

# Sumter County Gallery of Art in Sumter, SC, Features Exhibition Curated by Torreah “Cookie” Washington

The Sumter County Gallery of Art in Sumter, SC, and the Deane and Roger Ackerman Family Fund present *All That We Carry: The Epic Stitchers and Friends*, curated by Torreah “Cookie” Washington, on view through Jan. 13, 2023.

This presentation is an earth-based art exhibition of quilts, indigo, sweetgrass baskets and ceramic works curated by, and featuring the art of renowned quilt artist Torreah “Cookie” Washington. This large-scale exhibition celebrates the joys, the sorrows, the life stuff; physical, mental, spiritual, and familial of Black people. The exhibition title is inspired by the National Book Award winner “All That She Carried” by Tiya Miles. The book is about a sack that was handed from mother to daughter beginning in 1850 in South Carolina, since slavery. In this exhibition, artists are asked, what are you carrying in your sack? This exhibition of traditional art forms will include pieces that speak to the journey that Black women (and men) are on. What is in the invisible emotional sack that they carry every day?

Curator Cookie Washington observes, “Black folks talk about walking out of their houses and putting on ‘armor’ in anticipation of microaggressions and racial discrimination. Black artisans are not a monolith. We come from different walks of life and are profoundly diverse as a people. We are all carry different things from our different journeys. We also have our own



“We Still Wear The Mask” by Torreah “Cookie” Washington

stitcher, Washington is emblematic of traditional earth-based artists working today to maintain traditional art forms - to address issues of contemporary society while keeping true to generational processes and materials.

Karen Watson, SCGA Executive director notes, “The exhibition is also a Black history lesson. Works such as Washington’s quilt *Henrietta Lacks*, and Patricia Montgomery’s *Septima Clark* (often called the Mother of the Movement) *Civil Rights Coat*, Tony Williams’s indigo *The Fabric of Our Lives* chronicling cotton and enslavement, and Sylvia Hernandez’s *A Glimpse of Racism*. There are also pieces celebrating Black life and joy – Arianne King-Comer’s indigo *When Sistahs Sing the Gospel*, Angela and Darryl Stoneworth’s sweetgrass *Diamond African Wedding Basket*, Bunny Rodrigues’s *Gullah Women*, and Antwon Ford’s sculptural sweetgrass baskets.”

Washington is a strong presence in her Lowcountry community and the Sumter County Gallery of Art (SCGA) is a strong presence in our community will combine forces through the educational and outreach component required by the \$3000 SouthArts grant the SCGA that was awarded for this project. SCGA has a long history of, and commitment to our community partnerships with the HYPE (Helping Youth Pursue Excellence) afterschool program, and Seniors Making Art – art classes for Senior citizens. Washington will go off-site to five of the most rural Sumter County community centers, one center a day (the closest is 8 miles from the gallery, the farthest center is 16 miles away) to make quilt squares with a total of 100 Senior citizens. Going off site to provide creative opportunities to underserved communities instead of putting the onus on people, who may have transportation challenges.

As with everything we do, this exhibition is a community effort. The presenting sponsor is The Deane and Roger Ackerman Family Fund. SCGA was awarded a prestigious SouthArts Traditional Arts Presentation grant, The Sumter County Cultural Commission with support from the John & Susan Bennett Arts Fund of the Coastal Community Foundation of SC, the SC Arts Commission and the Nat’l Endowment for the Arts, Ralph and Toye Canty, Ben Griffith and Tammy Kelly of State Farm, the Carson, Swan Lake Quilt Guild, and Trapp Construction and Remodeling. Flowers courtesy of Azalea Garden Club & the Council of Garden Clubs of Sumter.

For more info check our SC Institutional Gallery listings, call the Gallery at 803/775-0543 or visit ([www.sumtergallery.com](http://www.sumtergallery.com)).



“The Fabric of Our Lives,” detail by Tony Williams

ing.”

“Acknowledging and talking about our feelings is not something a lot of Black women have been taught to do or have seen modeled. When I tried to talk about my feelings as a child, my mother, would say things like ‘you’re fine’ or ‘you need to get over it’. We deal with things by pushing our feelings aside, keeping our eye on the prize and getting the task at hand done. Some of us have so much in our invisible sacks. After many years, I eventually came to terms with the fact that this is the world that we live in. I knew that I had a choice to spend the rest of my life in misery, or to heal and keep choosing happiness. What do I want to carry forward? When we heal, it unlocks all the joy that’s held captive inside of us. So, can we carry joy alongside our pain? “Joy in these times requires radical self-care. In the end, I am choosing to carry Joy in my sack... So how will you show the public through your art, what’s in your sack?”

*All That We Carry* is a large-scale exhibition that will be in both gallery spaces will feature the work of fiber artist Torreah “Cookie” Washington, an award-winning master art quilter from the SC Lowcountry and 19 other fiber, indigo, clay and sweetgrass artists – some of the best working in their field today. As a 4th generation

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. Send your info about exhibits to “Carolina Arts” by e-mail to ([info@carolinaarts.com](mailto:info@carolinaarts.com)). Our deadline is the 24th of the month “prior” to the month your exhibit starts.



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