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HIGH MUSEUM OF ART TO PRESENT NATIONALLY TOURING SONYA CLARK SURVEY THIS FALL

Exhibition brings together her large-scale, community-centered and participatory projects for the first time

“Sonya Clark: We Are Each Other”
Oct. 27, 2023-Feb. 18, 2024

ATLANTA, Oct. 26, 2023 — This fall, the High Museum of Art will present “Sonya Clark: We Are Each Other” (Oct. 27, 2023-Feb. 18, 2024), a major traveling exhibition of the pioneering fiber artist that will bring together her large-scale, community-centered and participatory projects for the first time, including “The Beaded Prayers Project” (1998-ongoing), “The Hair Craft Project” (2014) and the “Monumental Cloth” series (2019).

The exhibition is co-organized by the High, the Cranbrook Art Museum in metro Detroit and the Museum of Arts and Design in New York. Clark’s work centers on race and Black experience, and the collaboration between the institutions is rooted in both audience and context, as all three cities have substantial populations of residents with a lineage to the African diaspora, and each museum is dedicated to celebrating and collecting contemporary art and craft traditions. The exhibition will debut at Cranbrook this summer (June 17-Sept. 24, 2023) and travel to the Museum of Arts and Design next spring (March 23-Sept. 22, 2024) after its presentation at the High.
“We are honored to invite Atlanta to experience, and participate in, Clark’s extraordinary work, which inspires deep thinking about many of the complex issues affecting our society,” said Rand Suffolk, the High’s Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr., director. “The exhibition will also allow visitors to connect with one another as they explore the projects and examine how they reflect our shared experiences and history.”

Clark is acclaimed for using everyday fiber materials, such as hair, flags and found fabric, and a range of textile techniques including weaving, braiding, quilting and beading, to examine issues of history, racial injustice, cultural legacies and reconciliation. “We Are Each Other” shows how her community-centered projects facilitate new collective encounters across racial, gender and socioeconomic divisions. In addition to her large-scale installations, the exhibition will feature a range of her photographs, prints and sculpture.

The ethos of Clark’s participatory works is embedded in the exhibition title, which is inspired by the Gwendolyn Brooks poem “Paul Robeson” (1970), about the civil rights activist, which closes with, “we are each other’s harvest/we are each other’s business/we are each other’s magnitude and bond.”

Clark said of the exhibition, “I am a collaboration, as is each artwork. A collaboration, a generational connection, a tie between us. From the ancestral substance that makes up my bones and blood to the engagement with community, all of it functions as a means to do the necessary work.”

Monica Obniski, the High’s curator of decorative arts and design, added, “Sonya Clark’s highly metaphorical work invites us to think in profound and new ways about our shared history, as she allows for additional voices to create new cultural narratives. I’m excited for Atlanta audiences to encounter her projects and to accept the artist’s invitation to participate in the broader work of making society better.”

The exhibition will feature six of Clark’s projects created through mass participation:

**“The Beaded Prayers Project” (1998-present)**
This installation comprises thousands of small memorial pouches, created by community members across the globe, that are made using fabric from loved ones or donated material and contain a written commemoration, intention, wish or prayer. Each pouch is sewn shut with decorative beads and hung on large panels.

**“The Hair Craft Project” (2014)**
Inspired in part by the Atlanta company Bronner Brothers’ International Beauty Show, Clark worked with Black hair stylists in Richmond, Virginia, to break down barriers between hair salons and galleries as sites of aesthetics, craft, skill, improvisation and commerce. In a series of photographs and braided hair designs, the project shows both the stylists’ ability to manipulate the hairs on Clark’s head and their undeniable textile artistry on canvases stitched with thread.
Together, the works examine cultural narratives embedded within the everyday materials of cloth and hair.

“Unraveling” (2015-present)
In this ongoing performance, Clark works alongside individual gallery and museum visitors to unravel a Confederate battle flag thread by thread. The performance is slow and toilsome, meant to symbolize the collective work involved in the dismantling of the ideas of the Confederacy, White supremacy and racism in the United States.

“Monumental Cloth” Series (2019)
This series of artworks and activations is based on the historic repurposed dish towel that was used to signal a truce by Confederate forces at Appomattox in 1865. Visitors are invited to weave recreations of the flag on looms in the galleries and make tracings of the flag’s waffle-weave surface pattern to take home. In the related work “Many” (2019), Clark recreated 100 replicas of the little-known truce flag as a commentary on historical erasures and the enduring legacy of the Civil War. The project was created in collaboration with the Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia.

