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Caribbean Life

Haitian artist Myrlande Constant to exhibit 'Drapo' at Fort Gansevoort Gallery

Nelson A. King – December 20, 2022



Myrlande Constant, *Tout Ko Feray se dlee*, 2022, Beads, sequins, and tassels on fabric, 56.5 x 65 inches.
©Myrlande Constant. Courtesy of the artist and Fort Gansevoort.

Beginning Jan. 11, 2023, Haitian artist Myrlande Constant will display “Drapo” at Fort Gansevoort Gallery in Manhattan, its first solo exhibition with Constant, who has attracted international attention for dazzling hand-beaded and sequin-embroidered textile works in which heritage techniques are used to mingle contemporary and traditional themes.

Fort Gansevoort Gallery said the evolution of Constant’s personal aesthetic and mastery of her medium will be evident in monumental new pieces juxtaposed with examples from earlier in the artist’s career.

Constant’s work was recently showcased in the Venice Biennale exhibition *The Milk of Dreams*, curated by Cecilia Alemani (April 23— Nov. 27, 2022).

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The artist's upcoming survey exhibition, *Myrlande Constant: The Work of Radiance*, will open at the Fowler Museum in Los Angeles on Mar. 26, 2023 – the first US museum exhibition devoted to a female Haitian artist.

Based in Port-Au-Prince, the Haitian capital, Constant is known for sophisticated figurative compositions composed with beads and sequins on cloth.

While drawing upon the vernacular of traditional Vodou flags (known as *drapo Vodou*), which often adorn temples and are used in ceremonial practices, Fort Gansevoort Gallery said her oeuvre is characterized by a “distinctively sensual, painterly quality.”

“Intricate details and sumptuous colors coalesce in elaborate narrative scenes,” said the gallery. “Many of Constant's flags depict *lwa* spirits and illustrate myths central to the Vodou religion.”

Expanding into a secular context, Fort Gansevoort Gallery said Constant's art also incorporates imagery taken from Haitian history and civic life.

Although commercial flag making is a craft traditionally dominated by men, Constant is the first female Haitian textile artist to gain international acclaim for her innovation in the longstanding *drapo Vodou* practice.

In depicting her unique versions of the Haitian religion's myths, she has harnessed a fresh and contemporary spiritual force that elevates her work above the realm of folk art and craft.

“With her deft craftsmanship and visual sophistication, Constant melds the secular and the spiritual as she seamlessly integrates traditional art practices with a bold contemporary aesthetic”, Fort Gansevoort Gallery said. “The tactility and luminescence of her works activate their surroundings with sumptuous, provocative presence.”

Constant's work is included in museum collections throughout the United States including Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL; American Folk Art Museum, New York, NY; Lowe Art Museum, Miami, FL; Waterloo Center for the Arts, Waterloo, IA; and the Fowler Museum at UCLA, Los Angeles, CA.

The survey exhibition *Myrlande Constant: The Work of Radiance* will open at the Fowler Museum in Los Angeles in March of 2023.

Constant's flags are featured in the expanded exhibition *The New Bend*, curated by Legacy Russell, at Hauser & Wirth, Los Angeles (2022). The exhibition will travel to Hauser & Wirth, Somerset in 2023.

Constant's works were included in the Venice Biennale exhibition *The Milk of Dreams* curated by Cecilia Alemani (2022).

The solo exhibition entitled *The Last Supper* was exhibited at the Faena Hotel in Miami on the occasion of Art Basel, Miami Beach (2019).

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Her work has also been featured in various group exhibitions including *Reframing Haiti: Art, History and Performativity* at Brown University (2011), *Kafou: Haiti, Art and Vodou* at Nottingham Contemporary (2012-2013), and *Pòtoprens: The Urban Artists of Port-au-Prince* at Pioneer Works in Brooklyn, NY (2018), which traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami (2019).