

FORT GANSEVOORT



Frieze Los Angeles

Yvonne Wells

Stand A01

February 26 – March 1, 2026

Fort Gansevoort is pleased to make its debut at Frieze Los Angeles 2026 with a solo presentation of figurative quilts by 86-year-old Alabama artist Yvonne Wells. This occasion also marks the artist's first-ever exhibition on the West Coast. A pioneering voice in contemporary quiltmaking, Wells is celebrated for her bold visual language, merging a patchwork aesthetic with striking figuration to tell stories rooted in American culture and seminal historical events. As a Black female artist whose life and work are deeply intertwined with the history of the American South, Wells brings a singular perspective to the narratives she constructs.

Wells' figurative quilts feature repurposed fabrics, large expressive stitches, and playful found materials, creating a distinctive style that is immediately recognizable. A recipient of the 2024 Joan Mitchell Fellowship and the 2019 Governor's Arts Award, Wells was recently honored with a comprehensive monograph, *The Story Quilts of Yvonne Wells* (University of Alabama Press, 2024). Her quilts are also the subject of the forthcoming publication *It Tells My Story: Yvonne Wells Collection International Quilt Museum* (University of Nebraska Press, 2026).

For Frieze Los Angeles, Fort Gansevoort presents Wells' whimsical and incisive portraits of Hollywood legends and musical icons. Embracing the fair's setting—and the entertainment industry's strong influence on LA culture—the selection includes depictions of figures such as Dolly Parton, Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe, and Michael Jackson. Wells injects her own personality into the expressive articulation of the faces and clothing of each figure. Her quilts thus demonstrate the inclination to project one's own views, values, hopes, and aspirations onto celebrities. These works balance humor and reverence, reflecting both the public mythology surrounding these celebrities and the artist's own Southern perspective. Through inventive embellishments and expressive stylization, Wells humanizes her subjects—revealing the tension between fame and vulnerability, spectacle and sincerity. Her handcrafted aesthetic stands in dynamic contrast to the glamour of Hollywood, offering an accessible, heartfelt counterpoint to the industry's polished facade.

On the occasion of Frieze Los Angeles, Wells has created a new quilt, *Hollywood Walk of Fame (Six Stars)* (2026), which Fort Gansevoort will reproduce as an enlarged floor graphic spanning the entire booth. Each star in the

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composition represents a central figure depicted in the quilts displayed on the surrounding walls—each of whom has a corresponding star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Conceived as an integral element of the exhibition design, the floor graphic activates the space and visually resonates with the works on view, transforming the booth into a more immersive environment. Visitors will walk atop Wells's interpretation of the Walk of Fame, oriented to echo the layout of the original, turning the floor into a participatory element that underscores the playful inventiveness at the heart of her artmaking.

Selected works

In *Marilyn Monroe* (2000), Wells reimagines the star's iconic subway-grate moment with exuberant fabric details, expressive features, and humorous additions which nod to Monroe's legendary persona while acknowledging the complexities of her life off-screen.

In *Elvis II* (1997), Wells captures the dynamism of the "King of Rock 'n' Roll" through vibrant color, tactile embellishments, and a commanding pose that reflects both his cultural influence and his Southern roots.

About the artist

Yvonne Wells (b. 1939) is a self-taught artist from Tuscaloosa, Alabama. She is known for her intricate, narrative quilts rendered in a personal style that melds geometric abstraction with bold figuration. Wells has developed a unique contemporary visual vernacular characterized by large, uneven stitches, repurposed fabrics, and unexpected found materials. With an emphasis on story telling, Wells often embellishes her quilt with objects and annotations related to the central subject. Her work is included in the permanent collections of Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts, Little Rock, AR; Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, AL; Flint Institute of Arts, Flint, MI; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, MI; International Quilt Museum, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE; Kentuck Art Center, Northport, AL; Montgomery Museum of Fine Art, Montgomery, AL; Nasher Museum of Art, Duke University, Durham, NC; Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington D.C.; Wiregrass Museum of Art, Dothan, AL; and Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis, MN.

Caption and courtesy information

Yvonne Wells

Marilyn Monroe, 2001

Assorted fabrics

98 x 68.5 in

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