

# KAREN BURNETTE GARNER



## New Summer Artworks

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## Mint Museum in Charlotte, NC, Features Works by Thornton Dial

The Mint Museum in Charlotte, NC, is presenting the exhibit, *Hard Truths: The Art of Thornton Dial*, on view at the Mint Museum Uptown through Sept. 30, 2012.

"All truth is hard truth. We're in the darkness now, and we got to accept the hard truth to bring on the light. You can hide the truth, but you can't get rid of it. When truth come out in the light, we get the beauty of the world." –Thornton Dial



Thornton Dial (American, b. 1928), *African Athlete*, 1998. Pencil, charcoal, and pastel on paper, 44 x 30 in. Collection of the Souls Grown Deep Foundation. Photo by Stephen Pitkin, Pitkin Studio.

An artist raised in the rural South, Thornton Dial is a keen observer of the human spectacle and its narratives of corruption and moral strength, folly and triumph. As an artist, he has spent the last two decades exploring the truth of American history and culture in all its complexities and contradictions. This exhibition presents a major survey of Dial's work, an epic gathering of over fifty large-scale paintings, sculptures, and wall assemblages that address the most

compelling issues of our time.

The exhibition and opening reception are brought to the community with generous support from Wells Fargo. "Wells Fargo is proud to provide major funding to bring this compelling exhibition to the community," said Jay Everette, the chair-elect of The Mint Museum's Board of Trustees and the Senior Vice President and Community Affairs Manager for Greater Charlotte for Wells Fargo. "And we are especially excited to host the opening community celebration. We invite our neighbors and friends to join in previewing these highly significant works by Mr. Dial."

Brad Thomas, the Mint's curator of contemporary art added, "Since I joined the Mint team in January, it has been my distinct pleasure to work with our staff and many supporters on bringing this remarkable body of work to our museum. This retrospective exhibition shines a well-deserved light on one of the most original and prolific American artists of our time."

The Mint decided to engage both its campuses in the exhibition. In addition to the large-scale assemblages on display at Mint Museum Uptown, a selection of drawings by Dial will be on display at Mint Museum Randolph, 2730 Randolph Road in Charlotte, in the Dickson Gallery for the duration of the exhibition.

Dial spent his childhood toiling in the farm fields of western Alabama, followed by decades spent as a laborer in the region's factories and heavy industry. A working-class man whose art was weaned in the unheralded expressive practices of the black vernacular South, Dial speaks in a voice long overlooked in the canons of modern art and culture. Since his discovery in the late 1980s, critics have likened Dial's complex and tumultuous creations to the renowned works of such artists as Jackson Pollock and Anselm Kiefer.

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To create his art, Dial employs a vast universe of symbolically charged materials - from plastic grave flowers, child's toys, bed springs, and carpet scraps to cow skulls and goat carcasses. Salvaged from garbage cans and trash heaps, these items reappear in dense accumulations amidst the artist's fields of dripped paint and expressionistic brushworks.

Over the years, Dial has tackled a wide range of social and political subjects in his art, from gripping commentaries on the homeless, the abuse of the environment, and the failings of global capitalism to haunting meditations on the War in Iraq, Hurricane Katrina, and the tragedy of 9/11. Concerned with representing those otherwise rendered invisible within the contours of history, he has also created many works on the plight of women, labor, the rural poor, and the impoverished underclass. Still other paintings and sculptures examine the long history of racial oppression in America. Recounting the atrocities of slavery and Southern sharecropping, the aspirations of the Great



Thornton Dial (American, b. 1928), *Stars of Everything*, 2004. Paint cans, plastic cans, spray paint cans, clothing, wood, steel, carpet, plastic straws, rope, oil, enamel, spray paint, and Splash Zone compound on canvas on wood, 98 x 101 1/2 x 20 1/2 in. Collection of the Souls Grown Deep Foundation. Photo by Stephen Pitkin, Pitkin Studio.

Migration, the fight for Civil Rights, and other episodes in black memory, these

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