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## LOUISIANA BENDOLPH

08.01.2007

**L**ouisiana Pettway Bendolph began quilting at a young age, but put it aside when she moved to Mobile, Alabama, to raise a family. In 2002, she saw one of her early quilts in the *Quilts of Gee's Bend* exhibition at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts and began making quilts again. She came to Paulson Press in 2005 and made six prints. She returned to Paulson Press in 2007 and made four new prints. Her answers to the following questions resemble her prints: direct. We interviewed her over the phone at her home in Mobile.

—Kenneth Caldwell

**Q:** How are the new prints different from your earlier works?

**A:** Well, if you really look at them they are still based on a housetop. They are a new generation of housetop—that's what happened.

**Q:** Has the recognition and the travel changed you or what you want to do with your art?

**A:** I've learned to go different places but that's about it. It hasn't changed who I am or the things I believe in. I don't think it's changed my art because that was just inside.

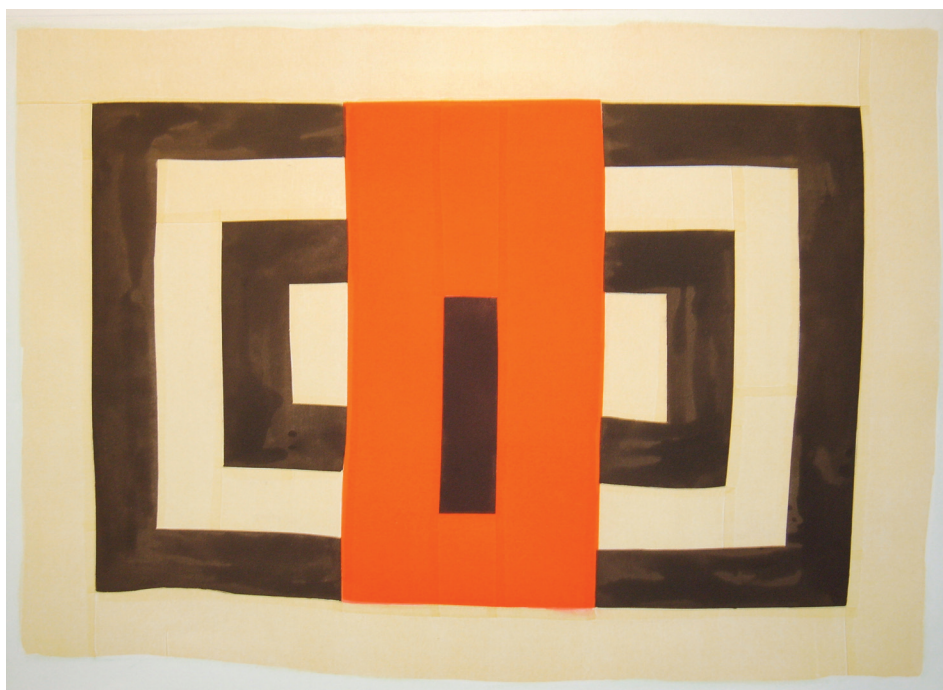
**Q:** What would you change in this experience?

**A:** I wouldn't change anything, because it's given me the opportunity to go

out and meet people and go to schools and talk to kids about how important education is, and it's opened a whole different world.

When you come back home and get a letter from someone at a school or college, and they write that you inspired them or changed their life, that's important. So often people are putting people down and so few times people say something inspired them, so that's important. It doesn't matter what your background is, or how you grew up, or what you don't have, you can still be a good person and you still matter, you can still be somebody.

That's a good thing in the world today, because so many bad things are happening.

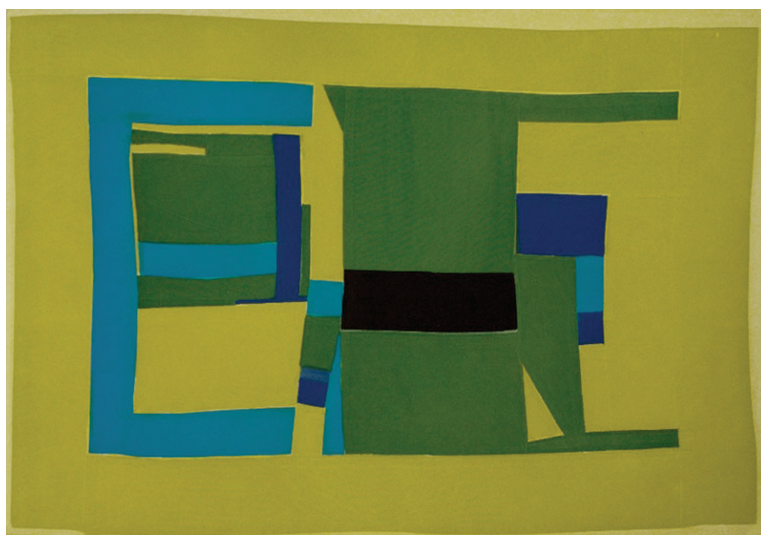


Louisiana Bendolph in the studio.

