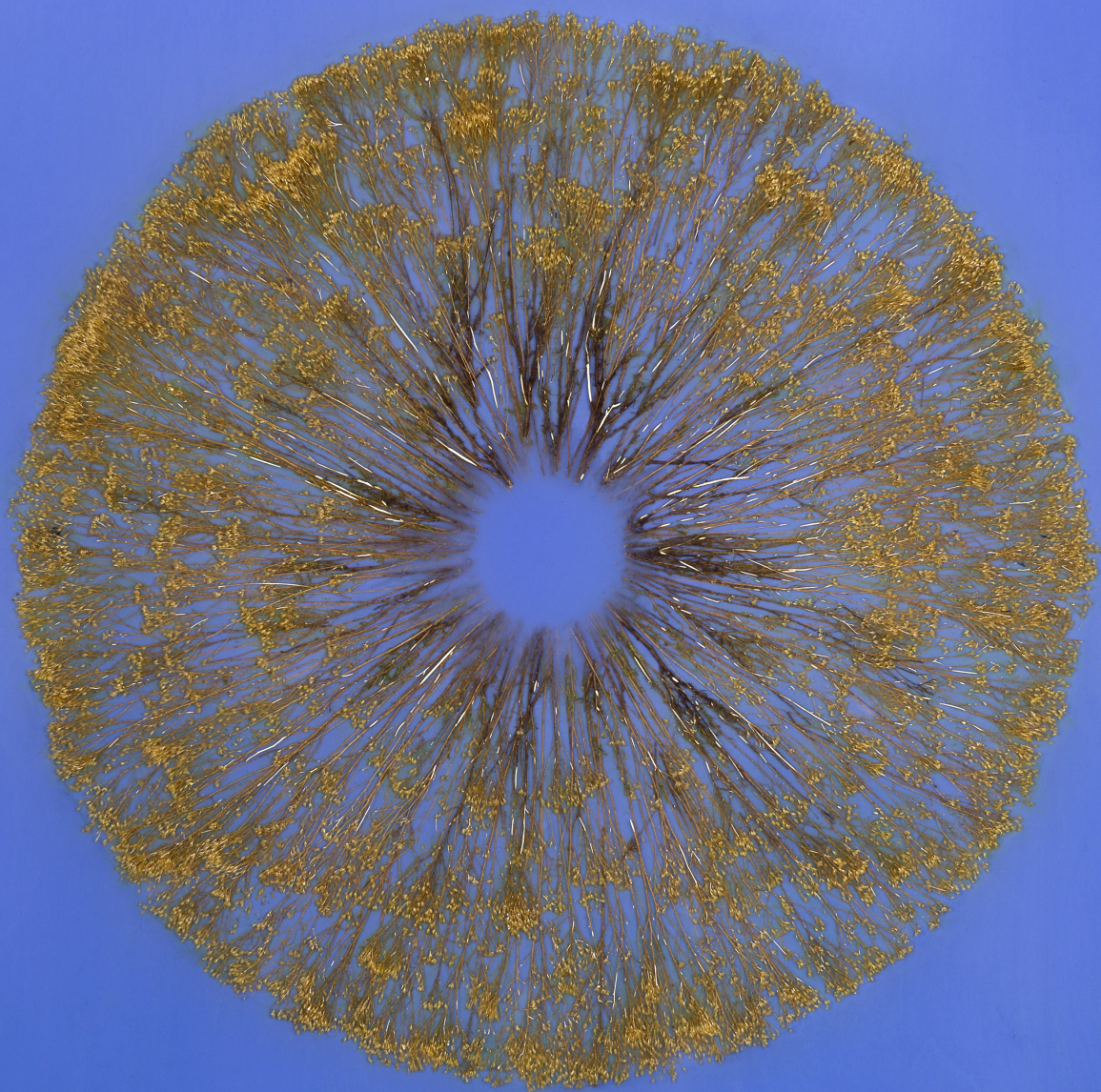


# LISA SETTE GALLERY



FALL / VOLUME 21

2018-2019



## TRINA MCKILLEN

When Trina McKillen embarked on the creation of her resplendent, intricately detailed life-size glass confessional, *Bless Me Child For I Have Sinned*, she encountered responses ranging from anger to relief. Having grown up in a Catholic family at the center of Northern Ireland's sectarian troubles, McKillen's understanding of the reach and power of the Catholic Church was profound, but so was her sense of the wrongs committed under its aegis. McKillen spent several years constructing the confessional, a structure fabricated of glass, metal, fabric and wood. Inside it sits a child-sized upholstered chair, and, on the other side of the booth's intersecting panel of glass, the corresponding priest-sized confessional kneeler, with its steely cushion of nails.

The piece will make its first public appearance at Lisa Sette Gallery, accompanied by a ghostly cohort of embroidered antique vestments, comprised of communion dresses and altar boy surplices once worn by children in church, and a series of illuminated linen poultices titled *Stations of Hope*. McKillen spoke with us about her upbringing and inspiration, and the process of accomplishing this monumental work.

**Lisa Sette Gallery:** Would you describe your childhood experience in Ireland and with the Catholic Church?

**McKillen:** *I was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in 1964 and I lived there until 1975 in a sectarian Catholic neighborhood called Andersonstown, a hotbed of Irish Republican Army activity. In our neighborhood, we grew up dodging bullets—rubber bullets and real ones—either from IRA snipers or the British Army on patrol. It was an intense, fear-filled childhood.*

*My dad felt that it was important to sit down with the British, the Protestants, along with the IRA, and talk about some sort of peaceful solution. But he was ahead of his time, and when the IRA found out what he was doing, our house was ransacked. We never found out who did it. My parents decided to leave for our safety, and we moved from a war-torn area of Belfast to a peaceful Dublin. It was really an unbelievable change—suddenly there was no fear. We could walk slowly; we weren't afraid of being shot or getting caught in an ambush. There was an incredible feeling of safety and a sense of having gone to live with our people in the Republic of Ireland.*

