

Anita Cooke: *Density*

November 1- November 28, 2012

Opening Reception Saturday, November 3, 6-9 pm



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(New Orleans, Louisiana) October 31, 2012

Jonathan Ferrara Gallery is proud to announce *Density*, a new series of sewn constructions by artist Anita Cooke. This will be Cooke's second solo exhibition at the gallery, with an artist reception **Saturday, November 3rd**, from 6-9 pm. The exhibition will run from October 31 thru November 28, 2012.

Anita Cooke has lived and worked as an artist and teacher in New Orleans since 1980. She received her BFA in Ceramics from Kent State University in Ohio in 1978 and her MFA in Ceramics and Sculpture at Tulane University in New Orleans in 1984. She has taught Ceramics at Tulane University, Loyola University of New Orleans, Stephen F. Austin State University in Texas, and at Western Michigan University. Cooke's work is in numerous collections including a twenty-eight foot long ceramic mural, "Lightsounds", on the campus of Western Michigan University. She is Louisiana Fellowship Award winner.

Cooke creates rich "sewn" constructions whose three dimensionality references her accomplished ceramics background. Layers upon layers of canvas painted and cut and sewn in a meticulous fashion, then rolled and bound together achieve a lush textural result that is part sculpture, part painting, part construction and part assemblage. Cooke takes three to four years to produce a body of work as each piece requires painstaking attention to detail, each one created on her "Auntie Genie's" 1950's Singer sewing machine.

Of her latest body of work, Cooke says:

I have always been visually attracted to and subsequently moved on an emotional level by mere multitudes of objects: stacks, layers, piled bundles, large groupings of objects, filled cubicles and compartments, rows of similar or dissimilar objects and repeated patterns. We experience this density everyday, as it is a fundamental quality of our daily American life. We have a lot- a lot of everything and there is much to see: dense forests, packed shelves and racks and boxes piled high in endless stores, huge bundles of recyclable materials, giant piles of trash, giant piles of giant hay bales in giant fields of crops, stacks and stacks of books and papers, crammed parking lots, attics packed with stuff, events with huge crowds of people, densely packed cities, and on and on. But it is the process- the energy, force, or living history that lies behind the creation of this dense field, whatever the specific objects may be, that attracts me and is what I am seeking to express in this body of work. My particular process is one of a rhythmic, repetitive tearing and sewing together of multiples of painted canvas strips that are then layered densely together to make thickly wrought bas-relief wall constructions.

These sewn constructions only obliquely reference any actual objects; the subject is the energy of the process itself- the acts of painting, disassembly, reassembly, layering, pinning, cutting, stitching, and compacting into a given space that is most visually evident. While primarily non-objective, most of the work does have some connection to an actual visual experience. For example, the idea for the composition of "Hidden Garden" came about from my experience of peering through the slits in walls or gates in New Orleans (especially the French Quarter) and discovering a courtyard or garden- a treasure that is hidden from street-view. In this piece the viewer, too, is asked to search for this 'garden'. The composition for the five pieces titled "Textures of New Orleans", with their narrow interior slits also came from this same experience, but the feel of each separate piece is meant to reference different aspects of New Orleans, from its weathered surfaces, its diversity and variety, to its joyous celebratory nature. "Turbulent Waters" is meant to reference both the turbulence within our lives and world and also, closer to home, the turbulence that water often brings to our lives directly.

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