

Textile Extensions: Quilts in a New Context, the Work of Carole Harris

October 2, 2009 – January 28, 2010

Acknowledgements Marilyn L. Wheaton

Carole Harris is a professional fiber artist and interior designer. She creates one-of-a-kind, improvisational works that provide warmth and texture to enhance an environment. "The rhythmically constructed, nontraditional tapestries of artist Carole Harris have been exhibited nationally in museums and galleries and are composed of hundreds of richly colored fabrics which are cut, overlaid, appliquéd, pieced and quilted," according to Harris' website.

Carole's first inspiration to be an artist came from her parents. They provided her with a piano when she showed an interest in music, and with paints and brushes when she showed an inclination to creativity. They made sure that Carole and her sister and brother always had books to read. Her mother taught her how to sew. Her father worked on a Ford Motor Company assembly line and invited anyone who played the piano to their home to play.

When she was in her late teens, the legendary African American painter Harold Neal would take Carole with him to his drawing classes, a memorable learning experience. Cyril Miles, a Detroit painter, collagist, poet and teacher, "showed me how to live with art when I was attending Highland Park Community College," said Carole. "She taught me how to see and express myself artistically." Like Miles work, Carole's quilts appear to be inspired by a global view of folk cultures, making constant reference to the things that connect humanity.

As a student at Wayne State University, Carole studied interior design, a field of practice at which she believed she could make a good living. A memorable Wayne State instructor, Olga Constantine, taught Carole basic design composition and color principles.

In 1965 a friend of Carole's received a quilt for her wedding. The following year when Carole was preparing to marry Bill Harris, she began to create her first quilt, a pinwheel design, for her own wedding. Ten years in the making, it was during that time that Carole realized quilts are art.

Throughout the more than 30 years when she ran a successful interior design business, Carole never stopped quilt making, and today she is totally devoted to creating her "art."

Carole has said many times that quilts are like paintings, full of color and texture and design. She is drawn to fabric because she likes the way it feels. African American artists Jacob Lawrence and Raymond Saunders have been major influences on her work, as have Euro-American painters Richard Diebenkorn and Robert Rauschenberg.

I want to acknowledge and thank her parents, teachers and mentors who nurtured her innate creativity, which in turn prepared Carole to build a successful career as a designer and fiber artist. The end result is that all of us are the beneficiaries of a well nurtured woman whose art does what she hopes: "I want people to look at my work and enjoy it."

Cover: The Sun's Gon' Shine In My Backdoor Someday, 1999, 52 ¹/₂" wide x 70 ¹/₂" long



Night Shift, 2009, 68" wide x 58 $^{1\!\!/\!\!2"}$ high



San Francisco Holiday, 2009, 60" wide x 49 $\frac{1}{2}$ long



Rhythm-a ning, 2009, 49" wide x 56 $\frac{1}{2}$ " long

I Want to Make Beautiful Things

I want to make beautiful *things*, as words no longer suffice.

Want to feel the grain of *kente* 'neath my thumb, my fingers; savor the perfection of stitches and seams.

Want to send the spirit to other worlds at the revelation of light on silk and textures so sweet as to enrapture.

Let words slide into silence. Let thought slip through the lace of days like light rays through parted curtains. Let truth speak through my hands.

by Aneb Kgositsile Detroit July 2009



Before The Freeway, 2008, 61" wide x 55" long



Way Across Town, 2008, 59" wide x 70" long



Fire Music, 2008, 31" wide x 58" long



Epistrophy, 2007, 58" wide x 83" long



Big City Blues, 2007, 54" wide x 70" long



Kitchen View-Preston Street, 1999, 63 ½" wide x 36" long



Dahomey Dream, 1993, 39 $^{1\!\!/}\!\!2''$ wide x 70 $^{1\!\!/}\!\!4''$ long



Passion Dance, 1993, 51 $^{1\!/}\!\!2''$ wide x 67 $^{1\!/}\!\!2''$ long



Playing on the Edge, 1991, 59" wide x 65" long

Carole Harris

EDUCATION Bachelor of Fine Arts, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI, 1966

SOLO EXHIBITIONS Ellen Kayrod Gallery, Detroit, MI, 2009 Center for African and African American Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, 1995 The River Gallery, Chattanooga, TN, 1994 The Anderson Gallery, Pontiac, MI, 1996 Arnold Klein Gallery, Royal Oak, MI, 1992 Gallery 7, Detroit, MI, 1977