*At the same time it was a jolt, having to leave our homeland. In Belfast the Catholic Church had taken on the role of caretaker for this besieged community, and served as a refuge, but in Dublin it was different; people weren't being persecuted, and the Church didn't offer that refuge. I went to a convent school in Dublin and it seemed the Church just wanted to inflict as much guilt as possible. The nuns would say "I don't like the way you're looking at me. You'd better watch yourself, you're going to get pregnant; I wouldn't be surprised if you were pregnant right now." You know, there was all this shame-based teaching.*

Left: Trina McKillen, *Bless Me Child For I Have Sinned*, 2010-2018, glass, marble, wood, nails, metal, nickel-plated composite, linen, plexiglas, 102" x 94" x 58"

Front Cover: Mayme Kratz, *Vanishing Light 7*, 2018, resin, broom snakeweed from Colorado plateau on panel, 36" x 36"





LSG: How did your relationship with the Church change as you grew up?

McKillen: *I had a childhood friend, who was an effervescent doll-like creature full of life and fire. I really admired her and her family—they had vibrant conversations about politics and the world, and I was in awe of this because I was one of nine kids in my family, so there was just no room for my opinion. We went to different colleges, but when I was 19, I got a call from a mutual friend who told me that our friend was in hospital with a nervous breakdown. We arranged to go see her. She was in a psychiatric ward that was otherwise full of old people, lying in the fetal position at the bottom of the bed, heavily sedated by tranquilizers—the saddest image I'd ever seen.*

*She revealed to us that she had been sexually abused by her uncle who was a priest, a monsignor. I had been in awe that she had an uncle who was a priest, and that he would come and visit and take her to the theater, or to lunch at nice restaurants. As a teenager, I had thought, "Wow, she's so lucky."*

*And then, to hear this from her... it upended everything I felt or thought I knew about priests and everything I thought I knew about my friend's family. It was shocking, and at that point I just wanted to disengage.*

*But even before this, even as a young child, I did have a notion about the Church... I always felt that the confessional was a horrible, dark, shame-filled place; it was an opportunity to make you feel dirty and bad. There was never a kindness in there, or a sense that you were talking to a human being who wanted to comfort you.*



Above and right: Trina McKillen, *Bless Me Child For I Have Sinned (details)*, 2010–2018, glass, marble, wood, nails, metal, nickel-plated composite, linen, plexiglas, 102" x 94" x 58"



LSG: As an artist working in the United States, how did you start processing some of these feelings about the Church?

McKillen: *I don't know whether I would have been aware specifically that I was addressing the Catholic Church when I was creating assemblages, or taking photographs, but when I look at them now it's very clear to me that I was. I was digging into the idea of being under the influence of a dogmatic belief system that had never been very kind or loving at all, especially to women and girls.*

*In 2010, I went home to Ireland for my parents' 60th anniversary, and my mom, who was Catholic to her bones, who had always loved the Church and taken great comfort in it, whispered to me that she couldn't go to Mass anymore because she couldn't look the priests in the face after what she knew had happened to all these children. She whispered it because she didn't want my father to hear... The*

*betrayal and the loneliness of it broke my heart.*

*It really impacted me. I had these thoughts— "Who am I to take on this subject? I don't go to Mass anymore, I'm not a practicing Catholic, I'm married to a Jewish person!" But then I immediately realized that I had to do it.*

*I had the idea in my head, of what would God do if he came down and saw what the priests were doing to the children... The worst sin you could commit against the most vulnerable and innocent. And the idea of a glass confessional came to me. I thought, "I'm going to make the Church kneel in front of the child."*

LSG: This sounds as though it was a momentous revelation for you.

McKillen: *It was. Flying over the Atlantic on my way back to Los Angeles, I drew a picture of the confessional inside my notebook, and it looks almost exactly as the confessional has turned out. I had this idea, and in some ways it was really simple, but I didn't know where to begin, in taking on something so huge, not just conceptually, but practically. How was I going to make a gigantic glass confessional booth? That wasn't something I knew how to do. I had to put aside many aspects of my personality in order to do it; like the part of me that is shy or afraid to be noticed. It took me three years to complete and I've definitely had to work through every single fear I've had in my life in order to make this.*

*In 2007, the Catholic Church in Los Angeles settled a huge civil case in which it paid out \$660 million to 500 victims of clergy sexual abuse. Finally the victims were acknowledged and received financial compensation, but I remember some of the victims saying that more important than receiving money was that the diocese make public the files that they had kept on the priests who had abused them. They wanted the Church to be transparent about what they had known and what steps they had taken to keep it hidden. The lawyer for the Church said, "We want to be as transparent as possible, but not at the expense of the priest's privacy."*

*Just shocking. That arrogance is beyond me. At this point I was no longer fearful about the reaction this piece might receive, just determined to get it done. I remember thinking, "OK, good, then I will provide some transparency here."*



Left: Trina McKillen, *The Children*, 2015-2018, 20 communion dresses, 20 altar boy vestments, Irish linen, thread, gold leaf, dimensions vary  
Above: Trina McKillen, *The Children (detail)*, 2015-2018, 20 communion dresses, 20 altar boy vestments, Irish linen, thread, gold leaf, dimensions vary





Angela Ellsworth, *Pantaloncini: Work No. 069 (Emma)*, 2017, 52,692 pearl corsage pins, colored dress pins, fabric, steel, 28" x 38" x 17"



Claudio Dicochea, *de Iris y Lynn, la Lupe, la Tesorito, y la Akasha (of Iris and Lynn, the Lupe, the Treasured, and the Queen of the Damned)*, 2018, acrylic, graphite, charcoal, transfer on wood, 48" x 36"

