists, and white supremacists to surrender. In doing so, the work commemorates not only the fall of the Confederacy but also the ongoing and unfinished struggle for racial justice that began with emancipation and continues today.<sup>1</sup>

1. Information related to this essay was discussed in a series of telephone conversations and email exchanges between Sonya Clark and Amy Raehse, 2024–26. Clark described her engagement with historically charged textiles as “an act of care.” See also Sonya Clark, interview by Paul Farber, “In Pursuit of the Confederate Truce Flag,” Monument Lab Podcast, episode 12, March 2019, <https://monumentlab.com/podcast/in-pursuit-of-the-confederate-truce-flag-with-artist-sonya-clark/>.

**Joyce J. Scott**

*Lips*, 1991

Beads, thread, wire

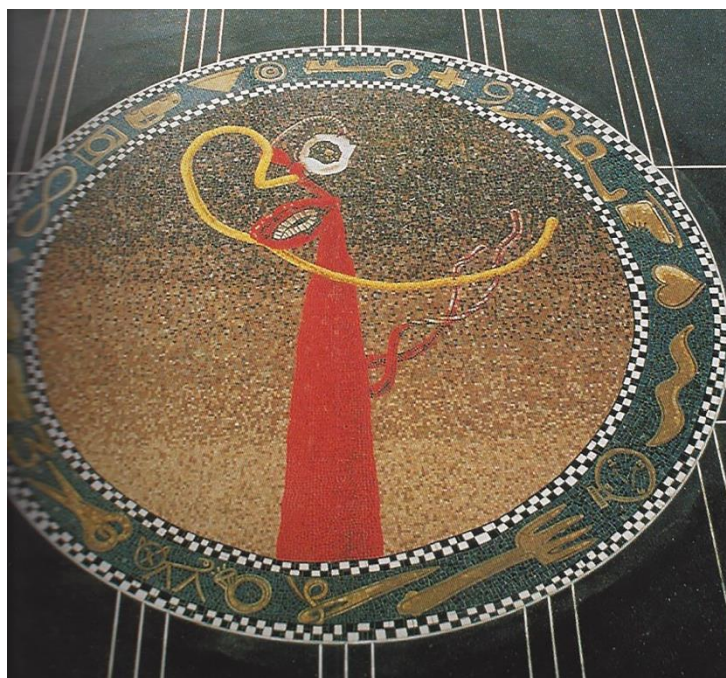
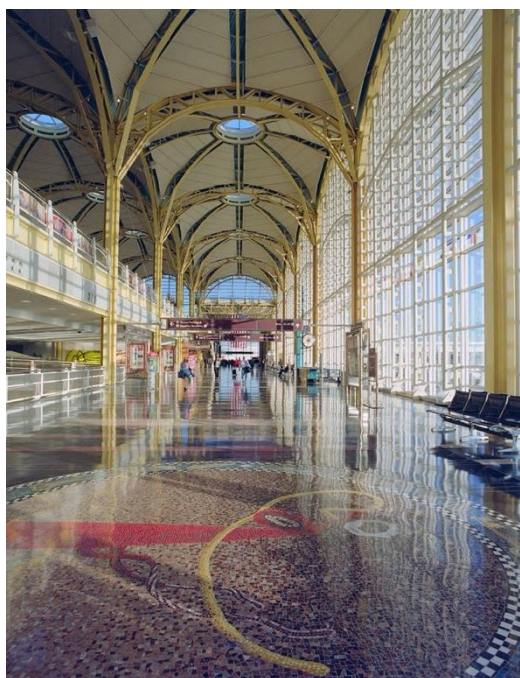
17 x 9.25 x 3 inches



In *Lips*, Joyce J. Scott transforms a familiar human feature into a powerful sculptural form charged with dark humor, beauty, and cultural critique. Created through her signature peyote-stitch beadwork technique, the work reflects Scott's sustained engagement with race, stereotyping, identity, spirituality, and the body. The exaggerated lips evoke racist caricatures historically imposed upon Black people, while reclaiming those forms through virtuoso craftsmanship, wit, and material transformation.

Scott later adapted *Lips* into a monumental marble and glass mosaic floor medallion for Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, translating the intimacy of beadwork into architecture and public space. Encountered by millions of travelers each year, the work expands Scott's visual language beyond the gallery, embedding questions of representation and visibility within the everyday movement of public life.

For Scott, beadwork functions as both artistic practice and storytelling, transforming materials traditionally associated with craft into vehicles for social commentary and cultural memory. *Lips* connects bodily form with voice, presence, and self-expression, challenging viewers to consider how the complexity of the body can become a site of projection, memory, hatred, resistance, beauty, and transformation.



*Lips*, Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, Washington, DC, Concourse Level Terminal C, Marble/Glass Mosaic.







**Joyce J. Scott (b. 1948, American)**

*Ancestry / Progeny*, 2008

Repurposed porcelain figures, beads, thread

Installed approx.: 20 x 14 x 4 inches

Beaded head (top): 7.5 x 6 x 4.25 inches

Male figure (left): 12.5 x 5.5 x 2.5 inches

Female figure (right): 12.5 x 4.5 x 3.5 inches



*Ancestry / Progeny* stages a charged encounter between objects that carry the weight of historical memory and inherited power. Repurposed Colonial-era figurines are arranged in an uneasy formation, their gazes directed upward toward a beaded Black head rendered with Scott's signature precision and tactile intensity. Both theatrical and confrontational, the work compresses centuries of racial hierarchy, domination, and cultural distortion into a tightly constructed tableau.

Scott draws upon the visual language of ornament and craft to expose the ideologies embedded within objects. The Colonial figurines — once symbols of refinement, order, and status — become unsettling witnesses, their authority destabilized by their proximity to the central figure. The beaded head, at once deeply human and symbolic, resists reduction even as it evokes histories of enslavement, objectification, and erasure.

The work operates in the space between beauty and unease, seduction and critique. By bringing together disparate materials and fraught iconographies, Scott reveals how cultural inheritance is never neutral, but shaped by structures of power, memory, and the enduring echoes of colonialism.

*Ancestry / Progeny* asks viewers to consider what is passed down, what is preserved, and what histories remain unresolved.<sup>2</sup>

2. This text was originally drafted in 2015 following extensive discussions between Joyce J. Scott and Amy Raehse. It was revised and condensed in 2026 for this publication.



**Louise Fishman**

*Angry Hillary*, 2008

Acrylic on paper

27.25 x 40.25 inches

*Angry Hillary* emerges from Louise Fishman’s historically significant and influential *Angry Women* series, created in 1973, in which the artist paired the word “ANGRY” with women’s names and surrounded them with charged, gestural abstraction. Across the series, Fishman rejected compositional harmony in favor of urgency, fragmentation, and visible painterly force — a visual language shaped by feminist consciousness and her refusal of the inherited conventions of male-dominated abstraction.

Years after the series completion, Fishman returned to it in 2008 to create *Angry Hillary*, based on Hillary Clinton, a public figure whose career has been persistently shaped by the expectations and constraints imposed upon women in positions of power. Rather than functioning as a conventional portrait, *Angry Hillary* operates as a field of tension in which language, gesture, and paint collide. Its layered surface carries a sense of accumulation and disruption, as color and mark resist resolution and instead sustain conflict in suspension.

Like the earlier works in the *Angry Women* series, *Angry Hillary* refuses closure. Here, the word “ANGRY” functions not as a fixed label, but as an expansive political and emotional condition — one that speaks to histories of frustration, exclusion, resistance, and endurance experienced by women navigating systems historically structured to marginalize them.

Fishman’s practice transformed abstraction into a site of embodiment, rupture, and lived experience. In *Angry Hillary*, that legacy continues. Abstraction becomes a means of holding pressure rather than resolving it, allowing emotion, politics, and form to coexist without reconciliation.<sup>3</sup>

3. This text draws upon writings by Carter Ratcliff (2024), “Louise Fishman,” *The Woman’s Studio*, June 7, 2021, <https://thewomensstudio.net/2021/06/07/louise-fishman/>, as well as conversations with Ingrid Nyboe, Martha Macks, and the Louise Fishman Foundation.



