

FORT GANSEVOORT



On View: 'Dawn Williams Boyd: Cloth Paintings' Online at Fort Gansevoort in New York

Victoria L. Valentine - October 24, 2020



DAWN WILLIAMS BOYD, "Baptizing Our Children in a River of Blood" 2016 (assorted fabrics, 36 x 48 inches) © Dawn Williams Boyd, Courtesy the artist and Fort Gansevoort

THESE ARE NOT QUILTS. Images of white supremacist Byron De La Beckwith in the moments before he assassinated NAACP field secretary Medgar Evers (1925-1963) in the driveway of his Jackson, Miss., home or the decapitation of a journalist with a bloodied sign reading "Freedom of Speech Denied Worldwide" lying near his severed head, are not the purview of traditional quilting. These are cloth paintings produced by **Dawn Williams Boyd** using methods of quilt making and collage. "I come from a long line of women who sewed, so fabric surrounds me," Boyd has said. The New Jersey-born, Atlanta-based artist also incorporates acrylic paint and a variety of embellishments, including sequins, beads, cowry shells, lace, and silk ribbons. Boyd has been developing her artistic practice for more than four decades. Since 2001, she has "painted" pictures with fabric creating detailed, layered, candid, and provocative images documenting historic events and contemporary scenes in the American narrative—from 1960s civil rights protests to 21st century police abuse. For "Dawn Williams Boyd: Cloth Paintings," her online exhibition at Fort Gansevoort, Boyd also invokes Hurricane Katrina, the Tuskegee syphilis experiment, and Angola State Prison, the Louisiana penitentiary housed on a former cotton plantation that continues to produce crops on land worked by the incarcerated. Other images embrace Black female femininity and offer a graphic reinterpretation of the American flag. This last work, titled "The Trump Era: Trump's America" (2020), symbolically divides the country into two America's—one white, the other colored.