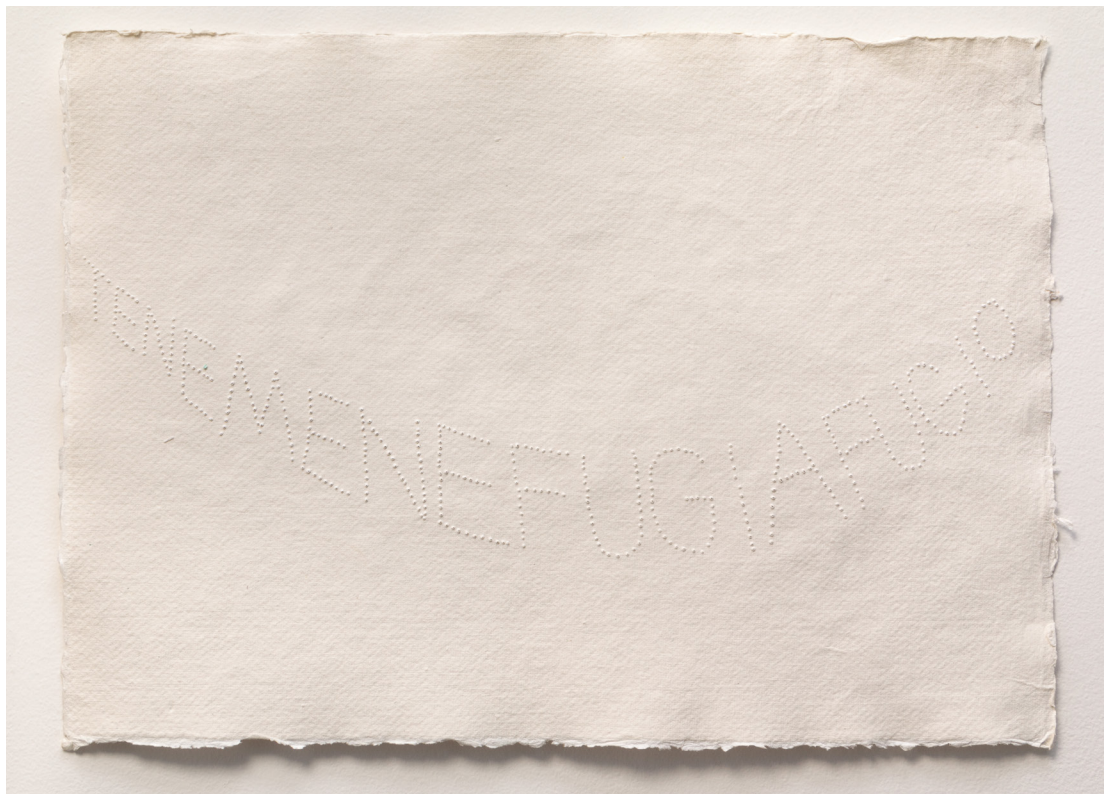


# SONYA CLARK

In a series of carefully calibrated experiments, Sonya Clark's projects test the interactions between elementary human materials: textiles and text, storytelling and visual symbols such as flags and currency, beads and human hair. Clark's formulations incorporate measures of time and history—often connecting exhibits or performances to epochal dates in American chronology—and fuse stories both universal and personal.

Human interconnectedness is a constant in each of Clark's projects, and the resulting objects and performances present a new scholarship of American identity, a matrix formed by our disparate human narratives and our shared human experience. Such a project must involve the legacy of slavery and the ensuing and ongoing mistreatment of African and African-American bodies. Clark's *Slave Collar* series addresses this continuing injustice with an unflinching look at its historical origins. Words that encapsulate the practice of dehumanization and slavery are inscribed by a series of punctures through handmade cotton Khadi paper.

Clark explains that these pale and haunting works, "are based on the parallel legacies of Empire building through slave labor in the Roman Empire and in the USA. Many of the enslavement practices of ancient Rome were employed in the Americas, including things like slave collars. 'Tenemefugiafugio' is text directly taken from an Ancient Roman slave collar. It translates from Latin as 'Keep me so I do not flee.'"



Sonya Clark, *Slave Collar*, pricked Khadi cotton paper, 9" x 12"



With a methodical approach and clarity of purpose, Clark's works manifest the symbolic synapses and connective fiber of our human biology as well as the exchange of stories and skills that is fundamental to human connection across time. The deconstructed flags of Clark's renowned *Unraveling* project resulted from hours of work alongside volunteers from the public, who shared their reflections and their labor to mark the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War by unweaving the threads of a tightly woven Confederate battle flag.

A continuation of this project, *Interwoven* presents the deconstructed fibers of the current US flag interwoven with the deconstructed flag of the Confederacy. The result is eerily not one thing nor the other; a shadow image reminding us of the difficulty of separating out the strands. "It's not really about an oppositional relationship," remarks Clark, "But instead to try and discern the complexity of the symbol, the complexity of the history, and work—or unwork—it together."

