

LEOH Trip

Houston Center for Contemporary Craft

August 13, 2025



THE HOUSTON CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY CRAFT (HCCC)

is a non-profit arts organization located at 4848 Main Street,
within the Museum District.

Founded in 2001, it is one of the few art venues in the country
dedicated exclusively to the interpretation
and presentation of craft.

The mission of HCCC is to inspire and connect people
to the art and process of making.

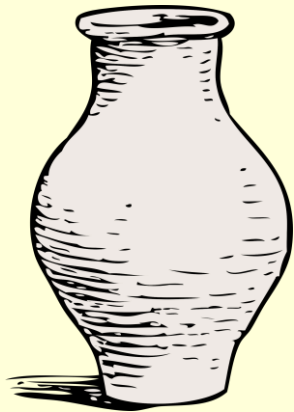
HCCC hosts thought-provoking exhibitions and hands-on programs
for children, adults, and educators. Visitors can also visit the open
studios of craft artists. The outside Craft Garden allows visitors
to relax as well as view and learn about plants used in the making
of textiles, basketry, and other art forms.

The Center's rooftop serves as home to a beehive,
ensuring pollination of the Craft Garden plants.

The Center is closed on Sundays, Mondays, and certain holidays.
Parking and admission are free other days between 10a-5p.

The HCCC would not be possible without its generous donors.
Learn much more about the Center on their website

crafthouston.org.

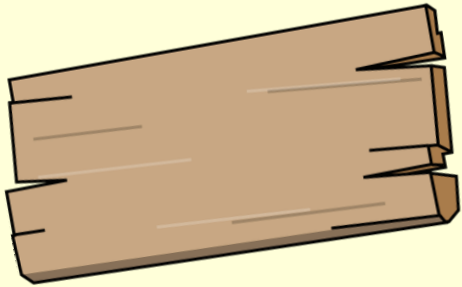


WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY CRAFT?

Crafting brings together 3 M's:
Makers, Materials, and Methods,
with the goal of creating art that shapes
communities and enriches daily life.

Traditional materials included clay, fiber, glass, metal,
and wood. These same materials are used by
HCCC resident artists.

Located in our diverse city of Houston,
the goal of HCCC is to be inclusive for all.
These include a person's race, age, ability, ethnicity,
religion, political beliefs, sexual orientation, gender
identity or expression, nationality,
geographic origin, and socioeconomic status.



ARTIST RESIDENCY PROGRAM

An annual juried selection awards artists residencies from 3 - 12 months. Selection is based not just on the quality of the artist's work, but also on their ability to interact with the public, their career path, and program diversity.

Artists receive a monthly stipend, an on-site studio with a sink, plus telephone and internet access.

Outdoor electric kilns are available. Resident artists also have access to a wide variety of opportunities, such as teaching assignments, collaboration with fellow residents, exposure at HCCC events, and discussions with curators and gallery owners.

The artists are required to fulfill certain program requirements. Crafting media must be wood, glass, metal, fiber, or clay.

Artists are also required to open their studios to the public on Saturdays and one other day each week, to engage with the public.





Zaynab Hilal,
Curatorial Fellow,
served as our tour guide.

She began by discussing this large art piece constructed entirely of small pieces of repurposed wood.



ATO RIBEIRO
(Atlanta, Georgia)

Home Away From Home #10,
2023
Repurposed wood, wood glue,
HDPE, and acrylic
Courtesy of the artist

Ribeiro draws inspiration from renowned fiber artist Sonya Clark, whose work is displayed in the exhibition, *We Are Each Other*, in the adjacent galleries. He says, "We've always used textiles to share stories...my job is to make the world remember these contributions." By meticulously cutting, gluing, curing, and slicing repurposed wood into assemblages that invoke the communicative power of African diasporic textiles, the artist is also engaged in a mode of archiving cultural knowledge.



Close-up of a portion
of the wall

Ato Ribeiro translates symbolic modes of communication from across the African diaspora, shifting traditionally textile-based expressions into complex, geometric wooden tapestries. His interlocking patterns reference Ghanaian adinkra and kente cloth traditions, as well as African-American quilts that were coded with secret messages and maps along the Underground Railroad. Adinkra are visual representations of concepts and proverbs traditionally stamped on cloth or ceramics. Kente cloth conveys social status, spiritual beliefs, and cultural heritage through its distinctive, intricate strip-woven patterns and color combinations. In *Home Away From Home #10* (2023), Ribeiro incorporates Adinkra symbols throughout, including *Nsaa* (excellence and authenticity), *Nkyinkyim* (life's twisting path), and *Owuo Atwedee* (the universal ladder of death).

Eggshell Shirt – Business Casual, and Eggshell Work Glove

These pieces made with eggshells were amazing to observe closeup. The artist explores textiles as conceptual skins that are protective yet permeable.

ERIKA DIAMOND (Asheville, North Carolina)

Above:
"Eggshell Shirt - Business Casual,"
2022
Eggshells, tulle, thread, buttons

Left:
"Eggshell Work Glove (right)," 2025
Eggshells, tulle, thread

Courtesy of the artist

Erika Diamond explores the fragility and resilience of the human body using materials that echo the properties of skin. Born to ballet dancers, Diamond creates work that is deeply informed by the expressive qualities of the body, the ephemeral nature of touch, and the power of presentation. A mentee of renowned artist Sonya Clark, Diamond examines textiles as conceptual skins that are protective yet permeable. Her work often incorporates materials like bullet-proof Kevlar and mirrored vinyl, which serve as metaphors for vulnerability, protection, and identity.

