

MARCH 1, 2017

MARY LEE BENDOLPH



Mary Lee Bendolph continues to explore personal and communal experience through her unique quilted compositions constructed from old clothing. She is one of

four Gee's Bend quilters who have together published over 30 editions with Paulson Fontaine Press since 2005. Highlighting the importance of Bendolph's work and that of other African-American self-taught artists, the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York have both recently made substantial acquisitions of their work from the Souls Grown Deep Foundation, an Atlanta-based nonprofit organization that documents, preserves, and promotes the work of contemporary African-American Artists from the southern United States.

The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco acquired 62 works from the Souls Grown Deep Foundation early this year. The acquisition consists of works by the Gee's Bend quilters as well as Lonnie Holley, Thornton Dial, and others. The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco will debut its entire acquisition at the exhibition Revelations: Art from the African American South, opening at the de Young Museum on June 3, 2017, along with a concurrent exhibition of prints from the Paulson Fontaine Press Archive, also at the de Young.

In 2014, the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art received a gift of 57 works from the Souls Grown Deep Foundation. The gift includes 20 important quilts by the Gee's Bend quilters, dating back to the 1930s. The Met Breuer will debut works from this acquisition in the exhibition Souls Grown Deep, opening in July 2017.

These acquisitions and exhibitions represent significant shifts in museum collections and in dominant art historical narratives. Self-taught African-American Artists from the American South historically have been marginalized or described with reductive terms such as "folk," "naïve," or "outsider." The inclusion of these remarkable artists in significant museum collections marks a welcome reexamination of the American contemporary art canon.



LONNIE'S FLAG, 2014

Color softground etching with aquatint and spitbite aquatint. 30.75" x 29.5"; Edition of 50



FIELDS, 2014

Color softground etching with aquatint and spitbite aquatint. 30.75" x 29.5"; Edition of 50



Mary Lee Bendolph at home in Alabama



FOURTEEN, 2014
Color softground etching with aquatint and spitbite aquatint. 30.75" x 29.5"; Edition of 50