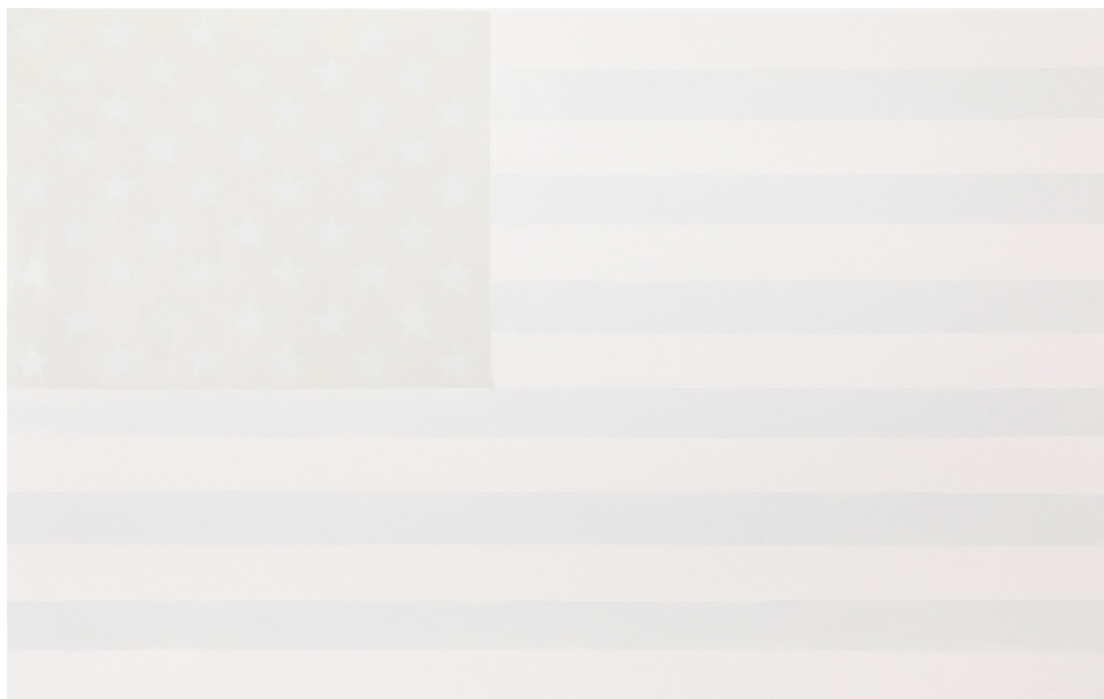
Sonya Clark, *Interwoven*, Unwoven and rewoven commercially printed flags, 5" x 5"



Community and craft as an iterative function of the American experience is integral to Clark's experience as a first-generation immigrant. Her story encompasses a vast breadth of identities that exemplify a resident of the American continents—raised in Washington DC by a Jamaican mother and father from Trinidad and Barbados, Clark's distant ancestors had in turn, survived the carriage from West Africa on a slaver's ship. A Scottish great-grandfather connected the family to Europe, and these days Clark travels widely among these diasporic branches of her family: to Europe and the Caribbean, Africa and the US. It is a family story with a unique vantage on the notion of American identity: forged through slavery, immigration, love, and an intergenerational linking of cultures.

In our family stories, Clark says, "the most personal becomes universal," and at the present moment of our American story, this rendering from the personal to the universal feels particularly urgent. For Clark's part, addressing the violence and iniquities borne by African-Americans in our society is only the first sentence in the story. "Anger is justified, and then what? Because anger is simply an emotion. I'm much more interested in what happens next. How do we move forward? And how far have we moved forward?"