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

ArtCite, Windsor, Ontario, Canada, 2008 Center Galleries, College for Creative Studies, Detroit, MI, 2007 King Arts Complex, Columbus, OH, 2007-10 Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland, African American History, Baltimore, MD, 2007-10 Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, Detroit, MI, 2007-10 New York State Museum, Albany, NY, 2007-10 American Folk Art Museum, New York, NY, 2007-10 Museum of Texas Tech, Lubbock, TX, 2007-10 Dell Pryor Gallery, Detroit, MI, 2007 Contemporary African American Quilts from the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, Montgomery, AL, 2006 Marygrove College, Detroit, MI, 2005 Scarab Club, Detroit, MI, 2003 New England Quilt Museum, Lowell, MA, 2001 University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, Canada, 2001 Headquarters Gallery, General Electric Co., NBC Gallery, New York, NY, 2000-01 Pavillon Josephine, Parc de l'Orangerie, Strasbourg, France, 2000 Lansing Art Gallery, Lansing, MI, 1999 American Craft Museum, New York, NY, 1999-01 The Mint Museum, Charlotte, NC, 1999-01 Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, 1999-01 Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida, Gainsville, FL, 1999-01 Camille Olivia Hanks Cosby Academic Center, Spelman College, Atlanta, GA, 1998 Museum of African American History, Detroit, MI, 1998 The African American Cultural and Historical Museum, Ann Arbor, MI, 1997 Center for African and African American Studies, Ann Arbor, MI, 1997 Center Galleries, College for Creative Studies, Detroit, MI, 1997 New Initiatives for the Arts, Ann Arbor and Pontiac, MI, 1996-97 University of Akron, Akron, OH, 1996 University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, MI, 1995 Anderson Gallery, Pontiac, MI, 1995 General Electric Corporate Gallery, Fairfield, CT, 1995 Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH, 1995 Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, MI, 1995 University of Michigan School of Art and Architecture, Ann Arbor, MI, 1995-96 Museum of African American History, Detroit, MI, 1995-96 Jesse Besser Museum of Art, Alpena, MI, 1995-96 Pontiac Center for the Arts, Pontiac, MI, 1995-96 American Craft Enterprises, Baltimore, MD, 1995, 1997 Marketplace, Atlanta, GA, 1994, 1996

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS (Continued) Kentucky Art & Craft Foundation, Louisville, KY, 1994 American Craft Museum, New York, NY, 1993 The African American Panoramic Experience Museum, Atlanta, GA, 1993 Museum of African American Life and Culture, Dallas, TX, 1993 African American Museum of Fine Art, San Diego, CA, 1993 The Renwick Gallery, Washington, DC, 1993 Frank Hale Black Cultural Center, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, 1993 American Museum of Quilts and Textiles of San Jose, San Jose, CA, 1993 National Afro-American Museum & Cultural Center, Wilberforce, OH, 1993 Junior Black Academy, Dallas, TX, 1993 International Quilt Festival, Houston, TX, 1992 Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI, 1992 Museum of History and Science, Louisville, KY, 1992 San Diego Historical Society, San Diego, CA, 1992 American Folk Art Museum, New York, NY, 1992 The Valentine Museum, Richmond, VA, 1992 Anacostia Museum, Washington, DC, 1992 Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence, KS, 1992 Minnesota Museum of American Art, Minneapolis, MN, 1992 Museum of American Life and Culture, Dallas, TX, 1992 Janis Wetsman Gallery, Birmingham, MI, 1991 Michigan State University Museum, East Lansing, MI, 1991 Museum of African American History, Detroit, MI, 1991 Flint Institute of Arts, Flint, MI, 1991 Ella Sharp Museum, Jackson, MI, 1991 Annual Quilt Exhibition, Mount Clemens, MI, 1990 Detroit Gallery of Contemporary Crafts, Detroit, MI, 1990-2007 International Quilt Festival, Houston, TX, 1989 Detroit Historical Museum, Detroit, MI, 1978 Detroit Bank & Trust Company, Detroit, MI, 1978 Detroit Artists Market, Detroit, MI, 1977 Somerset Mall, Quilt Exhibit, Troy, MI, 1977 Harlem Gallery Square, Detroit, MI, 1977 Gallery 7, Detroit, MI, 1978

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

John H. Stroger Cook County Hospital, Chicago, IL Sinai-Grace Hospital, Detroit, MI Detroit Receiving Hospital, Detroit, MI The White House, Washington, DC Harris Bank and Trust, Chicago, IL Henry Ford Health System, Detroit, MI Michigan State University Museum of Folk Art, East Lansing, MI Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, Lansing, MI Kalamazoo Arts Council, Kalamazoo, MI Lewis & Munday, P.C., Detroit, MI Montgomery Museum of Fine Art, Montgomery, AL Northern Trust Bank, Chicago, IL Mercy Hospital, Chicago, IL Delta Manor; Delta Sigma Theta, Detroit, MI Amurcon Management Co., Southfield, MI Comanche County Hospital, Tulsa, OK Hamilton Anderson Associates, Architects & Planners, Detroit, MI Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan, Detroit, MI



Carole Harris Photo: Clyde Stringer



Down the Block & Across the Street, 2007, 52" wide x 75" long



The Dow Chemical Company



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