

Ontario Museum of History & Art
Reflections
January 14 – February 7, 2021
Guest Curatorial Statement written by Dr. Patricia Jessup-Woodlin

The premise for this exhibition entitled "Reflections" is to share or "reflect" on the unique perspective of contemporary and historical topics by Women of Color as seen through their diverse artistic expressions. So, what exactly does reflection mean? One definition states "Reflection gives the brain an opportunity to pause amidst the chaos, untangle and sort through observations and experiences, consider multiple possible interpretations and create meaning." Toward creating "new meaning" and insight for the viewer the topics for this exhibition include, but are not limited to, the COVID-19 Pandemic, Black Lives Matter, social and political injustices, women's physical and mental health and a 'Woman's Right to Choose'.

While the artworks vary in media ranging from painting, drawing, photography and printmaking to assemblage, sculpture, quilted textile, collage, photomontage and mixed media, the artworks are unified by concept, theme and subject matter.

"Ministry of Propaganda" an assemblage by Leah Knecht was inspired by the Nazi regime who had a department called "Propaganda Ministry and Public Enlightenment" headed by Joseph Goebbels. This assemblage is a reaction to the constant lying stemming from the White House and the amplification by the right-wing media. The goal was/is to repeat lies enough until the listeners become brainwashed. This assemblage incorporated many intriguing objects such as a filmstrip of Sean Hannity and a toy pig representing the rich feeding at the trough of public deception. Painted on the surface of a speaker are terms like "Alternative facts" and "Faux news". The artist's clever use of an old film sound speaker, vintage radio, an 8mm film camera and other assorted items form a cohesive multi-layered provocative and gripping assemblage.

"Black Woman's Burden, Part 2" by Riea Owens who states, "Black Women have had to carry the weight of the Black families of this country ever since our ancestors were stolen from our Motherland and their arrival on these shores. We have been ridiculed for the way we look, speak and behave. We have been treated as less than, when in fact, we are Queens." Riea created a frontal view portrait of an attractive African American woman with an abundance of hair. Initially it looks as though the hair contains some decorative almost calligraphic writing, but closer observation reveals the artist has etched in the hair many of the numerous stereotypical labels that describe Black Women.

"Say Their Names" by Patricia Cunliffe says, "I have always felt it my duty to address political ills in my work - whether it be in the form of a written word, or an abstract statement in a painting or a film." As an act of homage, she has painted on 4 feet square canvas, the names of 41 African American men, women and children who suffered death or injury because of racism. The names are painted with soft, quiet colors. They vary in size, but they all are equally compelling and a visual reminder that all we have left of them is their names.

As curator, my desire is for the viewer to gain insight and perhaps even empathy through the unique lens of these Women of Color. "Reflections" shows us that the hopes, dreams, frustrations, sorrows and triumphs of these artists, as expressed through their art, are clearly impacted by a society that continues to suffer from social, political and racial injustices.

The exhibition includes works by Allyson Allen, Jean Brantley, Liz Crimson, Patricia Cunliffe, Leah Knecht, Jaymie Leslie, Riea Owens, Gloria Mushonga-Roberts, Alicia Savio, Linda Ternoir, Patricia Jessup-Woodlin and Karien Zachery.

This exhibit spans three galleries and includes over 50 works.

- Dr. Patricia Jessup-Woodlin, Guest Curator