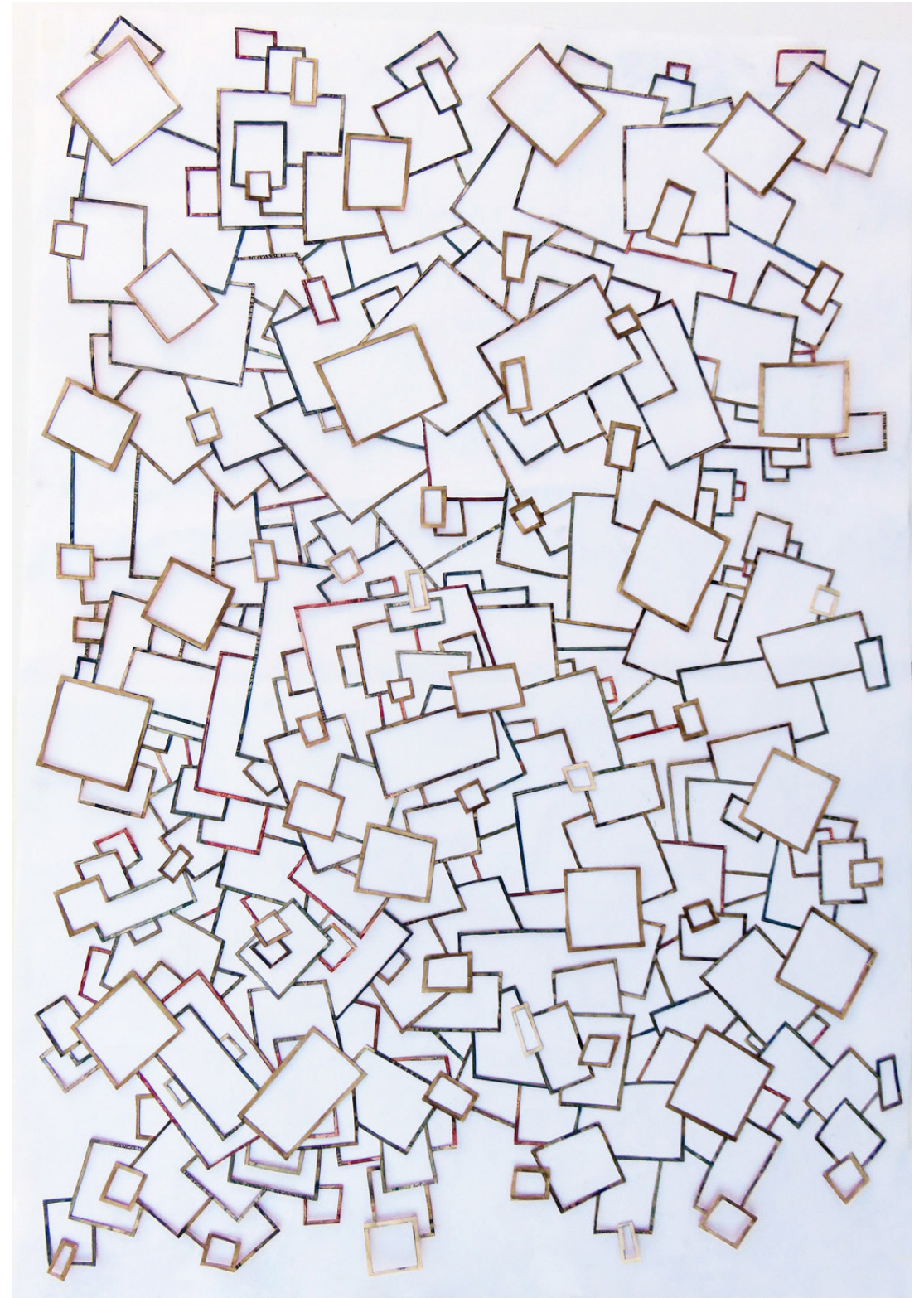
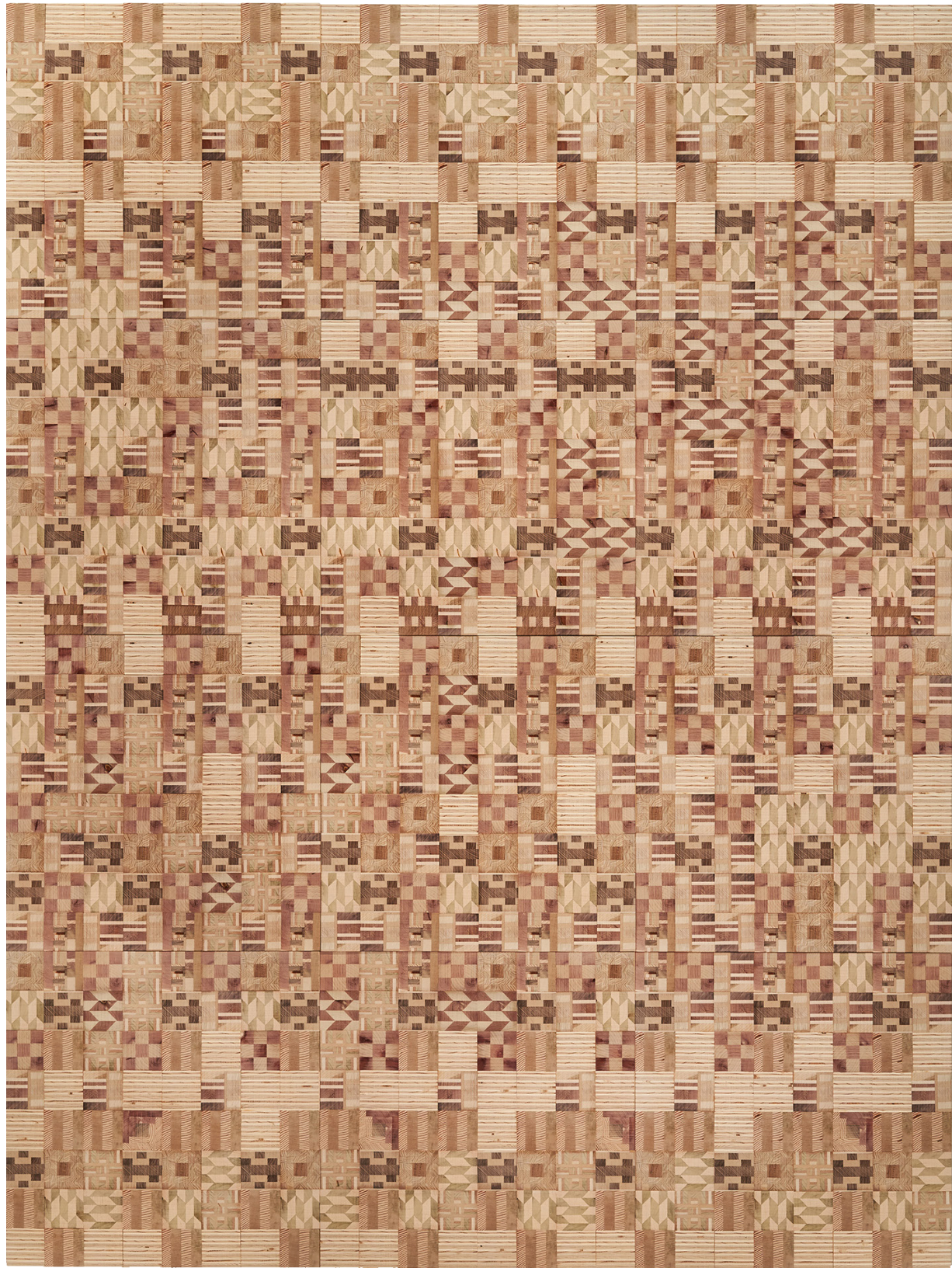
Now is an urgent moment for conversations about American identity and the ongoing role of racism in our culture.



Above: Sonya Clark, *Whitewashed*, 2017, painted directly on wall, Sherwin Williams paint colors: Incredible White, Storyteller, and Natural Choice (actual paint color names), 44" x 82", edition of 10  
Right: Sonya Clark, *Pigtails*, 2013, canvas and cotton thread, 10" x 10" x 26"







Above: Máximo González, *debo checar en mis archivos / i must check into my files*, 2017, collage: out-of-circulation currency, 39.5" x 27.5"  
Left: Ato Ribeiro, *Home Away From Home 5*, 2018, repurposed wood, wood glue, 96" x 72" x 1.25"



# SUBVERSIVE WHITE

White contains all wavelengths of visible light, and in turn humans have deposited within it our glimmering multitudes of meanings: innocent and wise, dead and alive, hot and cold. White reflects from a thousand opposing and essential facets of human experience. While the artists of *Subversive White* employ many different strategies in mapping this visual terrain, the exhibit presents a unified response to a specific strain of white currently permeating our national dialogue: the ugly premise of white supremacy. In this iteration, white is the sharpened weapon of a narrow and violent rhetoric, a mirror surface bearing witness to humanity's most shameful aspects.