**Joyce J. Scott**

*Oh Say Can You See*, 2016

Wood, glass beads, metal

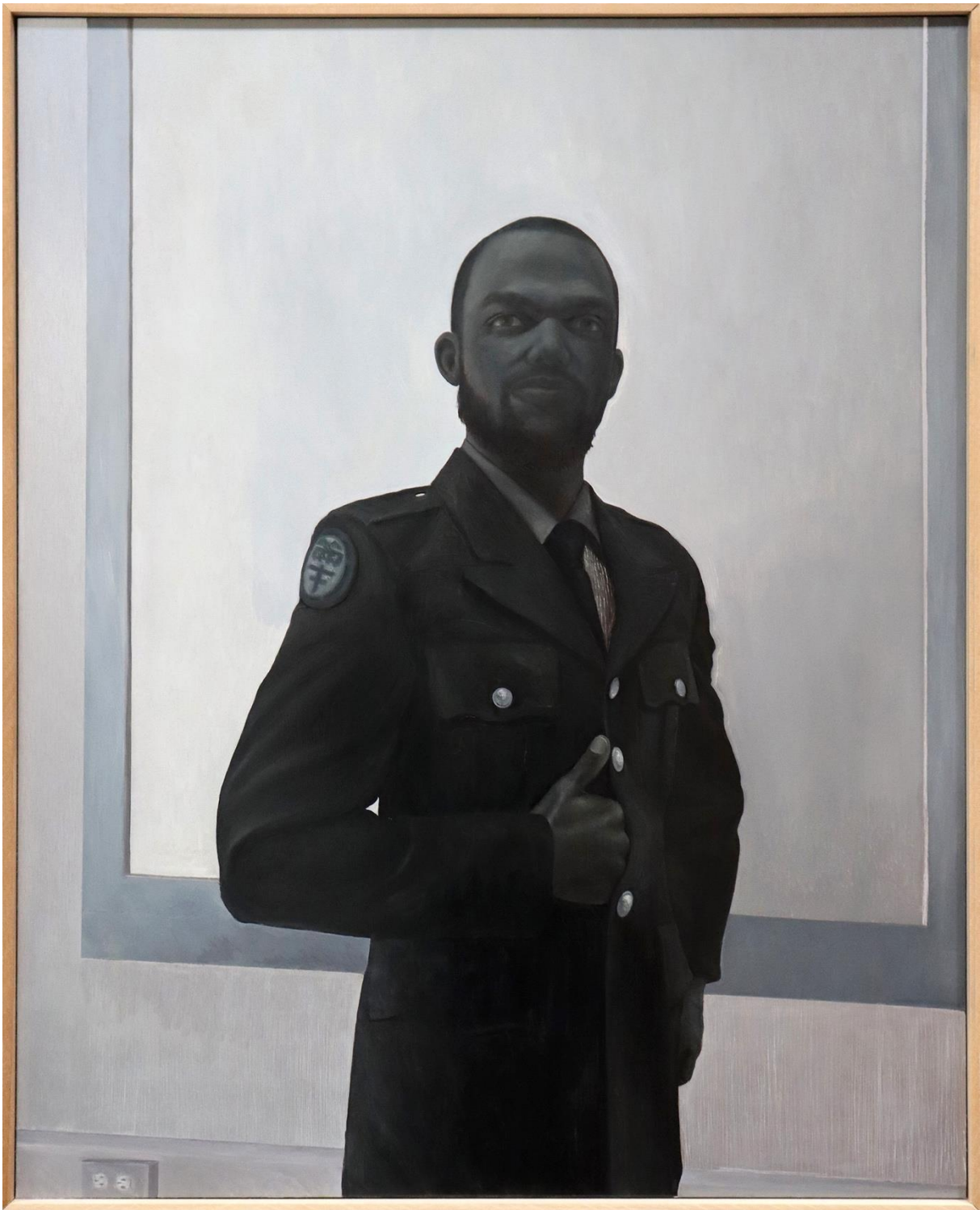
8 x 10 x 15 inches

In *Oh Say Can You See*, Joyce J. Scott assembles a provocative constellation of objects — including a decommissioned handgun, a carved wooden nutcracker in the form of a woman, and a meticulously beaded phallus — to deliver a searing critique of American culture and its contradictions. Combining humor, violence, sexuality, and craft, Scott exposes the ways power is encoded within race, gender, nationalism, and the mythology of the American dream.

The title invokes the opening line of the United States national anthem, yet the work poses a more difficult question: what, exactly, are Americans willing to see? Scott juxtaposes symbols of domination, desire, and domesticity to confront a society shaped by gun violence, misogyny, racial inequity, and spectacle. The carved wooden female nutcracker — a figure whose body is literally engineered for crushing nuts— introduces domesticity as a mechanism of both labor and control. The beaded phallus and American flag elements further complicate the scene, entangling sexuality, nationalism, and craft within a shared visual field. The inclusion of a real firearm grounds the work in lived danger and historical trauma, intensifying the tension between ornament, violence, and cultural meaning.

Throughout her career, Scott has used beadwork and repurposed objects to challenge distinctions between fine art and craft while confronting systems of oppression with biting wit and unflinching clarity. In *Oh Say Can You See*, satire becomes a strategy and weapon, dismantling safe national narratives by revealing an America in which violence, consumption, sexuality, and power remain deeply intertwined.<sup>4</sup>

4. Amy Raehse drafted this text from notes of a 2016 discussion with Joyce J. Scott, in which Scott described the female figure as a “gifted working nutcracker.” Scott noted that the decommissioned handgun was obtained through Pittsburgh’s “Goods for Guns” buyback program and provided through Boris Bally’s collaborative project I.M.A.G.I.N.E. Peace Now (2016), in which Scott participated.



**Kyle Hackett**

*After Private John Hackett, 2022*

Oil paint on aluminum

30 x 24 inches



Kyle Hackett, in his own words, explains that this work is informed by research into his second great-grandfather, John Hackett, who served in the Union Army during the American Civil War, and became a foundational figure in the family's Maryland roots. Born into slavery around 1845, John Hackett's life followed a remarkable trajectory — from enslavement to service on the front lines of the Civil War, and ultimately to civic leadership in the postwar period.

The artist depicts himself in uniform as a way of connecting to and reclaiming this lineage, channeling the legacy of John Hackett's service in the 29th United States Colored Troops. Through military enlistment, J. Hackett gained his freedom and witnessed pivotal moments in American history, including surviving the Battle of the Crater in Petersburg, Virginia, and standing in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, as Union forces enforced emancipation on what would become known as Juneteenth.

By engaging J. Hackett's military service and his later life as a homeowner in the artist's hometown, the work reflects on ancestry as both personal inheritance and historical record. It positions Hackett as a patriarchal figure within the family line while also considering the artist's present-day relationship to that legacy. Ultimately, the work functions as a form of research and reflection, situating personal history within the broader narrative of the American story.<sup>5</sup>

5. The historical accounts and artwork descriptions above were provided by the artist Kyle Hackett.

**Elizabeth Talford Scott**

*Upside Downwards*, 1992

Fabric, beads, buttons, ribbon,  
rocks, thread

59 x 52.5 inches



**Elizabeth Talford Scott**

*Prayer (Healing Shawl)*, 1995

Fabric, stones, yarn, plastic netting, thread

22 x 16 x 1.5 inches

There is perhaps no story more distinctly American than that of the Scott family. Through the work of Elizabeth Talford Scott, Joyce J. Scott, and generations before them, fabric becomes testimony. Quilts become archives. Everyday materials become vessels of memory, resistance, ingenuity, spirituality, and love. These works remind us that history is not only recorded in written books — it is stitched into cloth, carried through stories, and preserved within families.

For the Scotts, quilts function not only as artistic expression, but also as diaries, memory keepers, and acts of resistance. As Joyce J. Scott has described them, early quilts were “diaries for preliterate people” — visual records layered with oral histories, coded narratives, family lore, survival strategies, and expressions of care. These were not static or purely decorative objects; they were often used, repaired, layered, and passed through generations. Over time, they became repositories of touch, memory, and testimony. When quilts became worn or stained, new fabric was added — what Joyce and Elizabeth referred to as “new pages in the book.” In Elizabeth’s hands, stitches became words. Words became paragraphs. Fabric became history.

The materials themselves carry meaning. Rooted in a philosophy of transformation, discarded textiles were cleaned, repurposed, and spiritually renewed. Printed text and graphics on feed sacks became tools of learning, making quilting at once communal, educational, spiritual, and ceremonial. Sugar sacks, grain and salt bags, natural dyes, recycled clothing, upcycled neckties, garments from Elizabeth’s migration “Upsouth” during the 1940s, fiber knots, rocks, buttons, and other repurposed materials all entered the work.

The imagery within these quilts often reflects memories from childhood — insects, plants, stars, maps, and light — symbols drawn from observation, imagination, spirituality, and lived experience. Some objects were created in relation to the body, such as the *Shield* seen here. These works were believed to carry medicinal and protective properties, while their physical weight — sometimes created through the addition of rocks or prayer beads — was thought to help ease pain. Together, they affirm quilting not only as an artistic practice, but as a living language of survival, storytelling, and cultural memory, sustained through a deeply personal and intergenerational voice.<sup>6</sup>

6. This text, originally drafted by Amy Raehse in 2023 for the exhibition *Both Sides Now: The Spirituality, Resilience, & Innovation of Elizabeth Talford Scott*, was revised in 2026 for the online exhibition *History in the Making*, and subsequently revised again for this publication.