### **New Generation, 2007**

Color aquatint, spitbite aquatint, and softground etching; Paper size: 31" x 36"; Edition of 50

“When I was coming back from Houston on the bus, I started having visions of quilts. At first I didn’t pay any attention to them. They just kept coming. I tried to ignore them. I said, I really just don’t want to do that anymore; I’m done making quilts. But they wouldn’t leave me alone. I thought, I’ve just been to a quilt show, and that’s why the images are in my mind. But the images I was seeing didn’t look like anything I had seen in the show or anywhere else. I ignored them. But they didn’t stop. So I got a pencil and a piece of paper and drew them out. I thought that would be the end of it, but it wasn’t. Finally I decided that I would get some fabric and make a quilt. I thought my days of making quilts were over, just a part of my past, like planting corn and picking cotton. But the images wouldn’t go away. They wouldn’t leave my mind. So I made another quilt, and another and then another. And I’ve kept on doing it because those images won’t leave me alone.”<sup>1</sup>

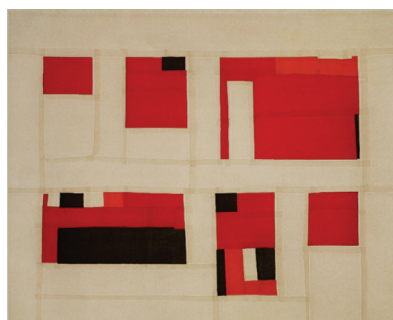


(left) **History**, 2007

Color softground and aquatint etching;  
Paper size: 27 3/4" x 34 1/2", Edition of 50

(below) **Shared Legacy**, 2007

Color softground and aquatint etching;  
Paper size: 30" x 32 1/4", Edition of 50



**Q:** Can you talk about being a quilter in Mobile, away from Gee’s Bend?

**A:** It’s not all that different. I am in Gee’s Bend a lot because my mom lives there. Since I am connected to the quilters, I am there a lot. It’s like I never really left home.

**Q:** Are your own daughters quilting?

**A:** Not exactly. This summer is supposed to be the summer we get started.

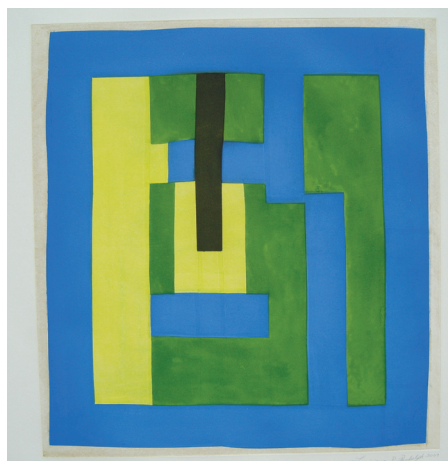
One of them is drawing designs. I think she will want to start putting them together after a while.

**Q:** Can you tell us something about these new prints and their titles?

**A:** The titles just came to me. When I am doing quilts, I am reminded so much of the things that happened and where we came from and the point we are at now. So the names usually have

to do with what I am thinking about as I am doing them. “Shared Legacy” is based on legacy; something I could leave behind. A lot of the time we leave stuff behind, but it doesn’t mean too much. This is a piece that will be left and it will carry on the Louisiana Bendolph legacy. ★

Paulson Press is pleased to announce the inclusion of four of our artists, Louisiana Bendolph, Mary Lee Bendolph, Loretta Bennett and Loretta Pettway, into F.A.P.E.’s (Friends of Art and Preservation in the Embassies’) Lee Kimche McGrath Original Print Collection. As part of the Collection, each year a distinguished American artist creates an edition of original prints for display in U.S. embassies. Chuck Close, Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, Elizabeth Murray, Robert Rauschenberg, Susan Rothenberg, Ed Ruscha and Frank Stella are all past participants.



**Still Have Joy/Tears of Pride**, 2007

Color aquatint, spitbite aquatint and softground etching; Paper size: 39 1/2" x 36"  
Edition of 50



Louisiana and Loretta at the U.S. State Department Balcony, Washington D.C., 2007

<sup>1</sup>Gee’s Bend: The Architecture of the Quilt, Tinwood Books, 2006