

MATERIAL GIRLS

Contemporary Black Women Artists

**FEBRUARY 12 –
OCTOBER 16, 2011**



MATERIAL GIRLS EXAMINES THE MATERIALS CONTEMPORARY BLACK WOMEN ARTISTS USE TO CRAFT PROVOCATIVELY TACTILE FORMS.

Some of these artists work with wood, metal, and glass. Others rely on manufactured, recycled, or unexpected materials, including plastic bags, tissue paper, rubber tires, combs, and human hair. Many create public art, whether commissioned for large, metropolitan centers or installed in locales off the beaten track. The materials they prod, ply, and piece together play on a range of cultural meanings, personal memories, and social agendas.

ARTISTS

CHAKAIA BOOKER

A native of Newark, New Jersey, Booker transforms recycled rubber tires into abstract sculptures that comment on race, class, gender, and the environment.

SONYA CLARK

Clark utilizes organic and commonplace objects, including human hair, plastic combs, and thread, to create visual references to the cultures of the African Diaspora.

TORKWASE DYSON

Based in Brooklyn NY, Dyson's studio practice is informed by issues of sustainability, technology, architecture, materialism, and imagination.

MAYA FREELON ASANTE

The most recent work by Baltimore-based artist Freelon Asante is a vivid combination of tissue paper, printmaking, collage, sculpture, and installation.

MAREN HASSINGER

Hassinger transforms industrial and commercial materials, such as wire cable, newspaper, and plastic bags, into fluid sculptures that comment on human emotion and the natural environment.

MARTHA JACKSON JARVIS

Working solidly with natural materials, including clay, glass, wood, and stone, Jackson Jarvis reveals narratives about ancestry and spiritual identity.

JOYCE J. SCOTT

Scott, a native Baltimorean, is a sculptor, jeweler, printmaker, performer, and educator whose work focuses intently on expanding handcraft traditions in glass and beadwork.

RENÉE STOUT

Stout's installations and found object assemblages explore the cultures and belief systems of the African Diaspora in ways that encourage empowerment and healing.

MATERIAL GIRLS



AMONG THE ARTISTS IN MATERIAL GIRLS are those who took early inspiration from seeing their mothers and other family members sewing, quilting, and shaping simple pieces of fabric into something rich and impressive.

Textile traditions are visible in works by Maya Freelon Asante, Sonya Clark, and Chakaia Booker. Freelon Asante unites fragments of tissue paper in sculptures reminiscent of her grandmother's quilts. Clark, who learned to thread a needle from her maternal

grandmother, creates sculptural works patterned to resemble West African *kente* cloth. Booker's recycling of old tires also connects to traditions of sewing. She translates the experience of reconstructing store-bought garments to suit her body into a creative practice that mixes wearable art and re-purposed materials.

Beyond the artistic legacy from family members, ancestral connections to Africa fuel artists Joyce J. Scott, Renée Stout, and Martha Jackson Jarvis who create objects with spiritual and ritual functions. Incorporating seeds, stones, clay, and glass into sculptures and installations that reference rituals practiced in Central Africa and the American South,



these three artists choose materials that reveal narratives about identity (who they are) and ancestry (who they come from).

For Maren Hassinger and Torkwase Dyson, materials serve as a critical language to explore concerns

about the environment. Hassinger uses sculpture as a way to make physical what has been lost or is in danger. Dyson is concerned with hazards resulting from our material economy; she questions how the "disposable" items we buy, sell, use, and discard will affect the environment. Both are interested in the relationship between humans and the world we inhabit—as are the other artists in *Material Girls*.

Keenly attentive to the pleasures derived from the sense of touch, the eight artists in *Material Girls* embrace art forms that allow them to engage the tactile qualities of their media. They build monumental sculptures, shape richly textured surfaces, and apply intricate handiwork

to both delicate and resilient materials. Fervently working at the intersection of art and material culture, these artists show us that when we choose to value the materials around us, we can shape our lives and livelihoods through our own making.



Left: Sonya Clark, *Thread Wrapped*, 2008, Plastic combs, thread
Photo/Taylor Dabney
Middle: Chakaia Booker, *The Futility of Hope*, 2007, Rubber tire, wood
Photo/© Chakaia Booker, Courtesy Marlborough Gallery.com
Above: Torkwase Dyson, *Untitled (West African mask, V-8 Model engine, and bling t-shirt)*, 2008, Mixed media, plastic, wood, bullet heads, cotton
Photo/Courtesy of the artist and Flanders Gallery



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Curated by Michelle Joan Wilkinson, PhD

February 12 - October 16, 2011

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- Above: Joyce J. Scott, *Inkisi: St. John the Conqueror*, 2009
Collected glass bottles, glass beads, wire, thread, coral
Photo/Michael Kyorta
- Cover: Maren Hassinger, *Love*, 2008, Pink plastic shopping
bags with love notes inside, inflated by human breath
Photo/Courtesy of the artist

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of Maryland African American
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830 E. Pratt Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
www.AfricanAmericanCulture.org
443-263-1800