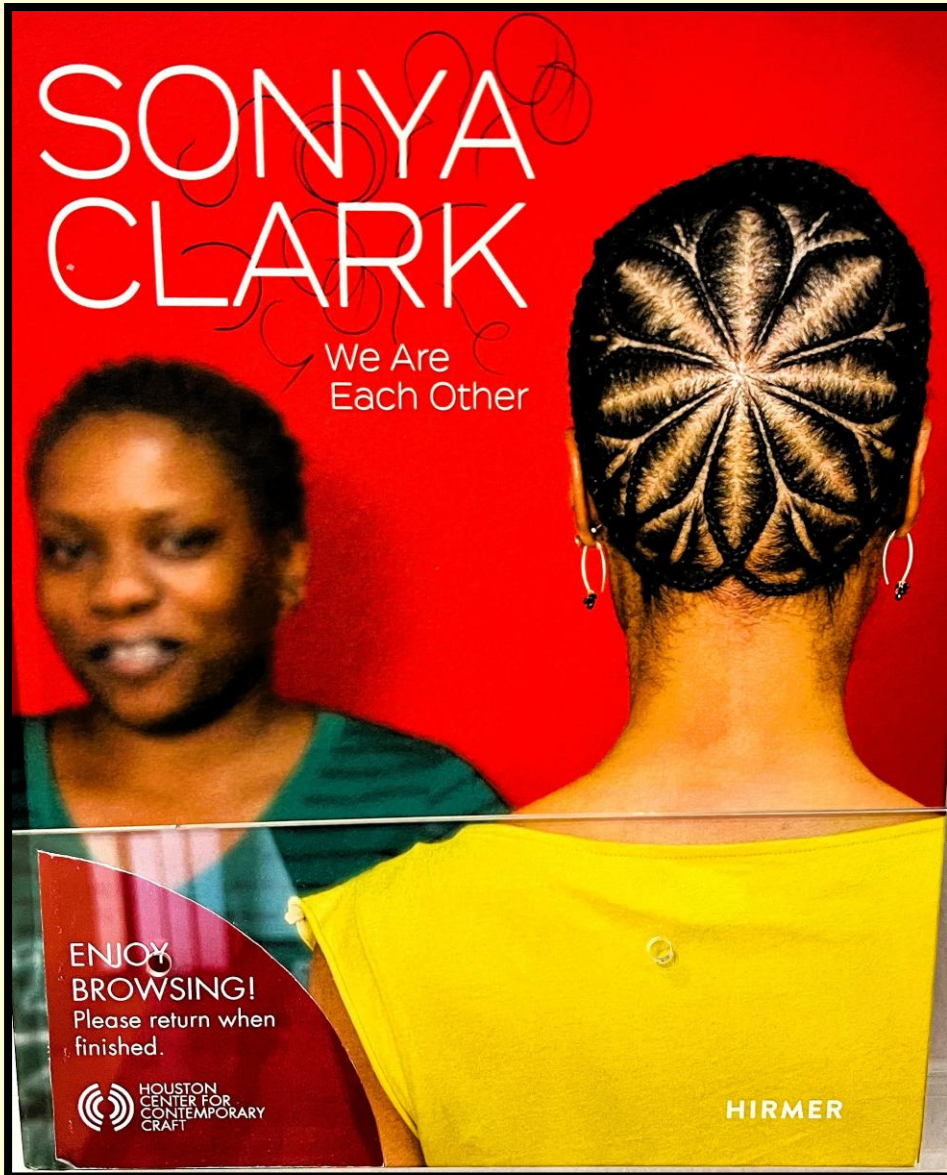
Eggshell Shirt - Business Casual (2022) is a meticulously quilted eggshell garment meditating on self-preservation and the complexity of queer experience. Diamond reflects, "As a queer woman, I walk through the world with a few extra layers of caution. I think a lot about protective exteriors, perceived fragility, and the paradox of safety and visibility. I find softness through breakage and strength in numbers." The artist performed in a similar eggshell garment, inviting participants to hug her—an act that allowed both her skin and the fragile armor to register the physical imprints of the interaction.

As an artist working in Asheville, North Carolina, Diamond honors the labor and resilience of communities rebuilding after Hurricane Helene in *Eggshell Work Glove (right)* (2025), a piece reminiscent of heavy-duty gloves. Crafted from eggshells and tulle, she describes the work as a love letter to volunteers and survivors, highlighting the strength found in collective effort. In Houston, where the impact of past hurricanes still resonates, the glove serves as a powerful reminder of the fragility of our environment and the strength of communities in times of crisis.

Through these works, Diamond invites viewers to reflect on the dualities of protection and exposure, vulnerability and resilience. Her use of everyday materials transforms the mundane into the extraordinary, creating artifacts commemorating touch, labor, and the enduring power of human connection. By centering queer visibility and community care, Diamond's work challenges us to consider how we navigate the world—both the barriers we build and the connections we forge.



Artist **Sonya Clark** was the featured artist in the main exhibit area.
Her works explore the theme ***We Are Each Other***.



For thirty years, artist Sonya Clark has focused her work on the African diaspora to confront, elucidate, and reframe US Black history and experience.

At the heart of her practice is communal art-making, and this exhibition is the first to comprehensively survey this ground-breaking and abiding aspect of her work.

Using a wide range of emotionally resonant materials and everyday objects – from cotton cloth and human hair to school desks and bricks – Clark encourages viewers to confront the country's historical imbalances and racial injustices through material transformation. The use of traditional craft materials, her applied knowledge of global craft techniques, and the communal collaborations that are integral to her art are among the many ways Clark represents and honors the legacies of the African diaspora in Black life.

We Are Each Other community-centered projects facilitate encounters across racial, gender, and socioeconomic divisions.

We Are Each Other

is inspired by Gwendolyn Brooks' poem "Paul Robeson" (1970)
about the famed concert artist, athlete, and activist.
The poem closes with a powerful verse about people
in community and our responsibilities to each other.

Through her work Clark asks us to acknowledge our individual
responsibility to the collective whole, consider how we might
address and challenge the injustices of US history,
and take an active role in deciding what happens next
in the future of our society.

We Are Each Other

is both a declaration and an invitation,
a battle cry and an embrace.