**Kyle Hackett**

*After Judgement*, 2018

Oil paint on panel

48 x 28 inches



*After Judgement* is among the artist's earliest self-portraits in regalia. The painting was inspired by his experiences as a faculty member in academia, as well as his roles as commencement speaker at his high school and at the convocation of his alma mater college. Through these experiences, he became interested in institutional hierarchy and its implications for status, posture, and positioning. At the same time, his work is attentive to the human dimensions that underlie these structures, as well as the distinctions of costume and symbolic presentation. He considers the complex psychological dynamics of regalia within institutional contexts and how these relate to power structures and the politics of visual representation.<sup>7</sup>

7. The historical accounts and artwork descriptions above were provided by the artist Kyle Hackett.

**Joyce J. Scott**

*Pussy Melon 2*, 1995

Blown glass, beads, paint, thread

11 x 14 x 8 inches

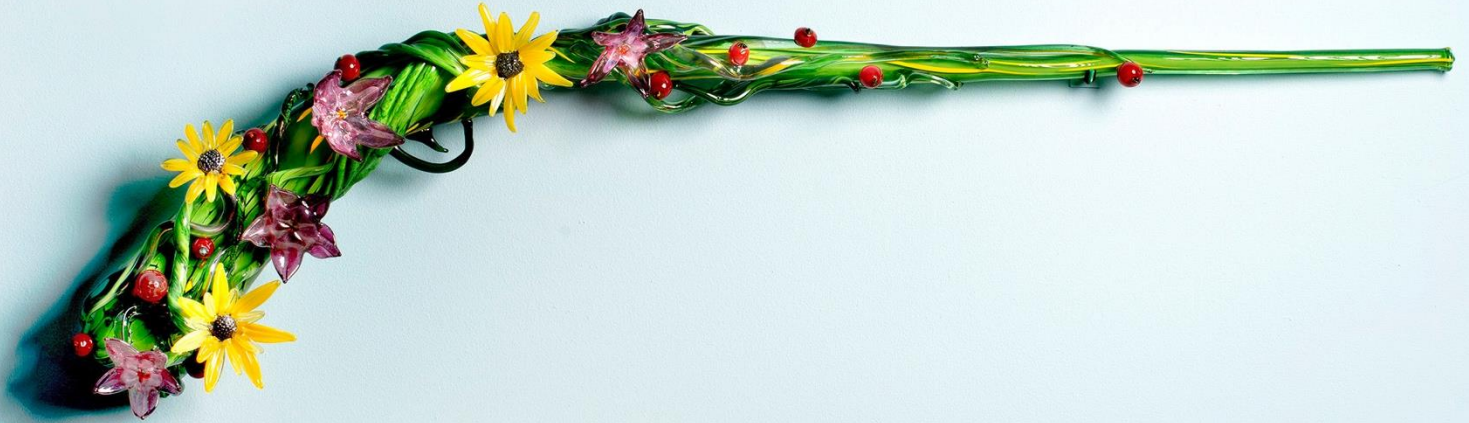




Joyce J. Scott's *Pussy Melon* confronts the intertwined histories of racist and sexist language used to represent Black bodies and women's sexuality. By merging the image of the watermelon — a racist trope long used to caricature Black people in the United States after emancipation — with explicit references to female anatomy, Scott exposes how ridicule, fetishization, and violence operate as embedded structures within American culture.

Inscribed along the edge of the glass melon rind is the text: "Girlfriend so juicy and so sweet. Ripe, red meat."

The work resonates with misogynistic rhetoric that gained renewed public attention during the 2016 U.S. presidential election, following the resurfacing of Donald Trump's 2005 *Access Hollywood* recording in which he boasted about forcibly "grabbing women by the pussy." The work draws a connection between degradation and sexual aggression as mutually reinforcing systems of power.



**Joyce J. Scott**

*[Harriet's] Rifle, 2017*

Blown glass, glass beads

12 x 47 x 5 inches



*Harriet's Rifle* reimagines the gun not as a symbol of conquest, but as a complicated instrument of survival, resistance, and liberation. Created in Baltimore with the assistance of Tim McFadden for Joyce J. Scott's exhibition at *Grounds For Sculpture* in NJ, the luminous green glass rifle references Harriet Tubman, who famously carried a rifle while guiding enslaved people to freedom along the Underground Railroad. For Harriet Tubman, the weapon represented protection, resolve, and a refusal to allow fugitives to be forced back into enslavement. The artist recognized a similar fierce determination in her own mother, Elizabeth Talford Scott, who was known to keep a shotgun by the front door for protection.

Scott transforms this history through fragile blown glass, beadwork, and radiant color — materials traditionally associated with beauty and delicacy rather than strength or force. The contradiction is intentional: the rifle appears powerful yet could shatter upon impact. In Scott's hands, the object becomes both memorial and warning, a meditation on the complicated role of violence within struggles for freedom and justice. By invoking Tubman's legacy alongside contemporary debates surrounding guns in America, Scott asks viewers to consider when resistance becomes necessary, who is permitted to wield power, and how histories of survival continue to shape the present. <sup>8</sup>

8. Excerpted from a 2016 publication, written by Amy Raehse.

**Soledad Salamé**

[Top right] *Layered News (Border Crisis)*, 2019

Embroidered pigment print on Fabriano paper

Print: 12 x 12 inches

Edition of 5

[Bottom left] *Layered News (Obama)*, 2019

Embroidered pigment print on Fabriano paper

11.5 x 13 inches

Edition of 5

[Bottom right] *Layered News, NY/9-11*, 2019

Monoprint with hand painting on Fabriano paper

15.5 x 12.5 inches

Edition 1 of 1





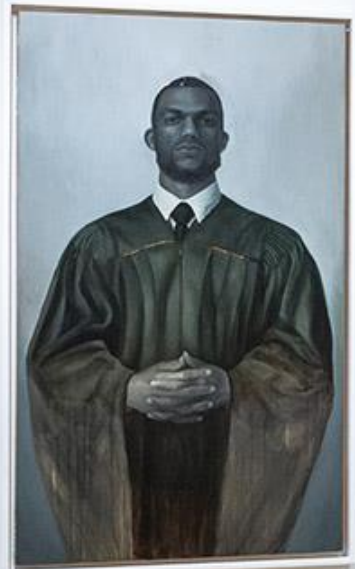
In this series of works on paper, Soledad Salamé transforms contemporary newspapers into layered fields of image, text, and material culture rich with commentary and critique. Drawing from printed headlines, photographs, and media imagery, she reworks the visual language of daily news into compositions that both document and question the forces shaping public understanding.

At the center of this body of work is an examination of how information is produced, circulated, and consumed in the United States. Responding to the relentless flow of breaking news, political rhetoric, and crisis reporting, Salamé underscores the fragility of collective memory and the speed at which events are absorbed, forgotten, or reframed. The works evoke a society in constant motion — defined by urgency, contradiction, and competing claims to truth.

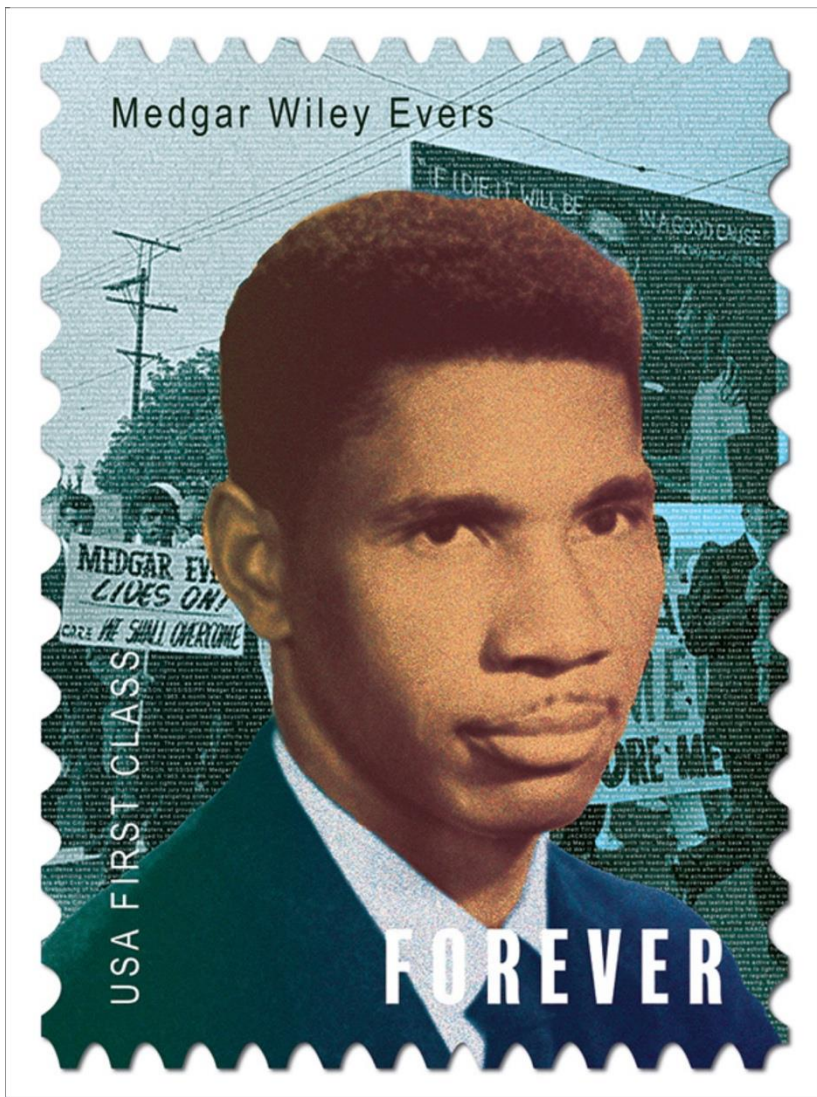
Rather than offering resolution, Salamé's interventions emphasize accumulation, residue, and interruption. Ink bleeds, fragments persist, and traces of headlines remain embedded within layered surfaces like sediment. In this way, the works function simultaneously as archive and disruption: recording contemporary America while resisting the authority of any singular narrative.

Salamé's practice ultimately turns attention back onto the viewer, asking not only what is reported, but how meaning itself is constructed, contested, and continually rewritten within the public sphere —and what it reveals about us as a society through the act of our own reporting.<sup>9</sup>

9. This text was adapted from the exhibition statement for *Soledad Salamé: We the Migrants: Fleeing/Flooding* (2019), originally drafted by Amy Raehse in consultation with the artist.







