



museum of arts and design

**MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN PRESENTS FIRST COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY OF SONYA CLARK'S COLLABORATIVE ARTWORKS**

*Sonya Clark: We Are Each Other*  
March 23–September 22, 2024



*The Hair Craft Project: Hairstylists with Sonya*, 2014. eleven color photographs, each 28 x 28 in. From left to right, top: Chaunda King, Marsha Johnson, Jasmine and Jamika Pollard, Ife Robinson; middle: Ingrid Riley, Kamala Bhagat, Anita Hill-Moses, Dionne James Eggleston; bottom: Natasha Superville, Nasirah Muhammad, Jamilah Williams, Sonya Clark. Photo: Naoko Wowsugi.

NEW YORK, NY (February 1, 2024) – This spring, the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) will present *Sonya Clark: We Are Each Other*, highlighting thirty years of artmaking dedicated to the Black experience in America. On view from March 23–Sept. 22, 2024, the exhibition is the first comprehensive survey of the communal artmaking projects that form the heart of the artist's pioneering creative practice. Accompanied by a selection of Clark's photographs, prints, and sculpture, the exhibition will feature five of Clark's large-

scale, collaborative projects, including her barrier-breaking *The Hair Craft Project* (2014) and the ongoing performance initiated in 2015, *Unraveling*.

Working with a wide range of emotionally resonant materials and everyday objects—from cotton cloth and human hair to school desks and bricks—Clark encourages audiences to confront the country’s historical imbalances and racial injustices through material transformation. At the same time, Clark celebrates the complexities of the Black cultural experience. The uses of traditional craft materials, her applied knowledge of global craft techniques, and the communal collaborations that are integral to the integrity of her art are among the many ways Clark represents and honors the legacies of the African diaspora in Black life.

“We are delighted to welcome Sonya Clark back to MAD,” said Tim Rodgers, MAD’s Nanette L. Laitman Director. “Sonya has participated in many of our exhibitions, including *Second Lives: Remixing the Ordinary*, inaugurating the museum’s expansion in 2008, and the landmark exhibition, *The Global Africa Project*, in 2010. We are honored to now present Sonya’s first solo exhibition in New York City, showcasing the 30-year development of a collaborative creative practice that involves everyone in the critical work of addressing racial inequality in the United States.”

Exhibition highlights include: *Solidarity Book Project* (2020-present), a collaborative, community-based artwork and activist initiative that invites participants to declare their commitment to a more equitable world by turning social and racial justice-related books into sculptures; *Monumental Cloth Series* (2019), artworks and activations based on the historic repurposed dish towel used to signal a truce by Confederate forces at Appomattox in 1865; *Unraveling* (2015-present), an ongoing performance in which Clark works alongside individual gallery and museum visitors to unravel a Confederate battle flag thread by thread, symbolizing the collective work involved in dismantling racism in the U.S.; *The Hair Craft Project* (2014), a series of photographs and braided hair designs highlighting hair stylists’ ability to manipulate the hairs on Clark’s head and their undeniable textile artistry on canvases stitched with thread; and *The Beaded Prayers Project* (1998-ongoing), an installation comprised of thousands of small memorial pouches, created by community members across the globe, that are made using fabric from loved ones or donated material and contain a written commemoration, intention, wish, or prayer.

“MAD has long supported contemporary artists who have expanded craft’s creative boundaries and amplified its social significance,” said Elissa Auther, MAD’s Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs and William and Lasdon Chief Curator. “Entwined with Sonya Clark’s commitment to issues of history, race, and reconciliation is an abiding and deeply investigated interest in craft and its relationship to group identity. Clark considers craft ‘an embodied wisdom and a cultural technology.’ In her work, craft and community become a collective voice addressing one of the most pressing issues of our day—the question of equality and how to realize it.”

A series of public programs, to be announced, will extend the exhibition content, and will include a May 2 conversation between artist Sonya Clark and curator and scholar Lowery

Stokes Sims. Part of MAD's curatorial team from 2007–2015, Sims highlighted Clark's work in exhibitions at the Museum and contributed to the current exhibition's catalog.

*We are Each Other* is co-organized by the Museum of Arts and Design, Cranbrook Art Museum near Detroit, and the High Museum of Art in Atlanta. The exhibition made its debut at Cranbrook last summer (June 17–Sept. 24, 2023) before traveling to the High for a fall presentation (Oct. 27, 2023–Feb. 18, 2024) and concluding its national tour at MAD this spring (March 23–Sept. 22, 2024).

The 184-page exhibition catalog, co-published by the organizing institutions and Hirmer Publishers, is the first book to document and contextualize Clark's large-scale, collaborative artworks. The publication includes contributions by leading scholars and educators Leslie King-Hammond, Lowery Stokes Sims, and Renée Ater; the exhibition's curators MAD's Elissa Auther, Cranbrook's Laura Mott, and the High's Monica Obniski; and features interviews with Clark by artists Nick Cave and Joyce J. Scott. The catalog will be available for purchase at The Store at MAD.

For more information about *Sonya Clark: We Are Each Other* and related programming and events, please visit [madmuseum.org](http://madmuseum.org).

## **EXHIBITION CREDITS**

*Sonya Clark: We Are Each Other* is organized by the Museum of Arts and Design; Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, MI; and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta.

Support for the exhibition and publication *Sonya Clark: We Are Each Other* was provided by grants from the Henry Luce Foundation, the Andy Warhol Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The exhibition is also supported in part by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

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## **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Sonya Clark is an artist and educator renowned for mixed-media works that address race and visibility, explore Blackness, and redress history. She is the Winifred L. Arms Professor of Art and Humanities at Amherst College in Massachusetts. Previously, Clark was honored as a Distinguished Research Fellow in the School of the Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University, where she served as chair of the Craft/Material Studies Department for over a decade. Prior to that appointment, she was the Baldwin Bascom Professor of Creative Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she taught for nine years. Clark earned an MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art and was honored with their Distinguished Alumni Award. She has a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her first college degree is from Amherst College, where she also received an honorary doctorate. In 2021, she was awarded additional honorary doctorates from Franklin and Marshall College and Maine College of Art. Her work has been exhibited in over 500 museums and galleries in the Americas, Africa, Asia, Europe, and Australia.

Clark's artwork is held in the collections of the National Museum of Women in the Arts, the Museum of Fine Art in Houston, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and the Smithsonian Museum of American Art, among many others. Clark is the recipient of numerous awards, including a United States Artist Fellowship, Anonymous Was a Woman Award, Rappaport Prize, Art Prize, and Art Matters Grant. She has been selected for residencies at Red Gate in Beijing, China; BAU Camargo in Cassis, France; the Rockefeller Foundation in Bellagio, Italy; a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship in Washington, DC; Civitella Ranieri in Umbertide, Italy; Yaddo in Saratoga Springs, New York; the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, Massachusetts; Indigo Arts in Portland, Maine; an Affiliate Fellowship at the American Academy in Rome, Italy; and Black Rock in Dakar, Senegal, among others.

### **ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN**

The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields and presents the work of artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity and skill. Since the Museum's founding in 1956 by philanthropist and visionary Aileen Osborn Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum's curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are influencing the direction of cultural production and driving twenty-first-century innovation, and fosters a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design. For more information, visit [madmuseum.org](http://madmuseum.org).

For high-resolution images, visit our press image archive: <http://press.madmuseum.org/>

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