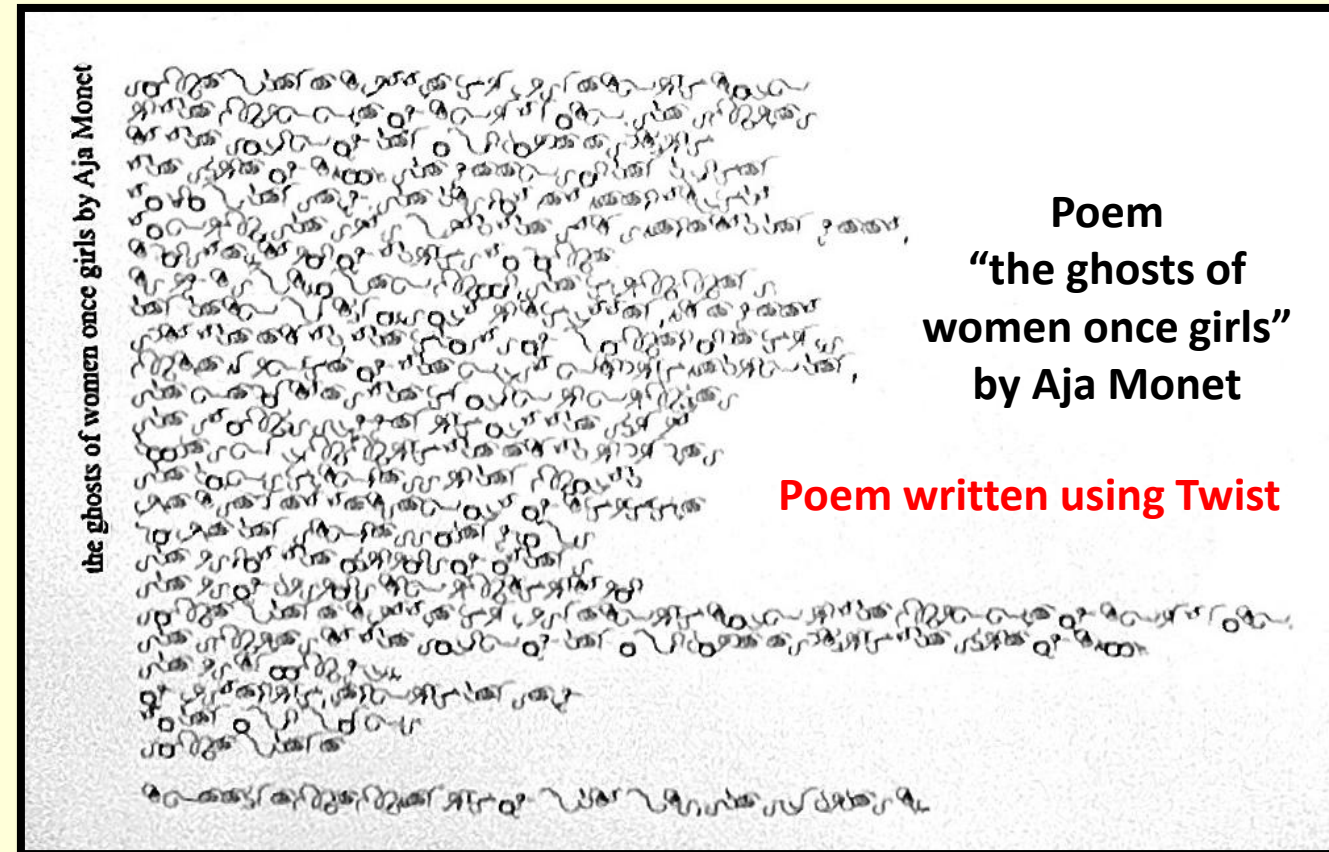
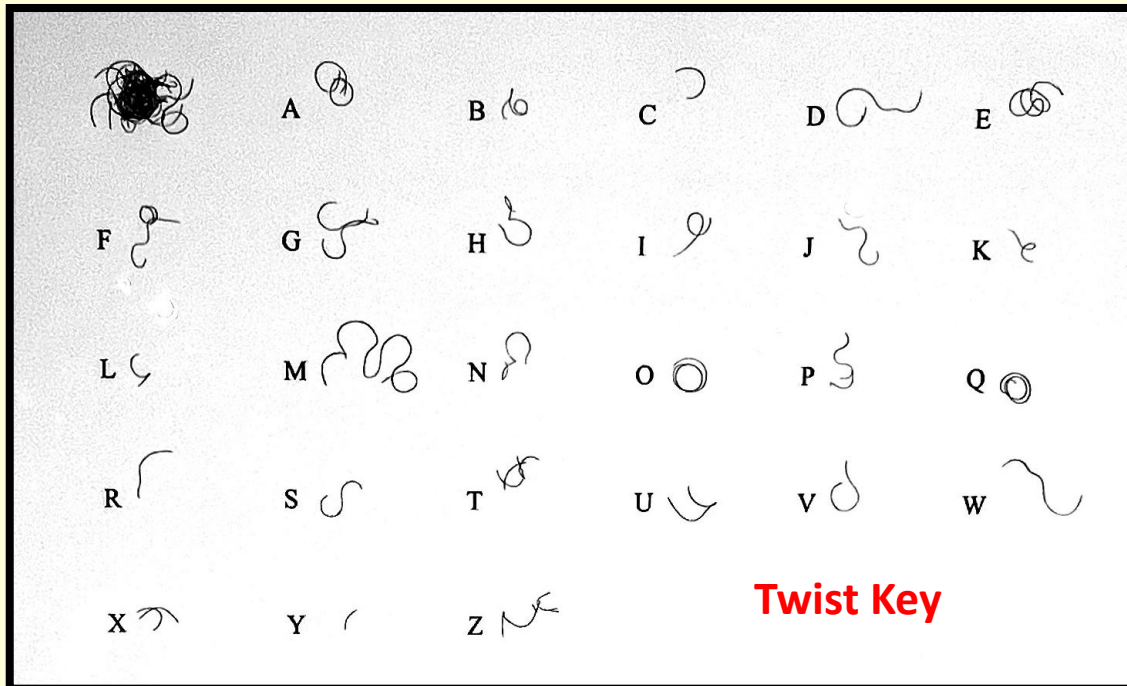
PAUL ROBESON

By Gwendolyn Brooks 1917-2000

That time
we all heard it,
cool and clear,
cutting across the hot grit of the day.
The major Voice.
The adult Voice
forgoing Rolling River,
forgoing tearful tale of bale and barge
and other symptoms of an old despond.
Warning, in music-words
devout and large,
that we are each other's harvest:
we are each other's
business:
we are each other's
magnitude and bond.

TWIST

Twist is an alphabet conceived by Sonya Clark and a font created in collaboration with graphic designer Bo Peng in 2016. The characters that make up *Twist* are based on Clark's hair, or as the artist explains it: "the Roman alphabet in the curl pattern of Black hair". *Twist* challenges the cultural supremacy of our alphabet and the European dominance inherent in its widespread use. As a system of colonial domination, thousands of indigenous scripts around the world have been replaced by the Roman alphabet. *Twist* pushes back at cultural erasures and has been a catalyst for Clark's collaboration with other artists across fields of poetry, music and dance.





Performance of *Unraveling* at Cranbrook Art Museum, May 2023

Video, TRT 01:12:35

Courtesy the artist

An ongoing part of Clark's art practice is the community-based construction and deconstruction of historic and cultural symbols. In her *Unraveling* series, the artist confronted the history of the Confederate battle flag through performances in which flags were painstakingly unraveled thread by thread. The performances were undertaken by the artist alongside visitors and symbolize the collective hard work involved in dismantling White supremacy and racism in the United States. This video documents one such unraveling performance.



A Flag of Truce towel, 1865, linen, 18x18½ in.
National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution,
bequest of Elizabeth B. Custer, 1936. This dishcloth became the
Confederate truce flag on April 9, 1865, when General Robert E. Lee
surrendered his Confederate army to Union General Ulysses S. Grant.



As an interactive exercise, visitors are invited to make
a rubbing of fabric similar to the original towel.

MONUMENTAL CLOTH SERIES

Monuments do more than historicize a person or event—they also characterize our values as a society and designate what knowledge will be passed on. In 2011, while Clark was a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellow at the National Museum of American History, she came across a fragment of the Confederate flag of truce—a common dishtowel—displayed next to President Lincoln's top hat. The dishtowel was used by Gen. Robert E. Lee to negotiate the Confederate Army's terms of surrender at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, on April 9th, 1865. Clark's encounter with the humble cloth had a profound impact on the artist, and it inspired her series *Monumental Cloth, The Flag We Should Know*. The series of works that resulted reproduced the truce flag at different scales to challenge the pervasive visibility and power of the Confederate battle flag.