**Paul Rucker**

*FOREVER: Medgar Evers, June 12, 1963, Jackson, Mississippi, 2019*

Fujicolor Crystal Archive emulsion sealed between solid recycled aluminum and a high-gloss UV protective laminate.

40 x 30 inches

Edition of 18

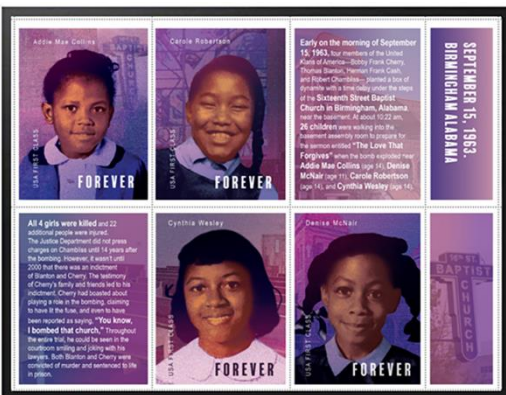
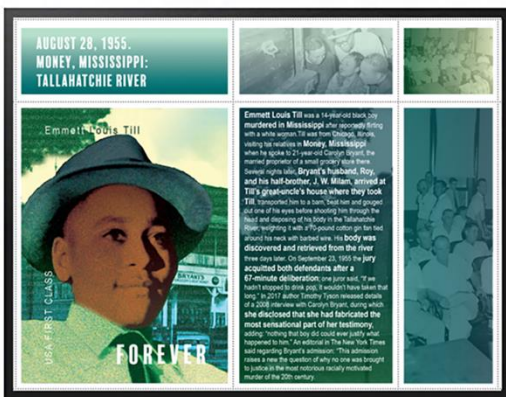
[Below]

**Paul Rucker**

*FOREVER: Emmett Louis Till, 2026, FOREVER: Four Little Girls, 2026*

Perforated postage stamp with dry, water-activated gum adhesive and dextrin, diptych 8.5 x 11 inches each

Edition of 32



*FOREVER* examines the history of civil rights martyrs—individuals and communities who were victims of racially motivated violence in the United States yet remain absent from many official systems of remembrance, including the commemorative narratives of U.S. postage stamps. Through this series, Paul Rucker confronts the politics of visibility and erasure, asking who is deemed worthy of national honor, and what forces shape those decisions.

By recontextualizing archival absence as a site of artistic intervention, *FOREVER* challenges viewers to consider how collective memory is constructed, maintained, and selectively forgotten. The works do not simply memorialize the dead; they interrogate the systems that determine which lives are publicly mourned and which are left unmarked.

In doing so, the series expands the meaning of commemoration beyond official recognition, asserting remembrance as an active responsibility rather than a passive inheritance. It calls attention to the ongoing consequences of racial violence while insisting on the necessity of confronting historical truth as part of the present.

Together, these works form a counter-archive—one that restores presence where history has imposed silence and insists that remembrance itself is a form of accountability.<sup>10</sup>

The series includes the following individuals and groups. Included in this exhibition are marked with an asterisk.

- \*Medgar Wiley Evers (June 12, 1963)**: A civil rights activist and NAACP field secretary in Mississippi, Evers was murdered in his own driveway by a white segregationist.
- \*Emmett Louis Till (August 28, 1955)**: A 14-year-old boy brutally beaten and murdered in Mississippi; recent admissions revealed that the testimony used against him was fabricated.
- \*16th Street Baptist Church Bombing (September 15, 1963)**: Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, and Cynthia Wesley were killed when a bomb planted by Ku Klux Klan members exploded at a Birmingham church.
- Viola Fauver Gregg Liuzzo (March 25, 1965)**: A white activist from Detroit who traveled to Selma to support the Civil Rights Movement, Liuzzo was killed by Ku Klux Klan members in Alabama.
- Edwin T. Pratt (January 26, 1969)**: The Executive Director of the Seattle Urban League, Pratt was shot at his home; the case remains officially unsolved.
- The Scottsboro Boys (March 24, 1931)**: Nine teenagers were arrested on minor charges in Alabama, then wrongfully accused of rape, leading to rushed trials, death sentences, and life in prison.
- Freedom Summer Murders (June 21-22, 1964)**: James Earl Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael "Mickey" Schwerner were murdered in Neshoba County, Mississippi, by a group that included law enforcement and Klan members.
- Vernon Ferdinand Dahmer, Sr. (January 11, 1966)**: An NAACP leader in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, Dahmer died after his home was firebombed by individuals with Klan connections.

10. The above text was adapted and condensed from materials on the artist's personal website, as well as from contextual conversations between the artist and curator in 2026.

**Paul Rucker**

*Maggie Walker \$300, 2026*

Archival pigment print on

Moab 300GSM paper

13 x 19 inches

Edition of 10



**Paul Rucker**

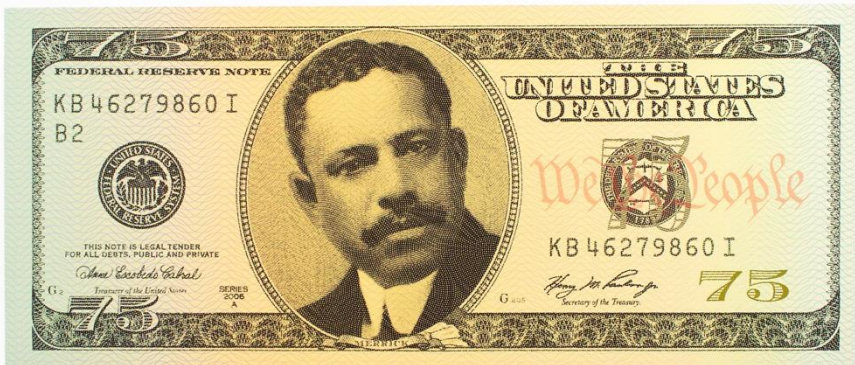
*John Merrick \$75, 2026*

Archival pigment print on

Moab 300GSM paper

13 x 19 inches

Edition of 10





These works commemorate two historically significant figures connected to America's Black Wall Streets.

One figure honored here is Maggie Lena Walker of Richmond, VA. Born on July 15, 1864, Walker was a businesswoman, teacher, and civic leader who, in 1903, became the first African American woman to charter a bank and the first to serve as a bank president in the United States. Guided by a vision of economic empowerment and self-determination, she worked to create tangible improvements in the lives of African Americans through business, education, and community leadership. Later in life, despite paralysis and the use of a wheelchair, Walker continued her advocacy and public leadership, helping to expand visibility and inclusion for people with disabilities.

The second figure honored is John Merrick of Durham, NC. Born into slavery in 1859 in Clinton, North Carolina, Merrick became one of the most influential African American business leaders of his era. He founded several successful enterprises in the Raleigh and Durham region, most notably the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company. Through entrepreneurship and philanthropy, Merrick reinvested in the Black community, advancing economic opportunity, education, and collective progress.<sup>11</sup>

11. The above text was provided by the artist and further developed through contextual email correspondence between the artist and curator in 2026.

**Joyce J. Scott**

*Sex Traffic*, 2014

Hand-blown Murano glass, metal,  
beads, thread, leather

76 x 16 x 9.5 inches



Joyce J. Scott's *Sex Traffic* confronts the intertwined violence of exploitation and America's enduring relationship with guns. Constructed as a monumental musket from blown glass, beads, leather, and thread, the work depicts a bound female figure attached to the weapon's barrel, invoking the brutal realities of human trafficking and the commodification of women's bodies. The gun's exaggerated scale and overtly phallic form connect sexual violence to broader structures of domination, power, and fear.

Yet Scott deliberately undermines the weapon's authority through her use of fragile materials. Constructed from glass and beadwork, the gun could never function without destroying itself, transforming the object into a metaphor for the instability and self-destructive nature of violence. Created amid ongoing national debates surrounding gun control, sexual exploitation, and systemic inequality, *Sex Traffic* remains urgently relevant as conversations around bodily autonomy, gendered violence, and the trafficking of vulnerable people continue worldwide. Through beauty, discomfort, and contradiction, Scott compels viewers to confront how violence is normalized, consumed, and embedded within contemporary culture.<sup>12</sup>

12. Excerpt from Amy Raehse's essay in the 2014 catalogue *Can't We All Just Get Along?* ISBN 978-1-4951-2405-1.





**Kyle Hackett**

*For A.G. Gaston (Birmingham), 2025*

Oil paint on canvas

50 x 73 inches

*For A. G. Gaston (Birmingham)* marks a pivotal shift in the practice of Kyle Hackett. The painting foregrounds tensions between institutional archives and personal memory, engaging the traditions of history painting through a more intimate, salon-style lens. Hackett approaches group portraiture as both image and artifact, incorporating photographic source material and the visible “wear and tear” of archival forms to examine how identity is constructed within historical representation. Central to the work is the question of how painting can operate both within and against the conventions it inherits.

