

FORT GANSEVOORT

whitewall

Dawn Williams Boyd Gets Personal and Political in “Cloth Paintings”

By Jade Guinard

Whitewall, November 13, 2020



Dawn Williams Boyd, “Baptizing our Children in a River of Blood”, 2017, 36 x 48 inches Assorted Fabrics; © Dawn Williams Boyd, courtesy of the artist and Fort Gansevoort.

Fort Gansevoort is currently showing “Cloth Paintings,” an online exhibition featuring the work of Dawn Williams Boyd. The work on view, curated by Sasha Bonét, addresses social commentary, identity, youth, and the Black American experience. The Atlanta-based artist challenges commonly accepted narratives by creating large-scale “cloth paintings” filled with personal recollections, historical records and political references. By including life-sized characters in her creations, alongside elaborate textures, ornate patterns and surprising materials—such as beads, laces, silk ribbons and acrylic paint—Boyd established her own visual identity within the wider traditions of sewing.

“I prefer cloth painting to quilt because quilt has a specific connotation. Historically Black women quilted less for decorative reasons, but for economic and practical reasons,” said Boyd in a press statement. “I come from a long line of women who sewed, so fabric surrounds me.”

In “Cloth Paintings,” visitors will find a range of works throwing light on overlooked events of American history, like *The Sins of the Fathers* focusing on incidents of violence against Black Americans and *Waiting for Medgar, Jackson, MS 1963* recalling the assassination of WWII veteran and prominent civil rights leader Medgar Evers. “Cloth Paintings,” on view through November 21, also includes Boyd’s latest series, “The Trump Era,” investigating the impact of America’s recent political turmoil.