Monumental Cloth (Sutured), 2017
Tea-stained linen and silk suture thread

Courtesy the artist

Monumental Cloth (Sutured) reconnects the two halves of the dish towel, now a monument, whose memory almost faded away with time. Fragments of the Confederate truce flag are held in collections around the nation. After the Confederacy's defeat, Union officer General George Custer cut the flag into pieces, keeping a large piece for himself and distributing the rest of the tiny patches to soldiers as mementos. Custer's piece eventually found its way into the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, where Clark, who seeks to resurrect the flag's image in defiance of its continued ubiquity, discovered it.

Visitors are invited to use a loom to weave a pattern similar to the truce flag.

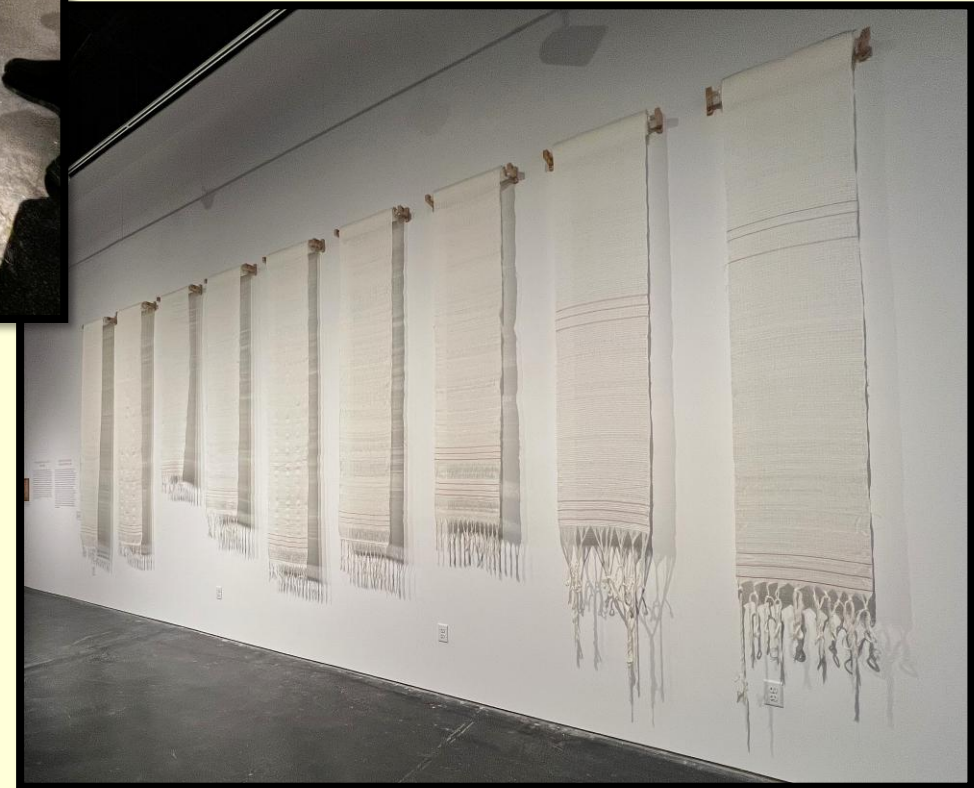


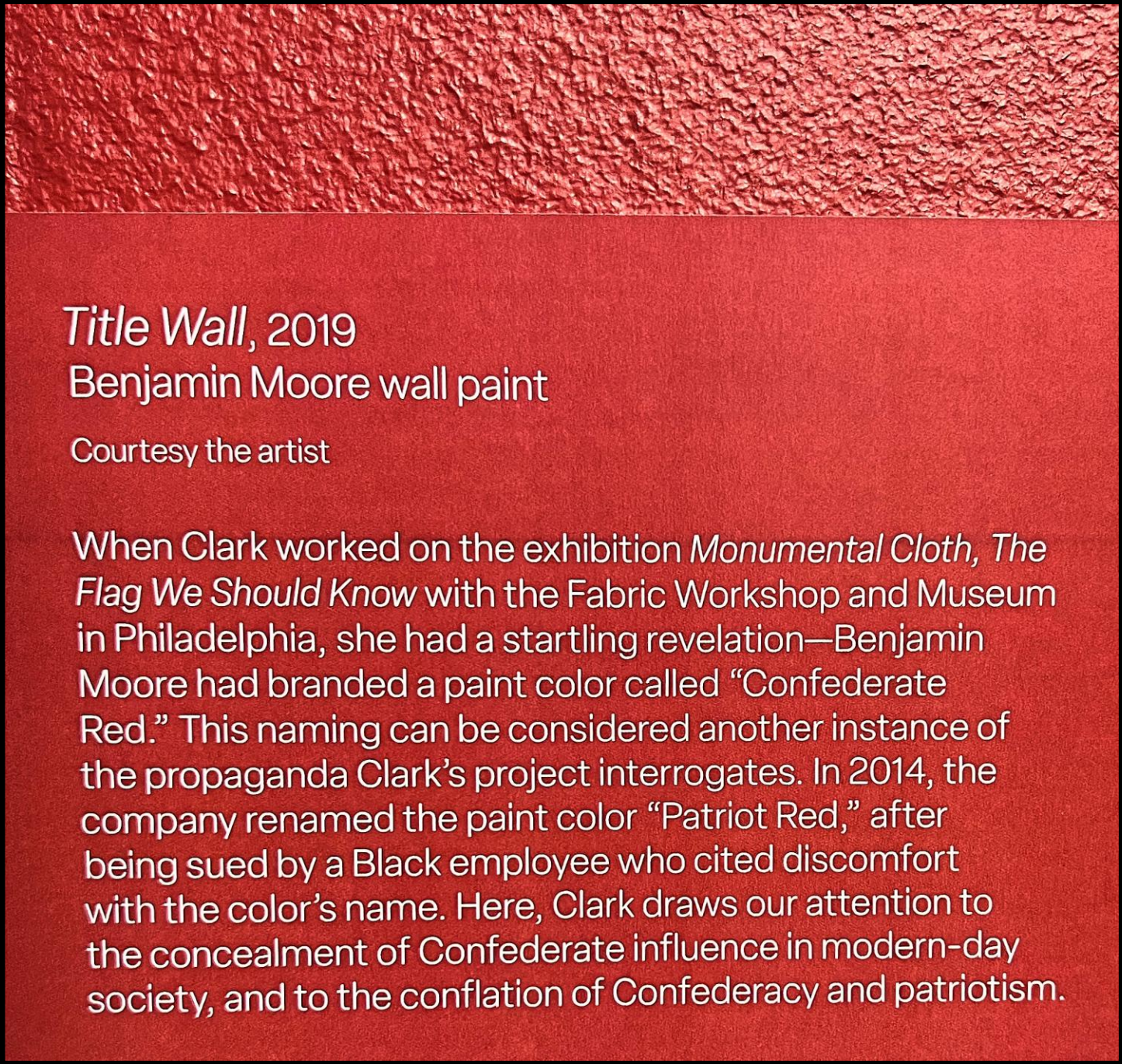
We enjoyed viewing a demonstration by Ms. Halal.