The painting emerged from Hackett’s 2023 solo exhibition *Circular Narratives* and a research trip to Birmingham, where he studied the layered histories surrounding sites such as the A. G. Gaston Motel. During segregation, the motel provided first-class accommodations, including air conditioning, for Black travelers navigating the restrictions of Jim Crow. It also served as a gathering place for civil rights leaders including Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. before becoming the target of bombing and vandalism in 1963. The building later closed in 1986 and was subsequently repurposed as a senior living residence. Today, as a Smithsonian-affiliated landmark, the Gaston Motel stands as an important archive of Black leadership and Birmingham’s complex civic history.

In *For A. G. Gaston (Birmingham)*, Hackett transposes a photograph — originally taken after returning home to deliver his high school commencement address — depicting his brother and a close friend onto a backdrop derived from the motel’s promotional brochure. In doing so, he symbolically carries family into the archive, collapsing temporal and spatial distance. Hackett’s brother not only accompanied him during the Birmingham research trip, but also contributed to the exhibition’s curation, reinforcing the work’s grounding in lived experience and relational memory.

The painting operates simultaneously as a tribute to personal relationships and as a meditation on the national histories that shape them. Through this synthesis of intimacy, archival reference, and material citation, Hackett reframes painting as both witness to and participant in the ongoing construction of historical meaning.<sup>13</sup>

13. The historical accounts and artwork descriptions above were provided by Kyle Hackett. They were originally adapted for the online exhibition *History: In the Making* (February 2026) and subsequently revised for this publication.

**Joyce J. Scott**

*Excessive Force*, 2018

Glass beads, thread, glass, faux bullets

Bullets: each measures 2.88 x 0.75 x 0.75 inches

Butterfly: 3.5 x 3.25 x 1.25 inches



Each beaded bullet features initials of individuals connected to incidents of police violence, excessive force, and racial injustice, including Kathryn Johnston, Tamir Rice, Korryn Gaines, Trayvon Martin, Rodney King, Michael Brown, Philando Castile, Sandra Bland, Amadou Diallo, Freddie Gray, Erica Garner, and Tanisha Anderson. Eric Garner is represented as a butterfly.

*Excessive Force* is deliberately titled to reflect the broader structures and manifestations of violence embedded within contemporary policing. Although the imagery of bullets may initially suggest gun violence, the work does not refer exclusively to firearm-related deaths. Instead, the bullets function symbolically, standing in for violence in its many institutional and bodily forms. This distinction is central to the conceptual framework of the piece.

The deaths of individuals such as Eric Garner, who died from compression of the neck, and Freddie Gray, who suffered a fatal spinal cord injury while in police custody, exemplify forms of state violence that extend beyond the discharge of a weapon. Their deaths underscore how excessive force operates not only through firearms, but also through restraint, physical domination, and the unequal distribution of power between law enforcement and civilians.

The police weapon functions not only as an instrument of physical force, but as a symbol of institutional authority and coercive power. Its visible presence — and the authority to use it — fundamentally alters encounters marked by tension and vulnerability, reinforcing asymmetrical relations of control. Incidents such as the beating of Rodney King demonstrate how such imbalances can escalate into acts of excessive force, even when firearms are not discharged.

*Excessive Force* should therefore be understood not as a commentary limited to gun violence, but as an examination of systemic violence more broadly: the ways authority, intimidation, and bodily harm converge within the mechanisms of policing and public power.<sup>14</sup>

14. Adapted from original exhibition text by Amy Raehse for the 2018 exhibition:  
*Can't We All Just Get Along?*







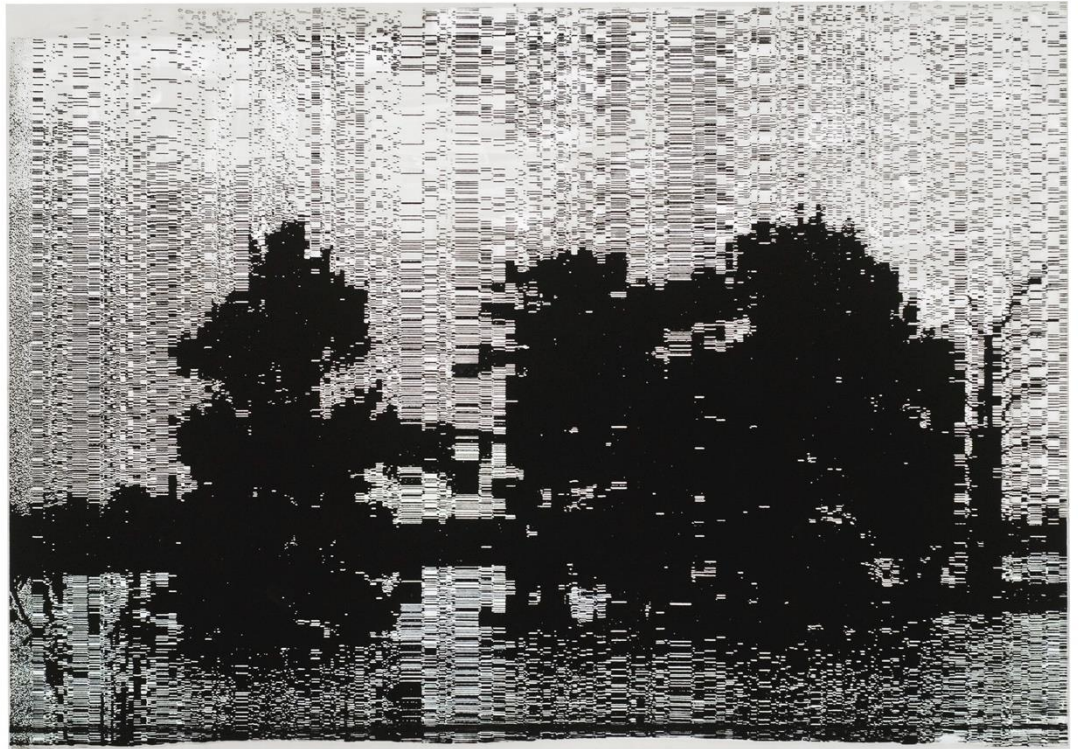
**Soledad Salamé**

*Gulf Distortion IV*, 2011

Silkscreen on mylar

22.5 x 32.5 inches

AP Edition 3 of 5



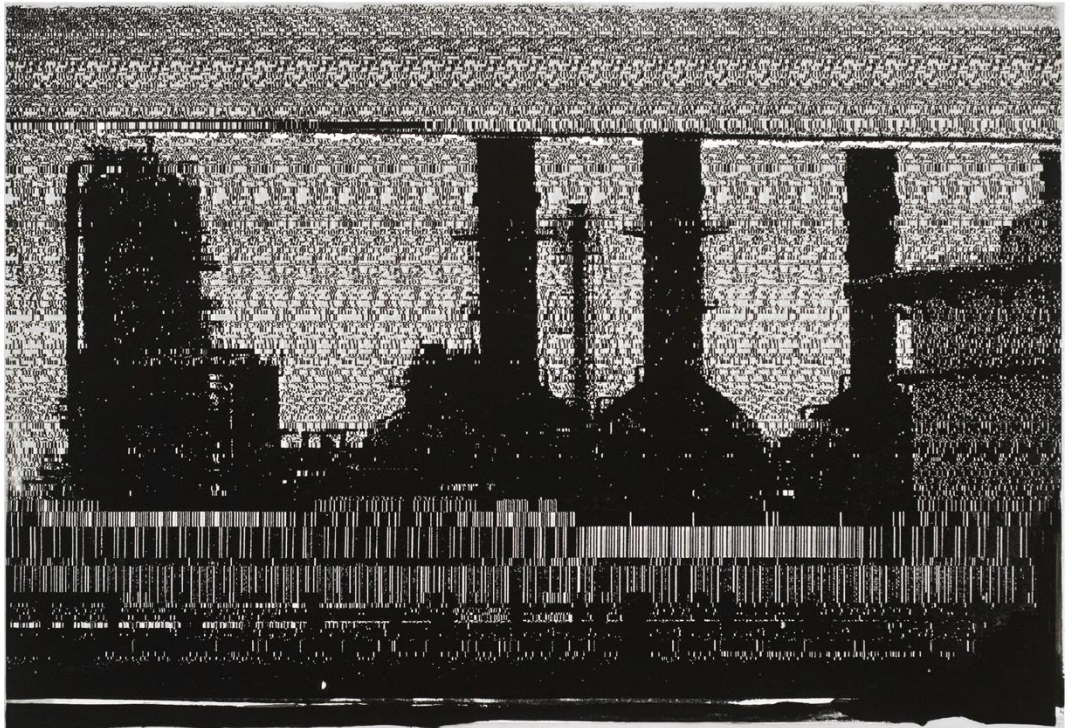
**Soledad Salamé**

*Gulf Distortion XII*, 2011

Silkscreen on mylar

22.5 x 32.5 inches

AP Edition 3 of 5





In *Gulf Distortion*, Soledad Salamé responds to the environmental and political aftermath of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill along the Gulf Coast. Developed from photographs taken in Louisiana—particularly in the Venice and Grand Isle regions—the series transforms documentary imagery into fractured, layered compositions that oscillate between representation and abstraction.

Working through printmaking processes that incorporate silkscreen, hand intervention, and digital degradation, Salamé deliberately disrupts photographic clarity. She employed technologies such as fax transmissions to further distort the images, introducing interference pixelation, and visual “noise” that echoes the instability of the affected environment.