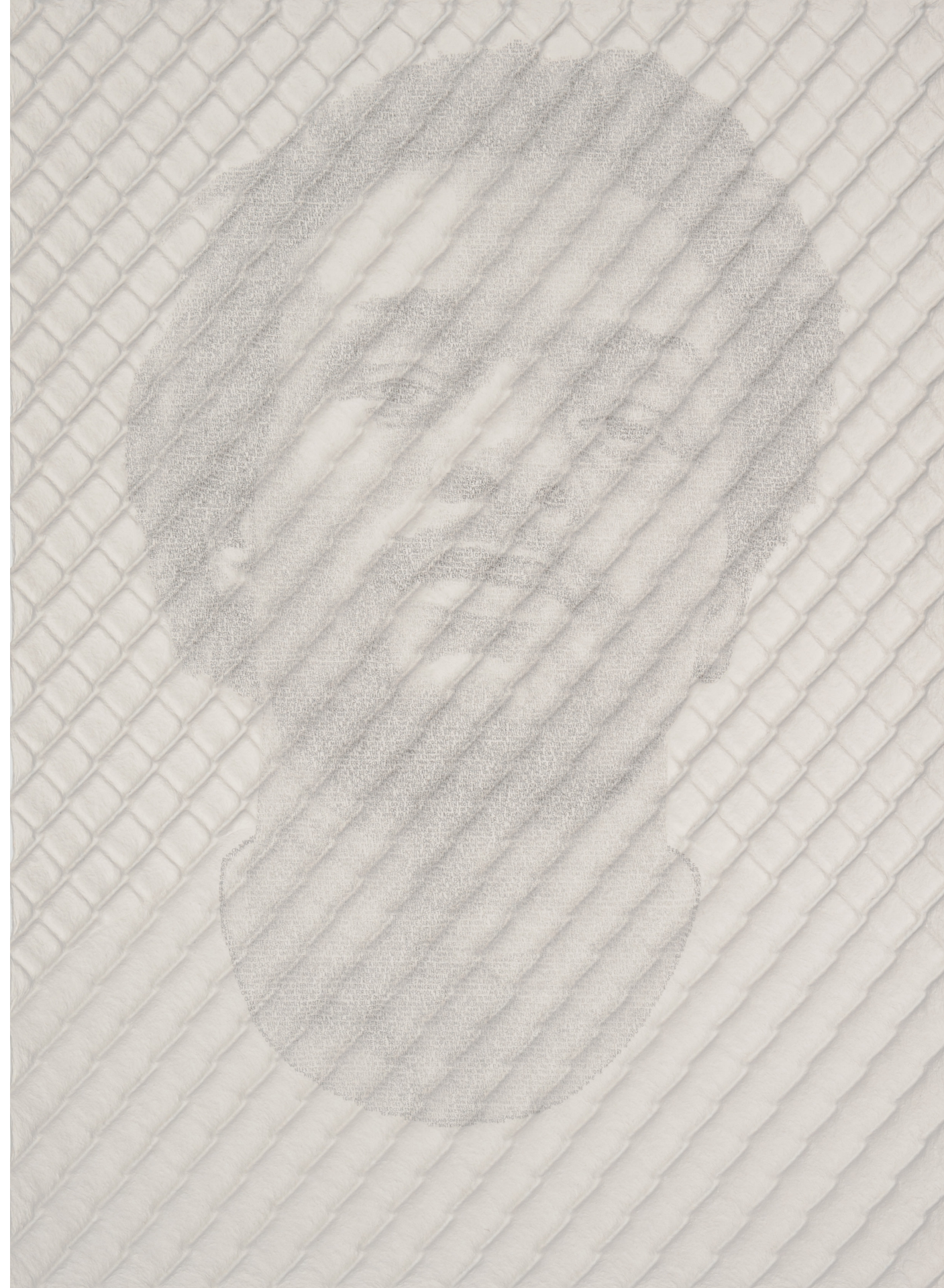
*Subversive White* lifts the veil of white supremacy to reveal the infinite phantasms within: the stolen sense of superiority; the false conceptions of race and color applied and enforced upon human beings; "purity" as a cover for complicity; the persistent menace of erasure. Figurative works take aim at the apocrypha of genetics and culture. Conceptual works negotiate the presumed opacity of white and its ability to obscure. Throughout the show, white reemerges as a purifying flash of light and heat, a conflagration with the potential to reveal and irradiate the encroaching rot.

Examining the discriminatory structures of our national bureaucracies, Ben Durham's *Chain-link Fence Portrait (John)* portrays one of the artist's adolescent acquaintances whose mugshot ended up in the public domain. The subject's likeness is executed in undulations of handwritten text on handmade paper, and the entire composition is systematically contorted by an underlay of wire fence. Durham describes the person he once knew with a series of associative memories, his words the only delineating line.

"I strive to find some way to tell the subject's story and yet I know I will fail to do so," says Durham. "Whiteness in painting and drawing is not neutral or a blank slate but always for me an absence, a record of what we can or cannot see. This balance and the question of who deserves visibility and attention and what attentions are valued and facilitated by our culture is at the center of my ongoing inquiry into memory, representation, and the criminal justice system."

The current state of systemic discrimination would not be possible without the contribution of generations of pseudoscientific scholarship, a history magnificently embodied in Fiona Pardington's image of a 19th century phrenological teaching model. A system of cranial measurement that supposedly corresponded to character traits, or "mind organs," phrenology was primarily a method to justify pervasive and immoral notions of ethnic superiority. Pardington, a native of New Zealand who scours cultural institutions for these obsolete medical models, found this pale, mustachioed visage abandoned "in the car park storage of Paris's Kremlin-Bicêtre Hospital, along with a group of other casts; they've basically been forgotten." While the models have been discarded, the pernicious habit of generating scientific facts as a rationale for existing biases reaches deeply into our present moment. It's a form of delusion that is aptly represented in the unblinking eyes and methodically gouged, segmented cranium of the Kremlin-Bicêtre man.

Right: Ben Durham, *Chain-link Fence Portrait (John)*, 2017, graphite text on handmade paper and steel chain-link fence, 65.25" x 49.5" framed





“Time is everything for the photographer,” Pardington has remarked, “How we situate ourselves and others in time, and how the past is served up in the present.”