Completed pieces line a wall



Looms are provided by the *Contemporary Handweavers of Houston*.





Title Wall, 2019

Benjamin Moore wall paint

Courtesy the artist

When Clark worked on the exhibition *Monumental Cloth, The Flag We Should Know* with the Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia, she had a startling revelation—Benjamin Moore had branded a paint color called “Confederate Red.” This naming can be considered another instance of the propaganda Clark’s project interrogates. In 2014, the company renamed the paint color “Patriot Red,” after being sued by a Black employee who cited discomfort with the color’s name. Here, Clark draws our attention to the concealment of Confederate influence in modern-day society, and to the conflation of Confederacy and patriotism.

Propaganda, 2019

Courtesy the artist



During the Civil War, there were several different flags, but the flag of General Robert E. Lee's army of Northern Virginia became well known as the Confederate flag today, a symbol of the Confederacy that instrumentalizes White supremacist ideologies. Clark lists just a few hundred products emblazoned with the symbol. This work highlights how the battle flag has become part of our consumer society as propaganda through its ubiquitous applications to commercial wares, like baby onesies and skate-boards, thus asking the viewer to consider, why is a symbol of racial terrorism seemingly everywhere?

The artist's partial yet still lengthy list to the right includes many everyday items, including

windchimes, beach towels, playing cards, water bottles, coffee mugs, gift bags, paperweights, ceiling fan pulls, sunglasses, baby blankets, calendars, balloons, bumper stickers, and so on....

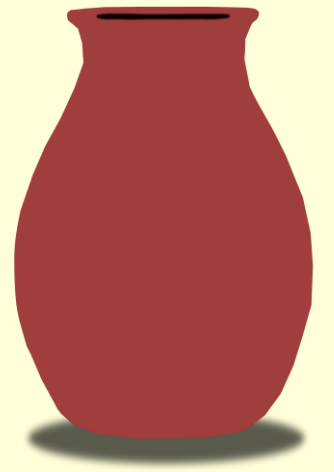
(Another example is the confederate flag clip art that was added to this slide presentation. It was easily found on the internet.)

skullcaps
baseball caps
cowboy hats
beanies
visors
rocket hats
redoras
scarves
bandanas
concealed carry purses
silicon wristbands
money clips
necklaces
cummerbunds
socks
neckties
bow ties
cufflinks
suspenders
sunglasses
sunglasses straps
tote bags
checkbook covers
carabiners
flip-flops
scrunchies
do-rags
pocket watches
belt buckles
belts
wallets
purses
earrings
bracelets
watches
gauged ear plugs
belly button rings
tongue rings
eyebrow rings
nose rings
nipple rings
backpacks
duffle bags
dog tags
high-top sneakers
wedding rings
umbrellas
headbands
cosmetics bags
dishcloths
drawstring bags
cowboy boots
coin purses
shoelaces
lanyards
keychains
sweatshirts
t-shirts
sleeveless button-up shirts
tank tops
tube tops
muscle shirts
men's briefs
bikinis
one-piece swimsuits
men's swim trunks
women's tank tops
vests
dresses
women's booty shorts
lingerie
leggings
panties
thongs
bras
denim jackets
men's dress shirts
sarongs
hooded blankets
tube tops
window-mounted car flags
rearview mirror hanging dice
spandex auto hood covers
valve stem covers
auto headrest covers
trailer hitch covers
travel neck pillows
spare tire covers
steering wheel covers
car floor mats
antenna balls
truck rear-window graphics
motorcycle bells
motorcycle cup holders
motorcycle helmets
motorcycle flag mounts
license plate frames
license plate frame fastener bolts
auto interior door lock knobs
seat covers
baby blankets
baby onesies
youth t-shirts
baby t-shirts
toddlers t-shirts
diaper bags
baby car seat covers
toy soldier sets
toy cars
flags, 4 x 6 inches to 10 x 15 feet
refrigerator magnets
car magnet
bumper stickers
stickers
license plates
motorcycle license plates
lapel pins
embroidered patches
flight wings
posters
blankets
bedsheet sets
three-piece comforter sets
shower curtains
aprons
oven mitts
pot holders
decorative signs
coasters
ashtrays
coin dishes
beverage coozies
pint glasses
suncatchers
bottle openers
tea towels
thermometers
shot glasses
coffee mugs
travel mugs
tumblers
mouse pads
flasks
salt and pepper shakers
mailbox covers
trinket boxes
toilet seats
bath towels
curtains
valances
light switch plate covers
wall outlet covers
windchimes
clocks
area rugs
tapestries
lamps
welcome mats
photo frames
table runners
placemats
water bottles
garden flags
music boxes
wooden boxes
door tags
cutting boards
decorative throw pillows
candle holders
pencil holders
bath mats
spandex door covers
paperweights
calendars
night-lights
coffee tables
vinyl wall decals
ceiling fan pulls
status
pocket knives
knives
throwing knives
air fresheners
plastic cups
windsocks
snuff cases
cigarette cases
knife cases
lighter cases
cell phone cases
cell phone grips
compact mirrors
Santa hats
Christmas ornaments
fidget spinners
craft ribbons
temporary tattoos
party streamer flags
balloons
dream catchers
toothpicks
writing journals
pens
postcards
commemorative coins
greeting cards
pencils
seasoning mixes
lighters
potato sacks
hot sauces
multi tools
self-defense toggles
hand fans
gift bags
Christmas stockings
paper plates
yo-yos
nail decals
hard hats
wrapping papers
washcloths
razor blades
tactical folding knives
skull decorations
gun grips
glass handpipes
ropes
gun holsters
clip art
spoons
jigsaw puzzles
piggy banks
action figures
nipple pasties
pet collars
dog leashes
dog bandanas
ski masks
beach towels
playing cards
beach bags
skateboards
golf balls
guitar picks
coolers
hockey masks
gloves
folding camp chairs
horse saddles
horse reins
guitars
guitar straps
cornhole sets
yoga mats
banjo straps
water shoes
and more....



Leaving the primary exhibit, Ms. Halal guided us past other works of art, including some for sale by current and previous artists in residence.

Our next stop was a tour of the artist residency areas, and an explanation of their artwork on display.





