FORT GANSEVOORT

Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson: *Beaded and Bound*

Fort Gansevoort, 5 Ninth Avenue, New York, NY
Opening: Thursday, November 19, 2026, 6-8 PM
On View: November 20, 2026–January 16, 2027



New York... Fort Gansevoort is pleased to present its second solo exhibition devoted to late visionary Ohio artist Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson (1940–2015). *Beaded and Bound* brings together twenty-five handmade books, mixed-media textile works, and intricately embellished dolls to celebrate Robinson's devotion to storytelling through unconventional materials and formats. Combining embroidery, appliqué, drawing, painting, collage, assemblage, and vernacular writing, the artist wove personal memories, family histories, and local narratives into richly tactile, sometimes peculiar, and always moving works alive with the histories of the African diaspora.

Bookmaking



Aminah Robinson was a prolific writer and natural storyteller who regarded bookmaking as a vital vehicle for formal and narrative experimentation. Beginning in the 1980s, she constructed elaborate handmade volumes, sometimes working on individual books over the course of several decades. She sustained this practice for nearly 30 years, producing numerous books that together stand as a remarkable contribution to the field: Robinson was among the earliest recognized African American women to produce artist's books.

The exhibition at Fort Gansevoort presents these objects, from intimate volumes to monumental works that unfold in multiple directions to reveal collages, paintings, three-dimensional elements, and even miniature books within books. Some of the volumes contain no words at all, while others feature extensive handwritten narratives. Encrusted with beads, buttons, and

stitched details, their highly embellished covers and enclosures are sculptural objects in their own right. For Robinson, the book was a generative form without fixed boundaries—a vessel for writing, image-making, material experimentation, and the preservation of stories.



Among the books on view, *Women in Poindexter Village, Button Beaded Book* (1989) stands out. It honors Robinson's upbringing in Poindexter Village, one of the nation's first federally funded public housing developments, located in Columbus, Ohio's Bronzeville neighborhood. This object celebrates women in the artist's community through hand-stitched appliqué portraits arranged within a fabric, accordion-fold volume. The cover, inscribed with the book's title, is decorated with an accumulation of buttons and stitched accents. A separate, unbound cloth portrait tucked inside the volume unfolds to reveal a more detailed appliqué portrait with drawn elements. Inscribed with the word "Mama," this portrait is a tribute to Robinson's own mother.

RagGonNon

Robinson's approach to animating the surfaces of her books with sculptural elements extended into her complex, often monumental, textile-based works, which she called "RagGonNon." She understood these works to be constantly evolving, their meaning continually expanding through the viewer's contemplation and interpretation. Robinson thus considered her practice as interactive, inviting audiences to participate in the ongoing life of the stories she shared as they "rag on" into the future.



The RagGonNon *A Holy Place: The Elijah Pierce Barbershop (*1983) honors Robinson's relationship with her mentor and fellow Columbus artist Elijah Pierce. Pierce's spirituality as a preacher and his distinctive carved and painted artworks influenced Robinson's subjects and experimental approach to making. This textile work depicts Elijah in his barbershop, cutting a customer's hair with exaggerated, oversized scissors. Soft sculptural elements, buttons, and stitched annotations animate the scene, creating an air of whimsy. Robinson's rendering reflects her characterization of Elijah's barbershop — and barbershops like it in Black communities across America — as a community gathering space of such cultural essentiality as to be 'holy.'

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Sculptures and Dolls

Robinson's handmade tabletop sculptures and fabric dolls, adorned with beads, buttons, and found objects, evoke the personalities of beloved storybook characters. These intimate objects draw on the familiarity and companionship of childhood toys while demonstrating the artist's attention to material, and form. She recognized dolls as objects capable of empowering the imagination, encouraging nurturing, and conveying the values she held as both a mother and an artist.

The exhibition presents these works alongside Robinson's books and textile pieces to reflect the artist's vision of her total oeuvre as a "RagGonNon"—a continuous process of imaginative expansion and powerful mutual connection.







About the Artist

Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson was born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1940, where she passed away in 2015. Her art is included in the collections of Akron Art Museum, Akron, OH; Arizona State University Art Museum, Tempe, AZ; Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD; Brooklyn Museum, New York, NY; Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH; JP Morgan Chase Art Collection, Columbus, OH; Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, MN; The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, NY; National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, Cincinnati, OH; Newark Museum of Art, Newark, NJ; North Dakota Museum of Art, Grand Forks, ND; Richmond Art Museum, Richmond, IN; RISD Museum, Providence, RI; Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma, WA; Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH; and Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, MA, among others.

In 2004, Robinson was honored with a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship Award. The Columbus Museum of Art organized the major retrospective Symphonic Poem: The Art of Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson in 2006. The exhibition later traveled to the Brooklyn Museum, the Tacoma Art Museum, Toledo Art Museum, and other venues nationwide. In 2015, Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson bequeathed most of her estate in Trust to the Columbus Museum of Art. From 2020–2021, the Columbus Museum of Art presented Raggin' On: The Art of Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson's House and Journals. Between 2025–2028, the exhibition Aminah Robinson: Journeys Home, a Visual Memoir travels to museums throughout the United States, including Springfield

Museum of Art, Springfield, OH; The Newark Museum of Art, Newark, NJ; Mobile Museum of Art, Mobile, AL; and Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA.

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Caption and courtesy information:
Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson
A Holy Place: The Elijah Pierce Barbershop, 1983
Buttons, beads, wood, found objects, hair, thread, and fabric
30 x 102 in

Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson
Atrium Diary, 1987
Buttons, beads, thread, stamps, paint, fabric, and parchment
Book cover (closed): 13.5 x 10.5 x 2.75 in
Book cover (open): 13.5 x 20.5 in
Book (closed): 11.5 x 9.25 in 2.5 in
Book (open): 11.5 x 18.5 in

Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson
Women in Poindexter Village, 1986
Buttons, beads, thread, ink, paint, and fabric
Closed: 11.75 x 9 in
Open: 11.75 x 27.5 in

Detail: Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson, *A Holy Place: The Elijah Pierce Barbershop*, 1983

Left to right:
Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson
Button Beaded Doll, c. 1988
Buttons, beads, cowrie shells, thread, fabric, and music box
16.5 x 7.5 x 4.25 in

Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson
Untitled [Man on horse], date unknown
Beads, bells, wood, hair, found objects, thread, fabric, and hogmawg
24 x 24 x 9 in

Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson
Button Beaded Doll, c. 1988
Buttons, beads, thread, and fabric
10 x 6.5 x 5.5 in

All works: © Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson Trust. Courtesy of the Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson Trust, Columbus Museum of Art, and Fort Gansevoort, New York.