The resulting works shift between fragile coastal landscapes and the encroaching infrastructures of extraction—oil storage facilities, industrial machinery, and traces of environmental devastation. The series charts a transformation in which natural beauty is progressively overtaken by the visual and material presence of industry and disaster.

Rather than presenting a singular narrative of catastrophe, *Gulf Distortion* constructs an unstable field of perception. The Gulf emerges as both subject and metaphor: a site where human intervention, environmental collapse, media circulation, and political neglect converge. Through strategies of distortion, Salamé resists the fixity of documentary truth, instead offering a vision of a landscape in flux—shaped as much by ecological trauma as by the systems that mediate and record it.<sup>15</sup>

15. Excerpted and adapted from the 2013 exhibition press release for *Soledad Salamé: Looking Back... Looking Forward...*

**Joyce J. Scott**

*Milk Mammy 2*, 2012-2014

Hand-blown Murano glass, glass beads,  
wire, thread, plastic dice

28.5 x 7.75 x 7.75 inches





Joyce J. Scott's *Milk Mammy* examines the enduring legacy of the “Mammy” stereotype in American history. Rooted in slavery and perpetuated through advertising, film, and popular culture, the figure of the Mammy romanticized the exploitation of Black women and their labor—particularly the history of enslaved women forced to nurse, nurture, and raise white children while their own families were separated or denied the same care.

By pairing maternal imagery with references to milk and the body, Scott exposes how women's caregiving, sexuality, and physical labor were commodified under slavery and continue to shape cultural expectations today. At the same time, the work honors the beauty, strength, and emotional complexity of caregiving itself—labor that remains essential to American society yet continues to be disproportionately carried by women, and too often undervalued, underpaid, or rendered invisible.

Scott challenges viewers to confront the persistence of these stereotypes within American memory and visual culture while recognizing the humanity and resilience of those whose generous care has sustained generations.<sup>16</sup>

16. Excerpted and adapted from Amy Raehse's 2012 essay for *Glasstress Beirut*.



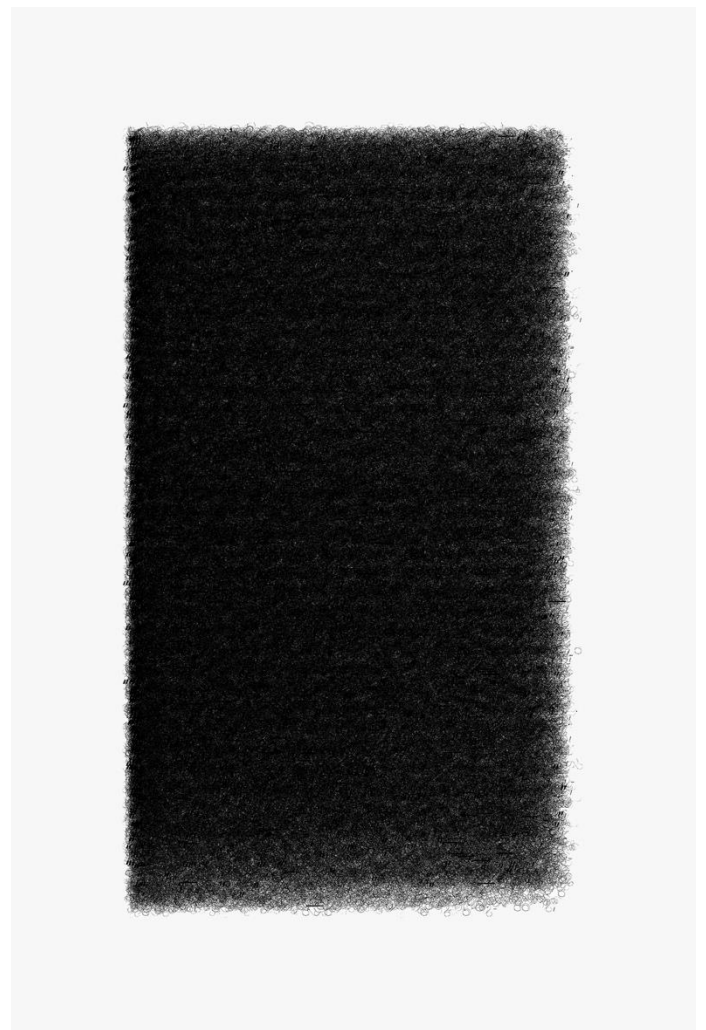
**Sonya Clark (b. 1967, American)**

*The Huest Eye*, 2023-2024

Embroidered thread on Rives BFK paper

36 x 24 inches

Edition of 12



**Sonya Clark**

*The Bluest, Twisted*, 2023-2024

Lithograph on Rives BFK paper

36 x 24 inches

Edition of 30

Sonya Clark's two editions, *The Huest Eye* and *The Bluest, Twisted*, center on Toni Morrison's groundbreaking 1970 novel *The Bluest Eye*, a work the artist has read more than thirty times. Through embroidery and lithography, Clark creates a powerful visual dialogue that confronts and redresses American constructions of beauty, centers Blackness, and exposes the enduring effects of internalized racism.

One of the most influential writers and intellectuals of the twentieth century, Morrison challenged Western beauty standards that privileged Whiteness while marginalizing Blackness. Set in Lorain, Ohio, during the 1940s, *The Bluest Eye* follows Pecola Breedlove, a young Black girl navigating racism, violence, and social rejection while longing for acceptance and beauty.

Morrison's symbolic use of color is central to Clark's interpretation. In *The Huest Eye*, Clark translates the 473 colors referenced throughout Morrison's text into embroidered blocks of thread that function as visual equivalents of the written language. As Clark explains, "In *The Huest Eye*, the colors follow the order in which they appear in the writing. The length of each color block corresponds to the length of the word. Red is a short block, whereas purple is longer." She also notes that passages referencing the Dick and Jane stories are rendered through compressed green and white sections, reflecting the novel's increasingly fragmented typography and psychological tension. "The colors are embroidered on paper to highlight the relationship between text, textile, and the fiber we grow—hair. It is also significant that Toni Morrison died the year the CROWN Act was passed, in 2019," Clark states.

Clark conceived *The Huest Eye* in direct relationship to *The Bluest, Twisted*, describing the latter as "a solid mass." In this work, Morrison's novel is transliterated into "Twist," an alphabet font Clark developed using the curl patterns of her own hair. Layered together, the text accumulates into a dense black form. Clark explains, "If you mixed all those referent colors together, one would arrive at black." Once framed and glazed, the work becomes reflective, incorporating the viewer into its surface. "It is important the viewer sees themselves in this work," Clark explains. "My font, made to reference African hair, resists the European dominance of the Roman alphabet's widespread use. *Twist* re-centers Africa as the cradle of humanity. It returns us to our roots."

Published by Goya Contemporary/Goya-Girl Press in collaboration with master printmaker Judith Solodkin of Solo Impression, NY, the editions translate Morrison's themes into meticulously crafted embroidered and printed forms that examine how systems of discrimination are reinforced through language, representation, and cultural convention.

Morrison's work fundamentally reshaped American literature and cultural discourse, and Clark's practice likewise reflects a deep intentionality in confronting inherited systems of exclusion while affirming Black identity, history, and resilience. Their cultural impact is profound. Clark has often credited her ancestors as central influences on her worldview and speaks of Morrison as a heroic figure whose writing and activism have significantly shaped her artistic practice.<sup>17</sup>

17. Adapted from a conversation between Sonya Clark and Amy Raehse, October 2023.

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**Sonya Clark (b. 1967, American)** is a renowned multidisciplinary artist and educator whose work explores themes of the African diaspora, cultural heritage, memory, race, identity, visibility, and history through material-based, tactile art. Drawing from her Afro-Caribbean background—her mother from Jamaica and father of Yoruba descent—Clark's practice engages deeply with the legacies of colonization, slavery, and cultural symbolism. Utilizing materials such as hair, cloth, flags, combs, coins, and seed beads, she creates powerful works that transcend craft into platforms for social commentary, activism, and cultural critique. Her use of hair challenges societal notions of beauty and power while honoring both personal and collective histories. Her works celebrate resilience, cultural pride, and social change, while addressing race and historical erasure.

Clark's extensive body of work, including large-scale installations, sculptures, and performances, has been exhibited in over 400 museums and galleries across the Americas, Africa, Asia, Europe, and Australia. Major projects include *The Hair Craft Project*, *Kente Flag Project*, and *Unraveling*, an interactive public engagement with the Confederate flag. *Monumental Cloth: The Flag We Should Know* at the Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia opened in 2019. That same year she opened *Sonya Clark: Hair Goods, An Homage to Madam CJ Walker* at Goya Contemporary Gallery in Baltimore. In 2021, Clark opened *Sonya Clark: Tatter, Bristle, and Mend*, a comprehensive survey of Clark's 25-year career held at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C., featuring 100 works that explore themes of heritage, labor, language, and visibility. *This Present Moment: Crafting a Better World*, highlighting 171 artworks, including Clark's "Monumental Cloth," opened at the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Renwick Gallery in 2023. *Sonya Clark: We Are Each Other* opened in 2023 at the Cranbrook Art Museum in Bloomfield, MI and traveled to the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, GA and the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City throughout 2024, with a focus on the artist's community-centric, participatory projects.