Perata's House of Hair

Materials include cardboard, popsicle sticks, foam board, and hair beads

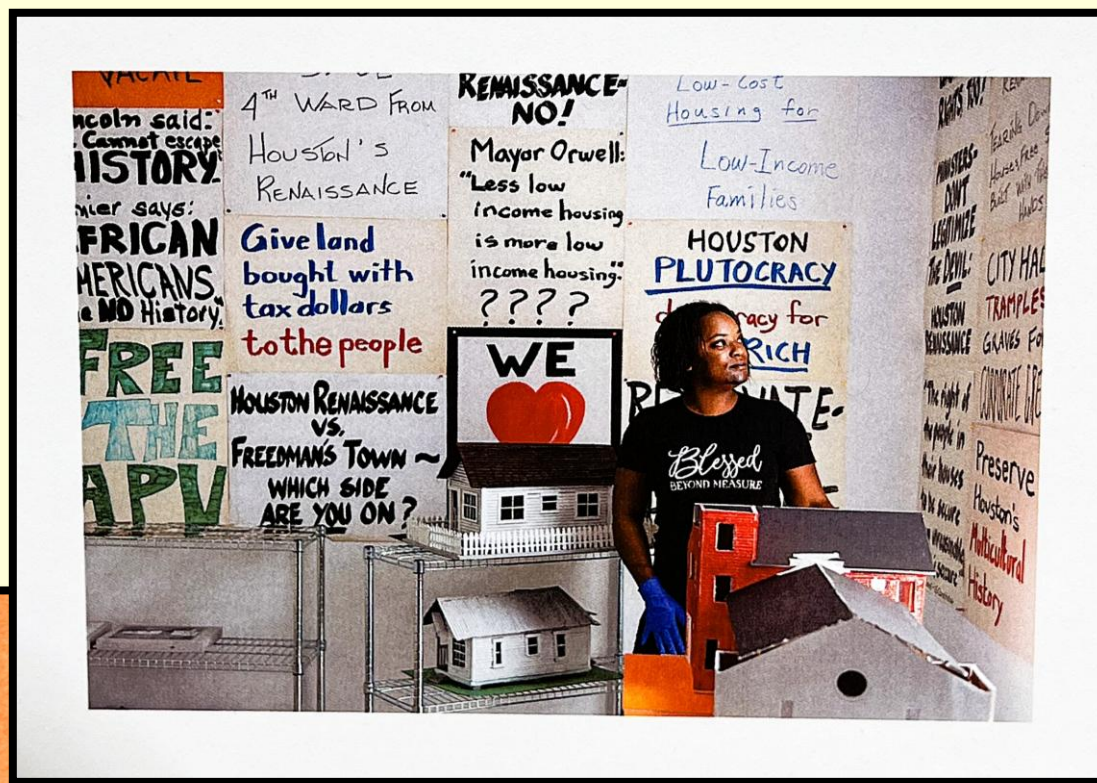
Artist Perata Bradley, of Houston



St. James Church (*Freedmen's Town*)

Materials include cardboard, foam board, and acrylic paint

PERATA BRADLEY
surrounded by some
of her work



CRAFTIVISM

By meticulously constructing scale models of homes, churches, and institutions, Perata Bradley celebrates the historical architectural legacy of Houston's Freedmen's Town while advocating against gentrification affecting Black and African American communities. In this piece, Bradley highlights St. James United Methodist Church, a historical church that continues to serve as a welcoming space, providing programs and resources for those in need. During her HCCC residency, Bradley transformed her studio into a vibrant center for community education and activism, demonstrating how art can serve as a tool for social change. Hand-painted archival protest posters lined the walls while she constructed scale houses from cardboard, demonstrating her commitment to raising awareness about gentrification in the Fourth Ward. Bradley's approach to her residency exemplified how artists can use their studios as platforms for education, advocacy, and community building.



PRESERVING CRAFT KNOWLEDGE

Drawing on historical research, Adam Whitney reinterprets ceremonial drinking vessels known as *rhytons* through a contemporary lens, while honoring traditional metalworking techniques of raising, *chasing*, and *repoussé* (a metalworking technique that creates raised designs from a single metal sheet). In his series *Cereal Mascot Rhytons* (2024), Whitney playfully reinterprets this ancient vessel form to examine modern rituals, branding, and American consumer culture. As one of the few contemporary metalsmiths crafting rhytons using traditional techniques, Whitney transformed his studio at HCCC into an educational hub to preserve craft knowledge. He installed a TV displaying time-lapse footage of his work on rhytons and his *Sea Monster* series, inspired by research into 16th and 17th-century maps. Whitney actively connected with Houston's metalsmithing community, using his studio to preserve traditional craft knowledge through accessible education and demonstration.

ADAM WHITNEY (Bakersville, North Carolina)

Left to right:

Cap'n Crunch Rhyton, 2024
Copper

Tony the Tiger Rhyton, 2024
Copper

Toucan Sam Rhyton, 2024
Copper
Courtesy of the artist

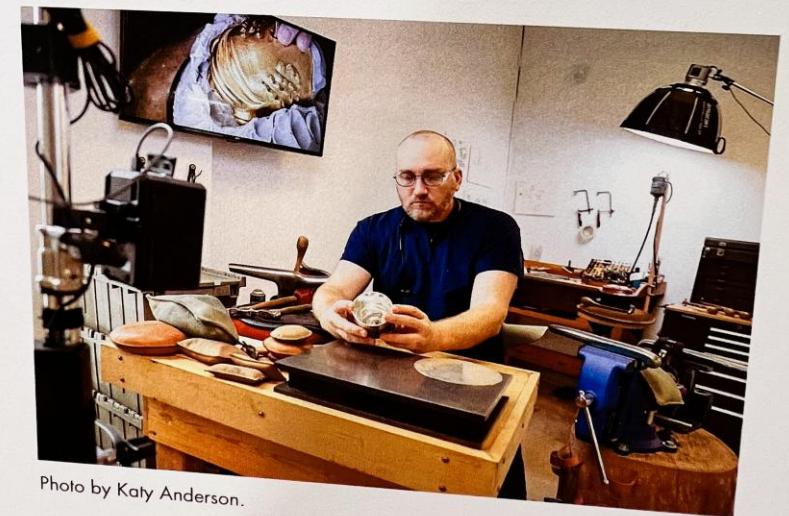


Photo by Katy Anderson.