In this installation, a large-scale canopy composed of squares of cyanotype reactive fabric provides the illusion of the night sky overhead. The celestial viewpoint embedded with several Big Dipper constellations allows the viewer to imagine the way starlight guided enslaved individuals along the Underground Railroad toward the multiple freedoms they had been denied. The work asks us to consider the multiple freedoms that continue to be stolen from individuals and marginalized groups today. Clark created the squares in collaboration with students, researchers, friends and a group of incarcerated men. The canopy hangs from the gallery ceiling, and visitors will be able to illuminate its designs with blacklight flashlights.

“Solidarity Book Project” (2020-present)
This collaborative, community-based artwork and activist initiative invites participants to declare their commitment to a more equitable world by turning social- and racial justice-related books into sculptures. Originally a partnership between the artist and Amherst College in Massachusetts, the project is an act of solidarity with Black and Indigenous communities.

“We Are Each Other” is co-curated by Obniski; Laura Mott, chief curator at the Cranbrook Art Museum; and Elissa Auther, deputy director of curatorial affairs and William and Mildred Lasdon chief curator at the Museum of Arts and Design. The exhibition will be presented in the Cousins Special Exhibition Galleries on the Second Level of the High’s Wieland Pavilion.

Exhibition Catalogue
The 184-page exhibition catalogue, co-published by the organizing institutions and Hirmer, is the first book to document and contextualize Clark’s large-scale, collaborative artworks. The publication includes contributions by Leslie King-Hammond, Lowery Stokes Sims and Renée Ater and interviews with Clark by artists Nick Cave and Joyce J. Scott.
About Sonya Clark
Clark holds a Master of Arts from the Cranbrook Academy of Art and is the recipient of a United States Artists Fellowship, a Pollock Krasner Award, an 1858 Prize, an Art Prize Grand Jurors Award and an Anonymous Was a Woman Award. Her work has been exhibited in more than 350 museums and galleries around the world. She is a professor of art at Amherst College in Massachusetts and previously served as chair of the craft/material studies department at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia.

Exhibition Organization and Support
“Sonya Clark: We Are Each Other” is co-organized by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Cranbrook Art Museum and the Museum of Arts and Design. Major funding for the exhibition is provided by William Banks Jr. Trust. This exhibition is made possible by funding by Premier Exhibition Series Sponsor Delta Air Lines, Inc.; Premier Exhibition Series Supporters ACT Foundation, Inc., William N. Banks, Jr., Cousins Foundation, Burton M. Gold, Sarah and Jim Kennedy, Harry Norman Realtor, wish Foundation; Benefactor Exhibition Series Supporters Robin and Hilton Howell; Ambassador Exhibition Series Supporters Mrs. Fay S. Howell/The Howell Fund, Karen and Jeb Hughes/Corporate Environments, Loomis Charitable Foundation, Louise Sams and Jerome Grilhot, The Fred and Rita Richman Fund, Mrs. Harriet H. Warren, Elizabeth and Chris Willett; Contributing Exhibition Series Supporters Farideh and Al Azadi, Sandra and Dan Baldwin, Mr. Joseph H. Boland, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Robin E. Delmer, Peggy Foreman, Mr. and Mrs. Baxter Jones, Joel Knox and Joan Marmo, Margot and Danny McCaul, Wade A. Rakes II & Nicholas Miller, USI Insurance Services; Generous support is also provided by Alfred and Adele Davis Exhibition Endowment Fund, Anne Cox Chambers Exhibition Fund, Barbara Stewart Exhibition Fund, Dorothy Smith Hopkins Exhibition Endowment Fund, Eleanor McDonald Storza Exhibition Endowment Fund, The Fay and Barrett Howell Exhibition Fund, Forward Arts Foundation Exhibition Endowment Fund, Helen S. Lanier Endowment Fund, John H. and Wilhelmina D. Harland Exhibition Endowment Fund, Katherine Murphy Riley Special Exhibition Endowment Fund, Margaretta Taylor Exhibition Fund, RJR Nabisco Exhibition Endowment Fund, and Waymaker Media. Support for the exhibition and publication “Sonya Clark: We Are Each Other” was provided by the Henry Luce Foundation.

About the High Museum of Art
Located in the heart of Atlanta, the High Museum of Art connects with audiences from across the Southeast and around the world through its distinguished collection, dynamic schedule of special exhibitions and engaging community-focused programs. Housed within facilities designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architects Richard Meier and Renzo Piano, the High features a collection of more than 19,000 works of art, including an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American fine and decorative arts; major holdings of photography and folk and self-taught work, especially that of artists from the American South; burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, including paintings, sculpture, new media and design; a growing collection of African art, with work dating from prehistory through the present; and significant holdings of European paintings and works on paper. The High is dedicated to reflecting the diversity of its communities and offering a variety of exhibitions and educational programs that
engage visitors with the world of art, the lives of artists and the creative process. For more information about the High, visit www.high.org.

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