Clark served as Distinguished Research Fellow and Department Chair at Virginia Commonwealth University (2006–2017) and is currently a Professor of Art at Amherst College. Previously, she was Professor of Creative Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She earned an MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art, a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, a BA from Amherst College, and several honorary doctorates, including from Amherst College (2015) and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2023).

The artist has received numerous prestigious awards, including from ArtPrize, Art Matters, United States Artists, the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, Anonymous Was a Woman, the American Craft Council, the Rappaport Prize from deCordova Museum, and the James Renwick

Alliance. A Smithsonian Artist Research Fellow, Clark has been selected for residencies in Beijing, France, Italy, and the United States, and was the inaugural recipient of the Black Rock Senegal Residency Fellowship.

Clark and her works have been featured in major publications such as *The New York Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *ARTFORUM*, *Artsy*, *Sculpture Magazine*, *LA Times*, *Hyperallergic*, *Mother Jones*, and *The Huffington Post*, among others. Represented by Goya Contemporary in Baltimore, her art is included in major museum and private collections worldwide.

**Louise Fishman (b. 1939 - d. 2021, American)** In 1956 she began studying art at the Philadelphia Museum School of Art, then at Stella Elkins Tyler School of Art, where she earned her BFA in Painting and Printmaking, and a B.S. in Art Education in 1963. She completed her MFA in Painting and Printmaking at the University of Illinois in Champaign/Urbana, and headed directly to New York in 1965, where she lived and worked until her death in 2021.

She was the recipient of three National Endowment for the Arts grants; a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship; and a Guggenheim Fellowship, among others. She was included in three Whitney Biennials, 1973, 1987, and 2014. In 2016, the Neuberger Museum of Art organized the artist's first retrospective, curated by Helaine Posner, which traveled to the Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina at Greensboro. A second related exhibition at the ICA Philadelphia titled *Paper Louise Tiny Fishman Rock*, was curated by Ingrid Schaffner. A retrospective of work on paper curated by Amy L. Powell, *A Question of Emphasis: Louise Fishman Drawing* was at the Krannert Art Museum, Champaign, IL in 2021/2022.

Her work is represented in many public collections, including: the National Academy of Art and Design, NY; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL; the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia; the Jewish Museum, New York; the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY; the Krannert Art Museum, Champaign, IL; the Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, NC; the Hood Museum, Hanover, NH; the Kunstmuseum Lichtenstein, Vaduz, Lichtenstein; the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA; the Woodmere Art Museum, Philadelphia, PA; and the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.

**Kyle Hackett (b. 1989, American)** was born in Still Pond, Maryland. Hackett received his MFA from the LeRoy E. Hoffberger School of Painting at the Maryland Institute College of Art and his BFA in Fine Arts from the University of Delaware. He is the recipient of numerous honors, including the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities Artist Fellowship, the Civil Society Institute Fellowship, 49

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the Civil Society Institute Fellowship at the Vermont Studio Center Residency, the Ruth Katzman Scholarship at The League Residency in New York, and Best in Show at the 2014 Bethesda Painting Awards Exhibition. His work has been featured in *New American Paintings*, *The Washington Post*, *HuffPost*, and *Aesthetica Magazine* (UK), and the National Portrait Gallery's Portrait Award publication in the British Library collection.

Hackett received a Mayoral Salute from the City of Baltimore for his solo exhibition *Rate of Contingency*. Recent exhibitions include the Ruth Borchard 2025 Self-Portrait Prize (UK); the Herbert Smith Freehills 2024 Portrait Award Exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery, London; *Revisit/Reimagine* at the Banneker-Douglass-Tubman Museum (Annapolis, MD); and *Circular Narratives* at Vinegar Projects (Birmingham, AL). His work is represented by Goya Contemporary Gallery (Baltimore, MD) and is included in collections such as Ethan Cohen Gallery (New York), the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities Art Bank, the Capital One Lounge at Washington Dulles International Airport, and the Soho House Art Collection, among others. Hackett is Assistant Professor and Co-Director of the MFA Studio Art Program at American University in Washington, DC.

**Paul Rucker (b. 1968, American)** is a multimedia visual artist, composer, and musician. His practice often integrates live performance, original musical compositions, and visual art installation. For nearly two decades, Rucker has used his own brand of art making as a social practice, which illuminates the legacy of enslavement in America and its relationship to the current socio-political moment. His work is the product of a rich interactive process, through which he investigates community impacts, human rights issues, historical research, and basic human emotions.

Rucker has received numerous grants, awards, and residencies for visual art and music. He is a 2017 John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship awardee, a 2012 Creative Capital grantee in visual art as well as a 2014, 2018, 2019 MAP (Multi-Arts Production) Fund grantee for performance. In 2015 he received a prestigious Joan Mitchell Painters & Sculptors Grant as well as the Mary Sawyer Baker Award. In 2016 Paul received the Rauschenberg Artist as Activist fellowship and the Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship, becoming the first artist in residence at the National Museum of African American Culture.

Residencies include the Rockefeller Foundation Study Center in Bellagio, Italy, MacDowell Colony, Blue Mountain Center, Ucross Foundation, Art OMI, Banff Center, Pilchuck Glass School, Rauschenberg Residency, Joan Mitchell Residency, Loghaven, Montalvo, Hermitage, Hemera Artist Retreat, Air Serembe, and Creative Alliance.

He will be a Master Teacher at the Atlantic Center for the Arts in 2026. In 2013-2015, he was the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation Artist in Residence and Research Fellow at the Maryland Institute College of Art. He has been awarded a 2018 TED Fellowship, a 2020 TED Senior Fellowship, and the 2018 Arts Innovator Award from the Dale and Leslie Chihuly Foundation and Artist Trust. He has received support from Ford/Art for Justice Fund for 2000 and 2022, and the Mellon Foundation for 2022.

Rucker is an iCubed Arts Research Fellow and Assistant Professor at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia and Curator for Creative Collaboration for VCUarts.

He is also the Founding/Executive Director of Cary Forward museum opening in 2026.

**Soledad Salamé (b. 1954, Chilean - American)** is a Chilean-born interdisciplinary artist based in Baltimore, Maryland. Her practice spans printmaking, sculpture, installation, photography, video, and mixed media, and is distinguished by a sustained commitment to research-based inquiry that fuses empirical investigation with a poetic visual language. Her work examines the intersections of environmental change, technology, migration, and human rights.

Salamé attended Santiago College in Chile in 1972. She later pursued advanced studies in Caracas, Venezuela, at CEGRA, Centro de Enseñanza Gráfica (CONAC), completing her training in 1979. Her academic formation combined traditional printmaking methodologies with experimental graphic processes, fostering an early and enduring interest in materiality, seriality, and the relationship between image-making and systems of communication. During her years in Caracas, she was immersed in a dynamic cultural and political environment that encouraged interdisciplinary inquiry and socially engaged artistic practice.

From 1973 to 1983, Salamé lived in Venezuela, where her encounter with the Amazon rainforest profoundly shaped her artistic trajectory and deepened her engagement with ecological systems. This experience marked a decisive expansion of her practice beyond formal concerns toward broader investigations of environmental vulnerability, geopolitical conflict, and the ethics of human intervention in natural landscapes. She relocated to Washington, D.C. in 1983 before establishing her studio practice in Baltimore shortly thereafter.

Grounded in extensive field research throughout the Americas and Antarctica, Salamé's work examines the environmental and social consequences of climate change, extractive industries, and technological intervention. As she notes, her practice draws on environmental humanities, political ecology, and postcolonial studies to

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES cont.

explore how systems of power, resource extraction, and global capitalism disproportionately affect vulnerable populations and fragile ecosystems.

Her recent projects focus on migration and displacement driven by environmental instability and political inequity, as well as the ecological consequences of the global clothing industry and so-called “fast fashion.” Engaging questions of labor, consumption, waste, and transnational production networks, these works critically address the material and human costs embedded within contemporary economies of mass consumption.

Through collaborations with scientists, environmental researchers, and technologists, Salamé develops works that integrate empirical data, cartographic methodologies, and material experimentation. These interdisciplinary approaches result in immersive installations that function simultaneously as sensory environments and critical reflections on socio-political conditions.

Her work is held in numerous public and private collections, including the National Gallery of Art, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, the Baltimore Museum of Art, the University of Essex (UK), the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and Deutsche Bank (New York), among others. She has exhibited internationally at institutions including El Museo del Barrio (New York), the Denver Art Museum, the Milwaukee Art Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts in Santiago, Chile, the Katonah Museum of Art, the Museum of the Americas, the Miami Art Museum, the Phoenix Art Museum, the Contemporary Museum of Baltimore, and the Museum of Goa, India. In 2025, her work was the subject of a major career survey at the Blaffer Art Museum in Houston, Texas.

Major projects include *Fast Fashion: Camouflage* (2025–26); *We the Migrants: Fleeing/Flooding* (2019); *The Women’s March* (2017); *Are You Listening?* (2016); *ALMA: Atacama Large Millimeter Array* (2014); *Territories* (2013–14); *Barcodes: Merging Identity and Technology* (2012); and *Where Do You Live? 3000 Miles of Maryland Coast* (2009).

**Elizabeth Talford Scott (b.1916- d.2011)** was born near Chester, South Carolina, on the land her parents worked as sharecroppers, and where her grandparents had previously been enslaved. The sixth of fourteen children raised on the Blackstock Plantation, she grew up within a culture of resourcefulness in which family members taught her to repurpose discarded materials for essential use.

