

FORT GANSEVOORT



Elaborate embroidery is a variation of a French technique, used to depict voodoo spirits

Lisa Rotondo-Mccord – Sep 30, 2024



Haitian artist Myrlande Constant used beads and sequins to 'paint' her 2022 work *'Ayida Wedo.'*
Sesthasak Boonchai

In this series, Lagniappe presents works from the collection of the New Orleans Museum of Art, with commentary from a curator.

Haitian artist Myrlande Constant has said that she “paints” with beads and sequins. Using the form of drapos, or vodou flags, Constant has reimagined this ritual object to be the field upon which she creates rich narrative and symbolic works that combine the secular and the sacred.

FORT GANSEVOORT

Drapos have traditionally been created by men; Constant has not only changed that gender dynamic, she has introduced historical and contemporary narrative into the form.

The daughter of a seamstress and a Vodou priest, Constant has drawn upon the technical skills gained through working alongside her mother in a wedding dress factory, and her deep Vodou practice to create richly embellished scenes. For over 30 years, Constant has created panels that depict the Iwa (or loa, the primary spirits of Vodou) and the life that occurs in their company.

Her innovative works employ a variation of the French tambour embroidery technique that is widely used in the wedding dress industry.

This technique involves using a special hook to create a chain stitch that then allows for the attachment of various embellishments such as beads, sequins and tassels.

Constant is known to draw the image on the back of the fabric, meticulously plot out the design, and then undertake the work from the back (so that the actual stitching and embellishments are not visible to the embroiderer without turning the piece over).

In this work, one of the most powerful and ancient of Iwa, Ayida Wedo, can be seen at the center, surrounded by representations of their power and influence: fertility, wind, water, fire, wealth, thunder and snakes.

"*Aiyda Wedo*" is on view in the contemporary galleries at the New Orleans Museum of Art.