

Mint Museum Randolph in Charlotte, NC, Offers Works by Diedrick Brackens

Mint Museum Randolph in Charlotte, NC, will present *Diedrick Brackens: ark of bulrushes*, on view from July 16 through Dec. 11, 2022.

The exhibition presents a new series by Los Angeles-based artist Diedrick Brackens including large-scale (8-foot) weavings and premiering the artist's first woven sculptures. Known for making colorful textiles about African American and queer histories, Brackens has developed a process of combining the tactility of yarn with the ethos of storytelling. For this exhibition, the artworks tell timeless narratives about emancipation and remediation through pattern, body, and the power of craft.

In addition to being one of the most innovative and important artists on the rise in the United States, Brackens' work incorporates traditions important to the Southern region - baskets that relate to Cherokee nation and the Gullah people, quilts that resonate with all cultures, but a particular exploration of quilts in the African-American historical narrative. Brackens' deeply colored weavings pull imagery from 19th-century Freedom Quilts - used as a communication tool by enslaved people traveling along the Underground Railroad - and star constellations that have been used to navigate the external world and internal psyche for thousands of years. The central focus of Brackens' artwork always returns to the Black body represented in form or implied in absence.

Intertwined with the patterns are dynamic human figures mimicking animals associated with constellations. This positioning aligns the body within the cosmic proportions of the universe, inferring empowerment of the individual and of a people.

The sculptural basket boats in this exhibition take different forms that reference the human body in communion with nature. The ark is Brackens' sculptural prototype of a boat that he hopes to float on the Mississippi River. Made with enough room for a passenger to sit upright or lie down, the body and boat can float and bob down the river as one.

The floating of reed basket boats is significant in legends of deliverance, including the Biblical story of the exodus of the Israelites where an "ark of bulrushes" carried the infant Moses up the Nile River. Taking its name from this story, ark of bulrushes gestures to craft itself as a form of mythology - the passing on of tradition, technique, and narrative. Brackens practices textile craft with unique vision and perspective, spinning new definitions of what it means to live today.

Diedrick Brackens (born 1989, Mexico, TX; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA) is best known for his weavings that explore narratives about queerness, masculinity, and the Black experience in the



Diedrick Brackens, "fashion a box of stars scaled"

United States. His work incorporates elements of West-African weaving, American quilting, and European tapestry-making, as well as histories associated with craft.

Brackens' work has been shown in solo exhibitions at the New Museum, New York, NY; Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX; Oakville Galleries, Ontario, Canada; Alabama Contemporary Art Center, Mobile, AL; The University of the South, Sewanee, TN; and Ulrich Museum of Art, Wichita, KS. Select group exhibitions include *Plumb Line: Charles White and the Contemporary*, California African American Museum, Los Angeles, CA; *Ear to the Ground: Earth and Element in Contemporary Art*, New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA; *Made in L.A. 2018*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; *Material Futurity*, Macalester College, Saint Paul, MN; and *The Possible*, UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA.

Brackens received a master of fine arts from the California College of the Arts, San Francisco, and a bachelor of fine arts from University of North Texas, Denton. The artist is a recipient of the United States Artists Fellowship (2021), Marciano Artadia Award (2019), American Craft Council Emerging Artist Award (2019), and The Studio Museum in Harlem's Wein Prize (2018).

Diedrick Brackens: ark of bulrushes was organized by Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art (SMoCA) and curated by Lauren R. O'Connell. Support provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and S. Rex and Joan Lewis Foundation.

The Mint's iteration of the exhibition also includes three additional components that enhance the core installation of Brackens' work, including woven and quilted works from the Mint, drawing heavily from the historic quilt collection and the extensive collection of Native American basketry; an installation of North Carolina weavers and a visitor engagement area with response walls and extensive resources from the Mint's Library and Archives that elaborate on these important craft traditions and methods.

For further information check our NC Institutional Gallery listings, call the Museum at 704/337-2000 or visit (www.mintmuseum.org).

Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts & Culture in Charlotte, NC, Features Works by Billie Zangewa

The Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts & Culture, at the Levine Center for the Arts, in Uptown Charlotte, NC, is presenting *Billie Zangewa: Thread for a Web Begun*, curated by Dexter Wimberly, on view through Sept. 11, 2022.