Quilting was an integral part of Black American life in the rural South, serving as a site of innovation, survival, and storytelling. Within this tradition, Talford Scott developed an early fluency in textile construction, which she would later expand into an experimental and highly personal visual language.

She migrated to Baltimore in the early 1940s where, along with Charlie Scott Jr., she raised their daughter, the artist Joyce J. Scott. During this period, she worked in food service and as a caregiver while also raising her child, eventually as a single mother. Demands on her time limited her artistic production, and she stepped away from quilting for many years. It was not until the 1970s that she returned to art-making with renewed focus and intensity.

Talford Scott transformed quilting into an expansive, improvisational form. Moving beyond functional domestic textiles, she created sculptural wall works that incorporate stones, buttons, shells, bones, sequins, beads, knotted fibers, glass, and other found materials. These densely layered compositions reject conventional pictorial order in favor of intuitive structure and tactile accumulation, situating her work within and beyond the lineage of quilting traditions.

Embedded within these surfaces are interwoven personal and cultural narratives, as well as a symbolic visual lexicon that references flowers, animals, insects, sea creatures, celestial forms, and imagined beings. Her works evoke dream states, folklore, superstition, and systems of memory, in which everyday materials are transformed into complex fields of visual and emotional resonance. In this way, Talford Scott’s practice operates simultaneously as abstraction, autobiography, and cultural archive.

Although she exhibited selectively during her lifetime, Talford Scott’s work was presented in major venues including The Studio Museum in Harlem, The Museum of American Folk Art (New York), and The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York). In 1987, she received the Women’s Caucus for Art Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Visual Arts. In 1998, George Ciscle organized her retrospective *Eyewinkers, Tumbleturds, and Candlebugs: The Art of Elizabeth Talford Scott*, which opened at MICA and traveled to the Smithsonian Institution’s Anacostia Community Museum in Washington, D.C., as well as additional venues in New England and North Carolina.

Despite this recognition, her visibility within the broader contemporary art field remained limited during her lifetime, reflecting the systemic marginalization of Black women working in fiber and textile-based practices. Alongside her daughter, she also led workshops and taught textile techniques to younger artists, extending her practice into pedagogical exchange.

Elizabeth Talford Scott died in 2012. In 2019, stewardship of her estate was assumed by Goya Contemporary Gallery. That same year, she was the subject—together with her daughter—of the exhibitions *Hitching Their Dreams to Untamed Stars: Joyce J. Scott & Elizabeth Talford Scott* at the Baltimore Museum of Art and *Reality, Times Two: Joyce J. Scott & Elizabeth Talford Scott* at Goya Contemporary Gallery.

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In 2020, Goya Contemporary presented her first solo exhibition with the gallery, *Upside-Downwards*. In 2021, her work was featured in a dedicated solo presentation at The Armory Show, NY, where it was widely noted by press coverage, including in *The New York Times*. Major works have since entered the collections of The National Gallery of Art, the Philbrook Museum of Art, the Toledo Museum of Art, the Mint Museum, the Baltimore Museum of Art, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, among others.

Talford Scott's posthumous recognition underscores the historical exclusion of many significant women fiber artists from institutional visibility during their lifetimes. Today, her work is increasingly recognized as foundational to contemporary conversations around textile, assemblage, and material storytelling. Her influence extends across generations of artists, including her daughter. Elizabeth Talford Scott's work remains strikingly immediate—its visual language as resonant today as when it was first made. © The Artist Legacy Project, Courtesy [www.elizabethtalfordscott.com](http://www.elizabethtalfordscott.com)

**MacArthur Fellow Dr. Joyce J. Scott (b. 1948, Baltimore, Maryland)** is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice spans sculpture, beadwork, textiles, printmaking, performance, and installation. Working across media with virtuosic technical command and conceptual clarity, Scott confronts urgent social realities—including racism, sexism, violence, inequality, and systemic oppression—while also engaging beauty, spirituality, nature, and healing. Her work seeks to illuminate shared human experience through narratives that engage the complexity of history, identity, and collective memory.

Scott is best known for her mastery of the off-loom peyote stitch, a free-form glass bead-weaving technique through which she integrates glass beads, blown glass, and found materials into densely layered compositions informed by autobiographical, sociopolitical, and historical themes. Born in Baltimore to parents from North Carolina—descendants of enslaved people—she was raised within a family lineage of skilled artisans working in quilting, basketry, pottery, metalwork, knitting, and oral storytelling. This early environment deeply shaped her material intelligence and her commitment to transforming inherited craft traditions into a vehicle for critical contemporary discourse.

She began her career working in fiber arts, producing clothing, jewelry, quilts, and sculptural textiles, and experimenting with loom-based structures. In the late 1970s, Scott turned to beads, drawn to their optical and chromatic possibilities beyond traditional painting. She learned the peyote stitch from a Native American bead artist, a technique that became foundational to her practice.

Over time, she expanded her visual language to include multicultural found objects, printmaking, performance, vocalization, and comedy, approaching artistic production

as inherently interdisciplinary and unrestricted by medium or category.

In the early 1990s, Scott began collaborating with glass artists to incorporate blown, pressed, and cast glass into her beadwork, significantly expanding the scale and spatial presence of her sculptural practice. Her 1992 invitation to the Pilchuck Glass School in Washington State marked a pivotal moment in this development. Years later, she subsequently worked with glass artisans in Baltimore, as well as with Paul Stankard and other noted fabricators, further advancing her materially hybrid approach.

By the late 1990s, Scott expanded into printmaking, producing extensive bodies of work in collaboration with ateliers including Goya-Girl Press, Pyramid Atlantic, Sol Print Studios, and Goya Contemporary. In 1999, she presented a landmark solo exhibition at the Baltimore Museum of Art, becoming the first Black woman artist to receive a solo presentation at the institution.

Her practice continued to evolve in the 2010s through major international projects. In 2011, she traveled with her primary gallery, Goya Contemporary, to work at Inferno Glass Studio in New Orleans for *Prospect.2* (curated by Dan Cameron). Following the death of her mother in 2012, she traveled to Murano, Italy, to work at Adriano Berengo's glass studio, producing works for *Glasstress* at the Venice Biennale, returning in 2013 for additional projects that entered significant collections and traveled internationally for *Glasstress* interactions from New York to Beirut.

From 2014 to 2015, Scott's Baltimore and Boston galleries worked with curator Lowery Stokes Sims to organize *Maryland to Murano: The Neckpieces & Sculpture of Joyce J. Scott* at the Museum of Arts and Design, New York. This was followed by *Joyce J. Scott: Truths and Visions*, curated by Patterson Sims at the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland.

In 2016, working with Gary Garrido Schneider and Amy Raehse, Scott began developing her largest exhibition at that time at *Grounds For Sculpture* in New Jersey, co-curated by Lowery Stokes Sims and Patterson Sims. That same year, she was awarded a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship. The exhibition opened in 2017 and featured both historical and recent works, including large-scale site-specific sculptures addressing the life of Harriet Tubman, developed at the Johnson Atelier.

Her work has been widely discussed in critical discourse; Nancy Princenthal, writing in *The New York Times*, noted, "you can't make out what these sculptures are about without coming closer than you feel you should—and seeing things you won't soon forget." Reflecting on her practice, Scott has stated: "I'd like my art to induce people to stop raping, torturing, and shooting each other. I don't have the ability to end violence, racism, and sexism. But my art can help them look and think."

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES cont.

Scott's major exhibitions and projects continue into the 2020s, including *Araminta with Rifle and VèVè*, shown at Open Spaces Kansas City (2018) and the Banneker-Douglass Museum, Annapolis (2022). In 2023, she launched a traveling jewelry exhibition called *Messages*. In 2024, she opened the major traveling museum retrospective *Joyce J. Scott: Walk a Mile in My Dreams*, co-organized by the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Seattle Art Museum and co-curated by Catharina Manchanda and Cecilia Wichmann. That same year, *Bearing Witness: A History of Prints by Joyce J. Scott* opened at Goya Contemporary Gallery.

Scott is the recipient of numerous awards, grants, and fellowships, including honors from the MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, *Anonymous Was a Woman*, and the American Craft Council, among others. She holds a BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art and an MFA from the Instituto Allende in Mexico, and has received multiple honorary doctorates, including from California College of the Arts, MICA, NYU, Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Baltimore.

Her work is held in major public and private collections worldwide, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Detroit Institute of Arts, Baltimore Art Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, the Seattle Art Museum, the Chrysler Museum, Toledo Museum, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the National Gallery of Art, among many others.

Scott's practice continues to challenge formal and conceptual boundaries, affirming art's capacity to provoke critical reflection, confront injustice, and expand forms of human understanding. Her jewelry is represented by Mobilia Gallery; her sculpture, fiber works, and works on paper are represented internationally by Goya Contemporary Gallery in Baltimore, where she lives and works.



Image: Detail of Kyle Hackett's  
*For A.G. Gaston (Birmingham)*, 2025

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**Sonya Clark, Kyle Hackett, Joyce J Scott, Elizabeth Talford Scott, Louise Fishman, Soledad Salamé, Paul Rucker**

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Goya Contemporary Gallery is comprised of: Martha Macks-Kahn, Amy Eva Raehse, Emily Vollherbst, Marian Jackson

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