MACON REED
(New Orleans, Louisiana)

My First Existential Crisis, 2024
Cardboard, paper clay, sheetrock
compound, acrylic gouache
Courtesy of the artist



DONGYI WU
(Houston, Texas)

The Black in Dark4, 2024

Fabric, Lego, cloth pin, button, ribbon, binder,
silicone ring, batting, sewing thread, acrylic sheet,
PVC vinyl, magnets, mirror sheet
Courtesy of the artist

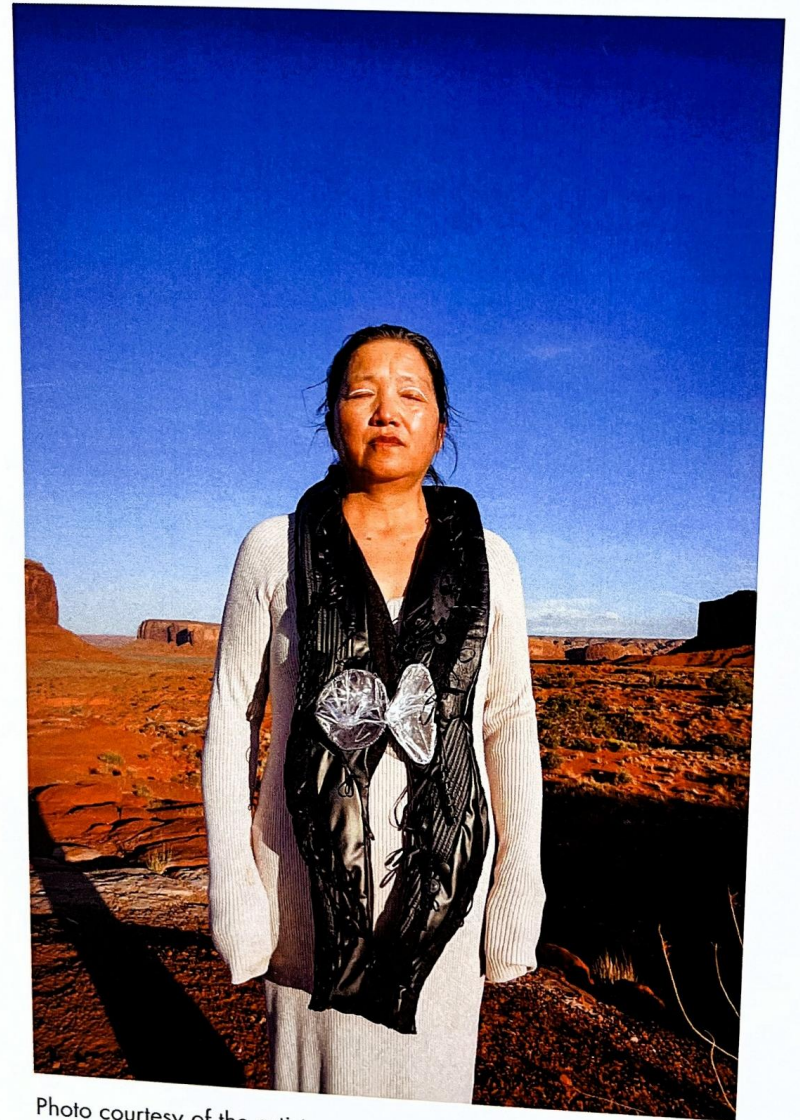
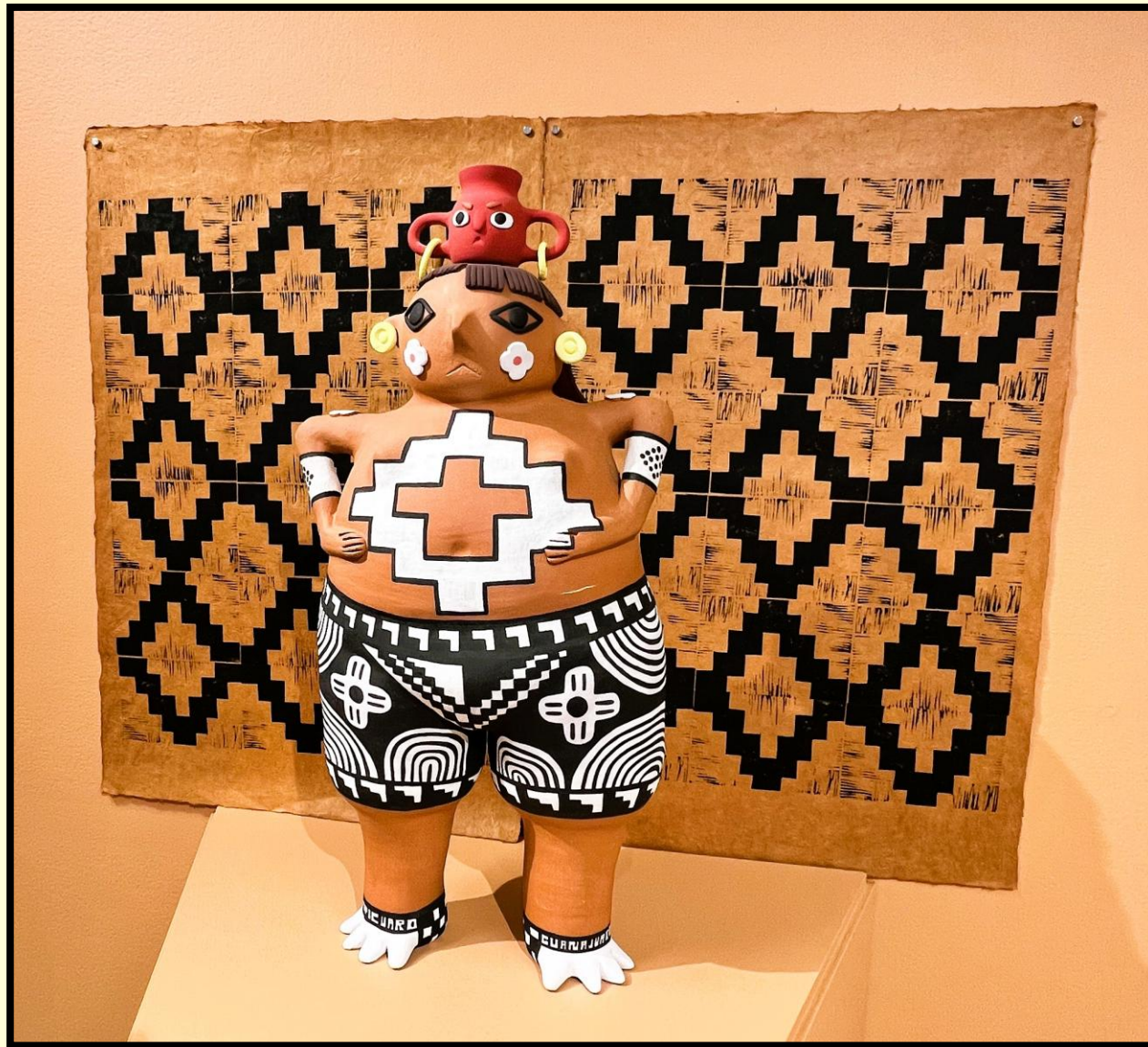


Photo courtesy of the artist.



Artist **Gabo Martinez** combines barro rojo (red clay) ceramics with print-making to immortalize her Mexican culture and narratives.



STEPHANIE BURSESE
(Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

The Woman Question, 2025
Hand embroidery with
cotton thread on linen
Courtesy of the artist



GBENGALA KOMOLAFE

Self-taught artist

Bound Denim



PREETIKA RAJGARIAH
(Houston, Texas)

spread the light, be the lighthouse, 2020
Auntie's sari, acrylic, latex paint, yoga
mats
Courtesy of the artist

The final stop of our visit to HCCC was their Craft Garden



Empty Bowls Houston – a frequent event at HCCC

HCCC hosted the 19th annual event of *Empty Bowls Houston* this past March 2025.