Wrapped in white silk and sweetly embroidered, with a braided cotton fuse, Mark Mitchell delivers a bomb from the past in *Cracker Party*. Taking aim at the repressive gendered iconography of white communion and bridal dresses, Mitchell instead honors the unsung work of those who counter such prescriptive notions, often through the very fact of their existence. Remarks Mitchell, the piece is “a tribute sculpture to the George Jackson Brigade, an intersectional armed resistance group of the late 60’s and early 70’s active in the Pacific Northwest. They were comprised of two gay ex-cons, two lesbians, a sex worker and a Black Panther. I made this bomb to celebrate their legacy.”

From the insistent protuberance pushing beneath the white skin-like surface of Julianne Swartz’s *Stretch Drawing (Thick Jut)*, to Carrie Marill’s eerily off-balance pale still-life, white becomes a method of resistance and a cipher; a place where meanings may turn radically below the surface. In her *Proof-Reading* series, Ann Morton’s white handkerchiefs include a disclaimer: a careful inspection will reveal the false claims of whiteness permeating our current conversation, from the bleached dentition of so-called leaders to the ever tightening straightjacket of our criminal justice system. As Mark Mitchell’s *Cracker Party* suggests, the antidote may be a white-hot explosion.

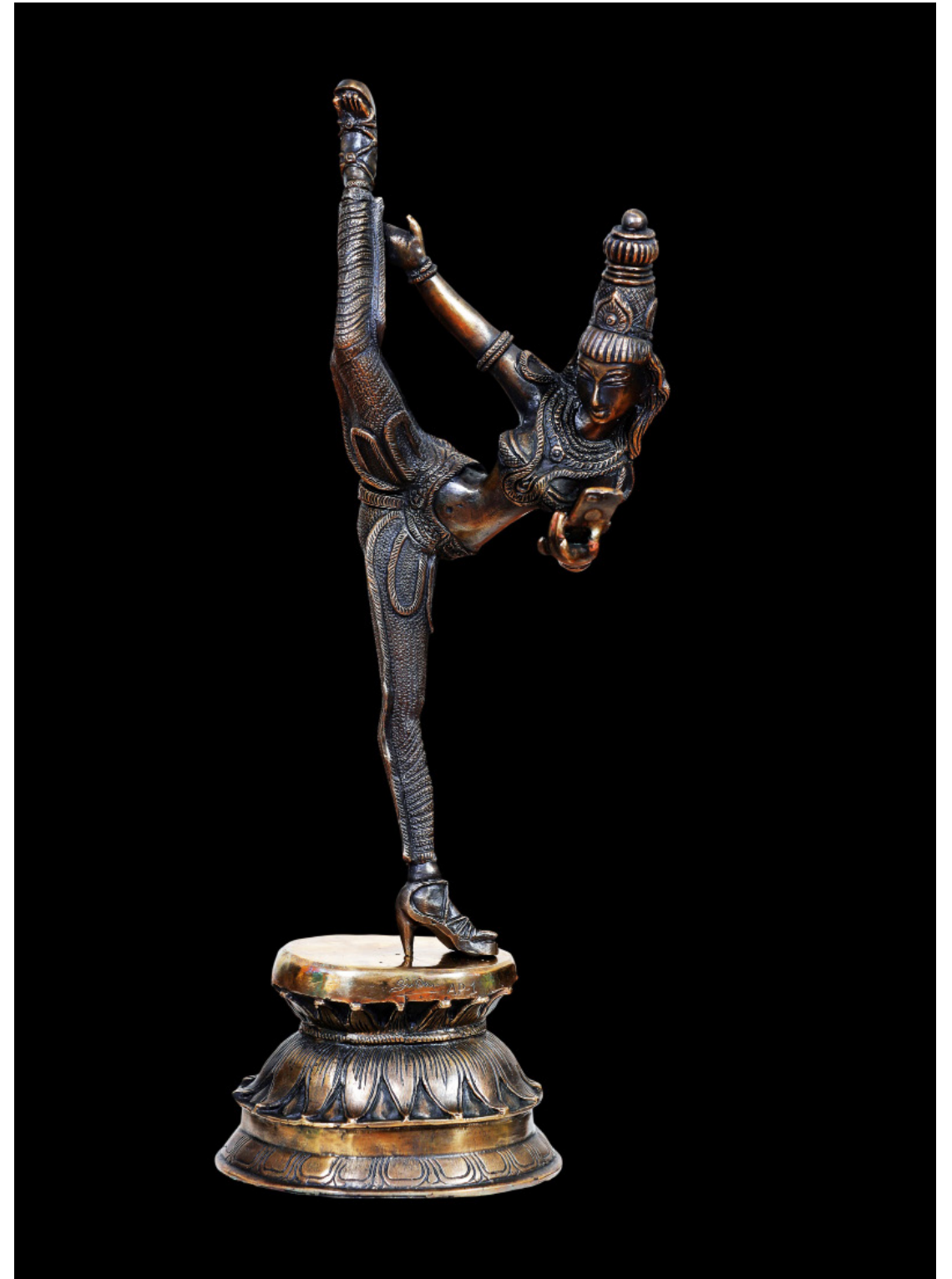


Mark Mitchell, *Cracker Party*, 2017, silk floss embroidery, silk taffeta, cotton buckram and reed, 9" x 6" x 6" (not including fuse)



Fiona Pardington, *Phrenology Head, Le Kremlin-Bicêtre Hospital, Paris* 2011 (With thanks to Musée de l'Homme (Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle), Paris), 2018, archival photographic print on Hahnemühle paper, 42" x 31", edition of 10





Above: Siri Devi Khandavilli, *Selfie Queens 3*, 2017, cast bronze, 18" x 6.5" x 5", edition of 3

Left: Ann Morton, *Proof-Reading 3 (collusion)*, 2018, handmade handkerchief with embroidery, 12" x 12" (hanging dimensions 4" x 15" x 3"), edition of 7



# MAYME KRATZ

Bears Ears National Monument was designated in December of 2016 with input from local tribal leaders and tourist interests. The area comprises over a million acres of Utah desert and canyonland and contains an estimated 100,000 Native American archaeological and ancestral sites, including thousand year-old dwellings, petroglyphs, and grave sites relevant to Hopi, Zuni, Navajo, Ute, and Ute Mountain Ute peoples. In December 2017, a new presidential administration reduced the area of protected land by 85% in order to allow for oil and gas extraction, uranium mining, logging and other commercial activities. Thus turns the story of the North American continent, an exhausting and ever-repeating narrative in which our society weighs the forces of exploitation and profit against the interests of a liveable habitat and protected land and cultures.



