

ART + EXHIBITIONS

"alt_quilts" Reimagines Quiltmaking at the American Folk Art Museum

A new exhibit at the American Folk Art Museum in New York dispels the quiet and staid image of this centuries-old pastime

By Rebecca Bates

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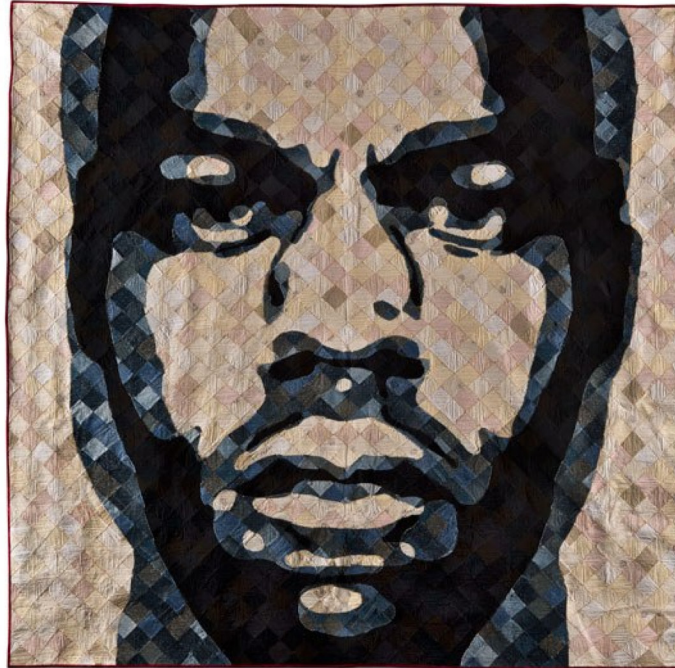
Camouflage, Sabrina Gschwandtner, 2012.
Photo by Matt Suib, Greenhouse Media and courtesy of Philadelphia Art Alliance

Quiltmaking, to most, is a quiet, antiquated pastime. Yet a new exhibit at New York's [American Folk Art Museum](#), "alt_quilts," highlights three contemporary artists who challenge the form's traditional modes of crafting and imagery. Sabrina Gschwandtner, for example, stitches and layers 16mm filmstrips, often from documentaries about the textile industry. These assemblages are presented against light boxes that illuminate the films' tiny frames and demand an up-close inspection of the people and clothing contained within.



Untitled (Return to Sender, after Mary Jane Smith, 1865), Stephen Sollins, 2010.
Photo by Tom Powel Imaging

Stephen Sollins's works most directly reference antique quilts, including a piece from the museum's permanent collection by 19th-century quiltmaker Mary Jane Smith. For *Untitled (Return to Sender, after Mary Jane Smith, 1865)*, Sollins closely replicated the structure of Smith's quilt, in a traditional Log Cabin pattern, with hundreds of strips of used Tyvek and paper envelopes. Each piece of paper hints at a history of private correspondence, an intimacy Sollins has shared with loved ones that viewers can't quite access.



[Iconography #7] Rags to Riches, Luke Haynes, 2012. Photo by Gavin Ashworth, New York

Of the three artists, only Luke Haynes works with actual textiles. Yet despite the familiar medium, he infuses his quilts with postmodern, pop sensibilities. In *[Iconography #7] Rags to Riches*, which looms large over the gallery space, Haynes has superimposed the faces of Kanye West and Jay Z, generating a double portrait of two musicians also concerned with the intersection of high and low art. Moreover, using reclaimed materials (such as blue jeans, sheets, metallic thread), the artist is able to physically enact a rags-to-riches tale.

Through January 5, 2014 at the American Folk Art Museum, New York; folkartmuseum.org

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