



NEWS

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For Immediate Release

A Look at What Inspires: Fine Craft Artists Pay Tribute to their Heroes

St. Petersburg, FL – June 5, 2024 - Florida CraftArt is delighted to announce the opening of **HEROES**, running from **July 11 to August 24, 2024**.

Heroes are integral to the human experience as they provide role models, sources of inspiration, and a sense of collective identity. The stories of heroes, whether fictional or real, serve as moral compasses, guiding individuals through challenges and dilemmas. They instill hope and demonstrate that, even in the face of adversity, one person's actions can make a difference. Heroes also contribute to the cultural tapestry of societies, reflecting shared values and aspirations. By celebrating heroism, societies reaffirm the importance of qualities like bravery, compassion, and justice.

Many of the artists in the exhibition recognize heroes who share their own creative pursuits but who did so while overcoming immense adversity while still managing to forge singular visions. Images of Frida Kahlo and Jean-Michel Basquiat, who transformed personal challenges into universal themes of identity and resilience and challenged societal norms, appear on the walls of the gallery, reminding us to embrace our unique voices and persevere through challenges.

Georgia Icon Flower, a richly colored mixed-media work by artist Victoria Rose Martin, draws inspiration from Georgia O'Keeffe, a trailblazer who often is hailed as the "Mother of American Modernism." Martin honors O'Keeffe's legacy of carving out a significant space for women in the male-dominated art world of the early 20th century. Martin's piece celebrates O'Keeffe's flower paintings, which are widely interpreted as profound explorations of female sexuality and strength. While O'Keeffe herself rejected reductive interpretations of her work, her art has become a powerful feminist symbol of femininity and women's experiences. Through *Georgia Icon Flower*, Martin echoes O'Keeffe's message of pursuing one's artistic vision without compromising identity or independence, a testament to O'Keeffe's choice of solitude and self-reliance in the New Mexico desert as a bold statement against traditional domestic expectations.

Phyllis Petrillo's evocative work, *Maya Angelou*, is a tribute to the legendary poet and activist. The artist was inspired by the "sentiment, love, beauty, and call to action of her words." The quilt's background is printed with Angelou's impactful quotes, creating a compelling backdrop. At the heart of the piece is a

striking image of Angelou, head thrown back in a broad smile, capturing the essence of her joyful resilience. This artwork echoes Angelou's own poignant observation about a Black woman's laughter as a "survival apparatus," highlighting the depth and complexity of the heroic qualities of endurance and strength.

Within Me Diptych, an artwork by Ajalena Daniels, pays homage to the enduring spirit and strength of her Cherokee ancestors who faced the hardships of forced relocation from their ancestral lands. Both halves of the diptych feature two screen-printed images, a self-portrait and historic images of Cherokee women bisected by a map of the current southeastern United States — the historic homeland of the Cherokee people. This visual narrative underscores the deep connection between the Cherokee community and their natural environment. In the image, the artist herself is holding an ear of corn, known as "selu" in Cherokee, which holds profound cultural significance to Cherokee identity and is also the name of the First Woman in Cherokee creation stories. By juxtaposing her image with those of her forebearers, Daniels states, "I celebrate their legacy and highlight the continuous journey of courage and identity that they have passed down to me."

HEROES artists: Caitlin Albritton, Joyce Curvin, Ajalena Daniels, Mikhail Gubin, Susan Hess, Jhordyn Innocent, Caelan Jeffery, Pamela Jones, Jackie Kaufman, Victoria Kudryavtseva, Anna Laxton, Jill Lindsay, Victoria Rose Martin, Elizabeth Neily, Phyllis Petrillo, Ellen Simon, Donna Slawsky, and Virginia Walton.

About Florida CraftArt

Florida CraftArt is located at 501 Central Avenue in St. Petersburg and is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. For more information, visit www.FloridaCraftArt.org or call **(727) 821-7391**. Florida CraftArt is a nonprofit organization founded in 1951 and headquartered in the former Rutland's Department Store, built in 1916 in downtown St. Petersburg. Its mission is to grow the statewide creative economy by engaging the community and advancing Florida's fine craft artists and their work. Fine craft art is presented in its 2,500-square-foot Florida Artists' Gallery, and curated exhibitions are featured in its adjacent Exhibition Gallery. Florida CraftArt is the *only* statewide organization offering artists a platform to show and sell their work.

CUTLINES

1. **Victoria Rose Martin - Georgia Icon Flower - photo courtesy artist.JPG, Photo by the artist**

Georgia Icon Flower, by artist Victoria Rose Martin, draws inspiration from Georgia O'Keeffe, the "Mother of American Modernism."

2. **Phyllis Petrillo - Maya Angelou - photo courtesy Florida CraftArt.JPG, Photo courtesy Florida CraftArt**

A quilt titled *Maya Angelou*, by artist Phyllis Petrillo, captures the eye with the poet's enigmatic smile.

3. **Ajalena Daniels - Within Me Diptych (1) - photo courtesy artist.JPG & Ajalena Daniels - Within Me Diptych (2) - photo courtesy artist.JPG, Photo by the artist**

Artist Ajalena Daniels places herself within her work *Within Me Diptych*, making a personal connection with her Cherokee ancestry and their legacy of resilience.