Mayme Kratz, *Circle Dream 74*, 2018, resin, deer bone, snake ribs and vertebrae on panel, 48" x 48"

An artist whose limpid, expansive resin panels gather and elevate the scrub and bones, flora and fauna of the American West, Mayme Kratz is deeply familiar with the Bears Ears site. Over two decades it has been one of the many Western landscape's undeveloped and wild tracts the peripatetic artist has come to know.

"I am not political... Or if I am, I don't try to make that the forefront of my work," Kratz remarks. Yet *Dark is Light*, a body of works commemorating the Bears Ears territory, came to her as an unquestionable directive. "It was so clear, as though I had a dream about it, and I woke up in the middle of the night knowing that I had to try to capture what I could from that landscape and bring it back and celebrate it, and mark its disappearance."

Kratz was impelled by a poem titled "Culture and the Universe," by the Puebloan writer Simon Ortiz, which concludes:

*Without knowing why culture needs our knowledge, we are one self in the canyon.*

*And the stone wall I lean upon spins me wordless and silent to the reach of stars  
and to the heavens within.*

*It's not humankind after all nor is it culture that limits us. It is the vastness we do  
not enter. It is the stars we do not let own us.*

"From the last line of the poem I understood this austere sense of things at Bears Ears, and how small we are as human beings and also how destructive we are. The information came to me in this way at once, the whole idea; the necessity for a celebration of that landscape, and the hope that something again will change and it won't be disrupted," remarks Kratz. "And also of course the knowledge that things never turn out quite the way you think they're going to."

Kratz does not contrive to replicate a given environment or expound a specific narrative about the wild places that she explores. Instead her works present a personal catalogue of the humble particulate assortments exhaled from vast systems of the natural world: The small bleached spinal segments and ribs of animals who died in the brush, the roots and seeds and splinters that result when organic systems multiply and ascend.

Kratz sources the biological gems that stud her artworks in the humble margins around undeveloped sites. Her practice is not exclusive or precious: *Dark is Light* contains collections scooped from the periphery of a construction site, and from the side of the road outside a Bears Ears campground. Yet Kratz's arrangements of biological matter in resin form majestic, glowing tributes to this foundational matter of the earth's biological systems.

Making an aesthetic tribute to the civilizational remains that punctuate Bears Ears territory was not something that Kratz envisioned, and yet in her latest exploration she remarked, the evidence of ancient human civilizations was ubiquitous: "In that landscape that's so sparse, every little thing matters. It's surprising to routefind down some canyonside and come across dwellings, again and again. But how do you bring that into the work, without it being self conscious? Instead I try to keep it in my mind, and that must be enough."



Recently, in finalizing a piece made up of a brushy grass culled from near Bears Ears, Kratz noticed a repeating form familiar to her from several of the area's ancient dwelling sites: "It's a circular form, and in the center there's an intentional blankness. It's a hole, and I realized it's a lot like the spirit holes and the viewing holes in the architecture of Bears Ears; They made these round spaces to scan the sky, or look out for their enemies".

Evidence of these ancient civilizations evoke an unexpected sense of urgency in Kratz: "It's not an undiscovered landscape, but it is still so full of mystery and spirit. I am overwhelmed by a sense of longing when I think in terms of what might just...go away. I've never done anything other than what I believe, but now it feels that if we don't speak about it, no one is going to. Now this is something I have to do."



Mayme Kratz, *Grasshopper Moon*, 2018, resin, grasshopper exoskeleton, seeds, leaves, branches from Colorado plateau on panel, 12" x 12"



Binh Danh, *Untitled #9*, from the series, "Aura of Botanical Specimen", 2017, photogram on Daguerreotype, 7" x 5", unique





Luis González Palma, *Pentagrama (Pentagram) 8*, chromaluxe print, 29.5" x 21.5", edition of 7



Luis González Palma, *Pentagrama (Pentagram) 6*, chromaluxe print, 29.5" x 21.5", edition of 7





Enrique Chagoya, *The Ghosts of Borderlandia*, 2017, color lithograph with chine colle, 15" x 80", edition of 30

## EXHIBITION SCHEDULE 2018/2019

SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER, 2018	TRINA MCKILLEN: <i>CONFESS</i>
NOVEMBER – DECEMBER, 2018	SONYA CLARK
JANUARY – FEBRUARY, 2019	MAYME KRATZ: <i>DARK IS LIGHT</i>
MARCH – APRIL, 2019	<i>SUBVERSIVE WHITE</i> : SONYA CLARK, ENRIQUE CHAGOYA, ANGELA ELLSWORTH, CLAUDIO DICOCHEA, BEN DURHAM, CARRIE MARILL, TRINA MCKILLEN, MARK MITCHELL, ANN MORTON, FIONA PARDINGTON, ATO RIBEIRO, JULIANNE SWARTZ
MAY - AUGUST, 2019	<i>AT THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION</i>

# LISA SETTE GALLERY

210 East Catalina, Phoenix, Arizona 85012

telephone 480-990-7342 facsimile 480-970-0825 [www.lisasettegallery.com](http://www.lisasettegallery.com)

Hours: Tuesday-Friday: 10 am to 5 pm | Saturday: 12 to 5 pm | and by appointment

Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day, and Fourth of July