Bowls of all sizes, ceramic and wood, are donated to this worthy cause by the artists who created them. The exhibition area of the Center is filled with the bowls, while the parking area and garden host food and drink vendors, demonstrations, and entertainment. Proceeds from sale of the bowls and souvenir items go to the **Houston Food Bank.**





Several benches like this one are found throughout the garden. They are made possible by donations in memory of or in honor of others.





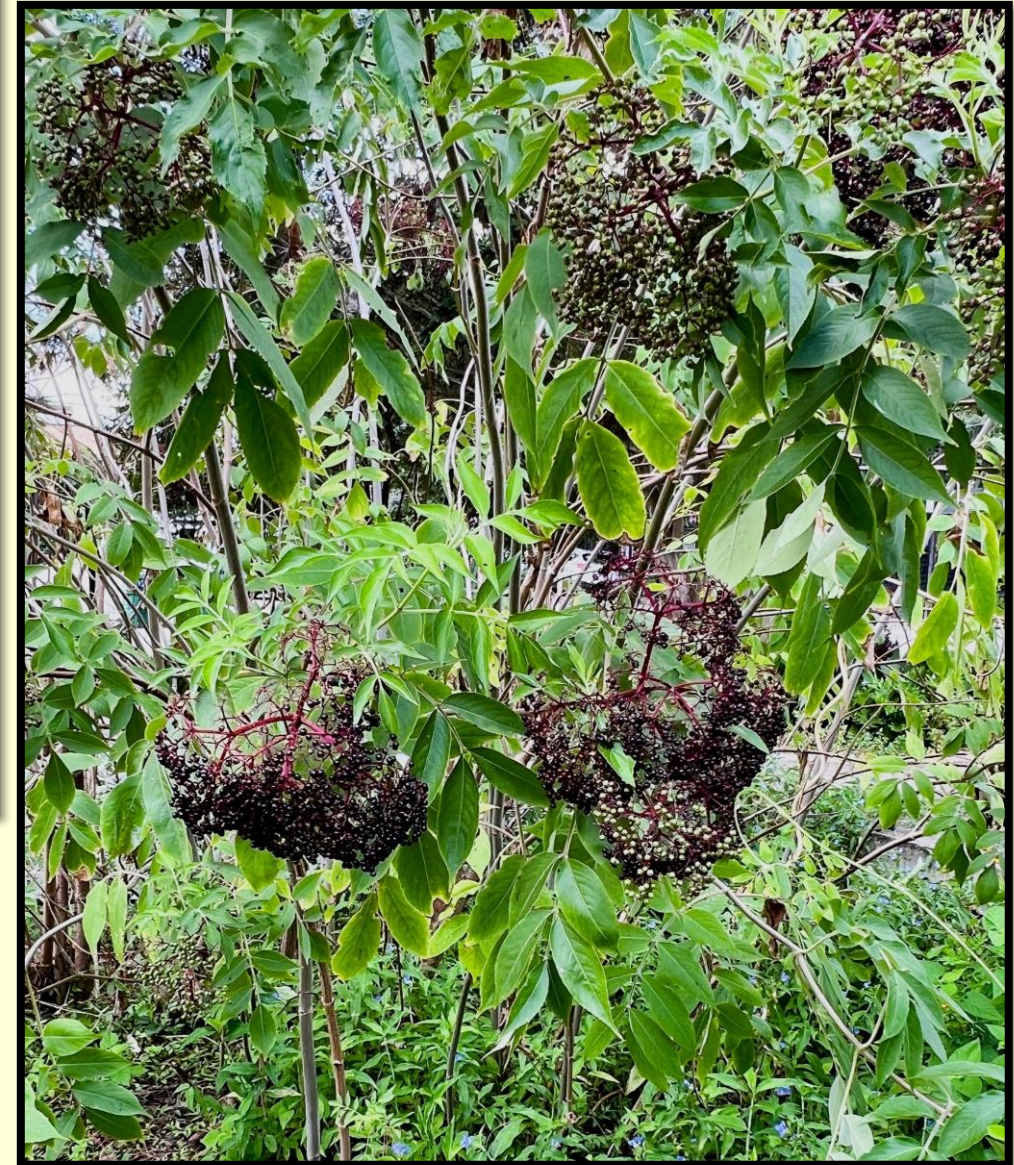
COREOPSIS, MADDER, AND TURMERIC

Textile artists use various parts of plants for eco-printing, hammer printing, and natural dyeing. Coreopsis' flowers produce yellow, orange, and brown colors, while Madder's roots yield rich warm shades of red. Turmeric's rhizomes, or roots, are boiled in water, dried, and ground into a vibrant orange-yellow powder, commonly used as both a fiber dye and a spice for food. Other plants, such as elderberry and pigeonberry produce dye in their colorful fleshy fruit. Even their leaves can produce color and interesting shapes for printing.



Los artistas textiles usan varias partes de las plantas para la impresión ecológica, impresión con martillo y tinte natural. Las flores de coreopsis producen colores amarillos, naranjas y marrones, mientras que las raíces de la rubia [madder] producen ricos tonos cálidos de rojo. Los rizomas o raíces de la cúrcuma se hierven en agua, se secan y se muelen para obtener un vibrante polvo de color amarillo anaranjado, comúnmente usado como fibra de tinte y como especia en la cocina. Otras plantas, como hierba carmín [pokeberry] y coralillo [pidgeonberry], producen tinte en su colorida fruta carnosa. Incluso sus hojas pueden producir color y proporcionar formas interesantes para la impresión.

Plants in the garden offer a variety of uses. Elderberries (pictured, right) and other plants provide dye and fiber for crafting purposes. We also learned that cotton varieties offer more natural fiber colors than just white.





Thank you, Ann,

for arranging this educational and visually stunning trip!
Following our visit, members enjoyed lunch at a restaurant
of their choosing, including nearby *Fia's Pizzeria*.

Future Trips



Wednesday, September 17: KPRC TV Channel 2

Travel by Precinct One bus to enjoy a tour, followed by lunch at nearby Los Tios.



Tuesday, October 14: Heritage Society at Sam Houston

Take another trip by bus, this time to the Heritage Society at Sam Houston Park, to view 3 historic homes.
Lunch at Pappas BBQ will complete the trip.

November and **December** trips are in the planning stages. Stay tuned!

Signing Up for a Trip

Trip Coordinator Ann Fairchild may be contacted at fairann@sbcglobal.net or **281-686-1325**.
She will publish complete trip details, with the opportunity to sign up, closer to the trip date.
If the traveler quota is full, you may ask to be put on a waiting list.