The exhibition brings together silk tapestries spanning 15 years of the Malawi-born, Johannesburg-based artist, Billie Zangewa's career. Zangewa's works explore themes of society, identity, and feminism through an intricate creative practice.

Zangewa does not make grand gestures or even overt political statements, but rather, like a kind of "daily feminism," focuses on mundane domestic preoccupations; themes connecting us all. Zangewa states "I use fabric and sewing, which traditionally is a female pastime, to empower myself. I tell my personal story, how it's happening on the home front, and show the intimate life of a woman, which usually we're not encouraged to



Billie Zangewa, "Solider of Love", 2020. Embroidered silk, 43 1/4 x 53 1/8 inches. Courtesy of Galerie Templon, Paris and Brussels.

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Photograph by Central Piedmont staff photographer Darnell Vennie

Polonaise, 1976, oil on canvas, 60 x 48 inches

UNPACKED

The works of Ellen Lee Klein

January 10 - December 9, 2022

Ellen Lee Klein: Exhibiting Artist Interview

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do." Zangewa views telling her own story in her own voice as a kind of personal empowerment. Historically, this has been very difficult for women in general, but particularly for women of color with many social obstacles to overcome.

Although many of the scenes depicted in Zangewa's layered silk tapestries are autobiographical, there is a relatability that goes beyond her personal journey as an artist. Zangewa's labor-intensive processes recall the historic implications of "women's work," but remain a steadfastly contemporary interpretation of lived experiences. Zangewa is dealing firstly with identity, as well as socio-politics around gender and skin tone, in a gentle everyday manner. She is also exploring the different roles that women play in society, including motherhood and the impact that it has individually and collectively. The images in her work are deliberately decontextualized. However, when shown in a group, their fragmentary nature is further emphasized, suggesting they are excerpted from a larger narrative.

Billie Zangewa (b. 1973, Blantyre, Malawi; lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa) creates intricate collages composed of hand-stitched fragments of raw silk. These figurative compositions explore contemporary intersectional identity in an attempt to challenge the historical stereotype, objectification, and exploitation of the black female form. Beginning her career in the fashion and advertising industries, Zangewa employs her understanding of textiles to portray personal and universal experiences through domestic interiors, urban landscapes, and portraiture. Often referencing scenes or experiences from everyday life, Zangewa has stated that she is interested in depicting the work done by women that keeps society running smoothly, but

which is often overlooked, undervalued, or ignored. Through the method of their making and their narrative content, Zangewa's silk paintings illustrate gendered labor in a socio-political context, where the domestic sphere becomes a pretext for a deeper understanding of the construction of identity, questions around gender stereotypes, and racial prejudice.

Zangewa received her BFA from Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa in 1995. Solo exhibitions of her work have been organized by Galerie Templon, Paris, France (2020); Afronova Gallery, Grand Palais, Paris, France (2017); Johann Levy Gallery, Paris, France (2008); and Gerard Sekoto Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa (2005).

Zangewa's work is in several public and private collections including the Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH; Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington, DC; Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Atlanta, GA; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands; and Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom. In 2018, Zangewa was selected as the Featured Artist for the FNB Art Joburg Fair.

Dexter Wimberly is an American curator, based in Japan, who has organized exhibitions in galleries and institutions around the world. Wimberly's exhibitions have been featured in leading publications including *The New York Times* and *Artforum*, and have received support from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Wimberly is the co-founder and CEO of Art World Learning, and a Senior Critic at New York Academy of Art.

For further information check our NC Institutional Gallery listings, call the Museum at 704/547-3700 or visit (www.ganttcenter.org).

So you're the Marketing Director of a visual arts organization, art museum, arts center, arts council or artist guild and you're wondering why you never see the exhibits presented at your facility included here. Maybe you're the owner of a commercial art gallery and you've never seen your exhibits included with others presented in your area. You might even be an individual artist who is having an exhibit in a non-profit space or commercial space and you don't see your exhibits included.

My question to you is - How long will you put up with that before you ask someone, "Why that is the case?" If you're not included - it's your fault.