

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 22, 2019



University Galleries of Illinois State University is pleased to present *Bethany Collins: A Pattern or Practice* from February 15 through March 31, 2019.

- February 15 through March 31: *America: A Hymnal* satellite exhibition at Milner Library
- Friday, February 22, from 5 to 7pm: Opening reception
- Saturday, February 23 at 1pm: Exhibition tour and workshop co-presented with the Children's Discovery Museum
- Saturday, March 23 at noon: Conversation featuring Bethany Collins and Duriel Harris
- K-12 field trip program, curator-led tours, and workshops available by appointment throughout the exhibition

A Pattern or Practice, the most comprehensive presentation of artist Bethany Collins' work to date, presents thirty pieces created from 2012 to 2019. In her drawings, prints, paintings, sculptures, and artist's books, Collins incorporates fractured or illegible phrases, either punishingly erased or arduously rendered. As Holland Cotter recently wrote in *The New York Times*, "language itself, viewed as intrinsically racialized, is Bethany Collins' primary material." The artist elaborates, "I adore language because of its potential capacity, but if language is biased and not representative of us, it's bound to fail."

Collins has explored personal, bureaucratic, and lyrical language. The earliest work in the exhibition is "*Do People Ever Think You're White?*" III (2012), one of Collins' *White Noise* drawings, which consist of writing in white chalk on a black chalkboard. The series began in 2010 when the artist was in graduate school in Atlanta, Georgia, and the panels are filled with nearly indecipherable clusters of letters that erratically spell out racially charged critiques of her work. Collins repeatedly wrote each phrase as a means of distancing herself from it and disrupting its systemic power. She moved from personal to more authoritative language for her later *Dictionaries* series. For *Colorblind Dictionary* (2013-2014), she methodically erased all references to color in a *Webster's New World Dictionary*, while for *Black and Blue Dictionary* (2014), she erased all terms related to the colors black and blue in a *New American Dictionary*. The exhibition's title is quoted from *A Pattern or Practice* (2015), Collins' installation of 91 blind embossed prints featuring text from the U.S. Department of Justice report on the Ferguson, Missouri, Police Department following the killing of Michael Brown by a police officer. The embossed white Somerset paper requires an intimate proximity to read the protruding letters of the report, which is entirely present except its conclusion. Collins has recently been researching historical songs and anthems. Her *America: A Hymnal*, is a 2017 hardcover book containing 100 laser-cut and burned versions of "My Country 'Tis of Thee." The artist points out that each re-writing supports causes "from temperance and suffrage to abolition and even the Confederacy," and each "represents a proposition of what it means to be American."

University Galleries is collaborating with multiple partners to present programming during, and following, Collins' exhibition, including Milner Library, the Children's Discovery Museum, Normal Editions Workshop, @Salon, and *Obsidian: Literature & Arts in the African Diaspora*. All events are free and open to the public. Contact gallery@ilstu.edu or 309.438.5487 to schedule exhibition tours.

Events

- **February 15 through March 31**
Exhibition of Bethany Collins' *America: A Hymnal* at Milner Library, including a display of related publications from Milner's collection.
- **Friday, February 22, from 5 to 7pm**
Public reception with the artist

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- **Saturday, February 23 at 1pm**

Exhibition tour and workshop co-presented with the Children's Discovery Museum. Participants (ages 7-10) will meet at the CDM, come to University Galleries for an exhibition tour, and return to the CDM for an exhibition-related artmaking activity. Registration is required for this free program at childrensdiscoverymuseum.net. This program is made possible by an Illinois Prairie Community Foundation—Mirza Arts and Culture grant awarded to the CDM.

- **Saturday, March 23 at 12pm**

Public conversation featuring artist Bethany Collins and poet, author, and performer Duriel Harris (Associate Professor of Creative Writing at Illinois State University). This event is co-sponsored by @Salon and *Obsidian: Literature & Arts in the African Diaspora*, a biannual journal edited by Harris and published by the Publications Unit at Illinois State University. Complementary @Salon programming will be announced.

- Free curator-led tours and workshops are available by appointment throughout the exhibition. Contact gallery@ilstu.edu or 309.438.5487.

Bethany Collins: A Pattern or Practice is organized by University Galleries' Director and Chief Curator Kendra Paitz. The exhibition and programming are sponsored in part by grants from the Illinois Arts Council Agency and the Harold K. Sage Foundation and the Illinois State University Foundation Fund. An exhibition catalogue is forthcoming. Collins will also produce a print with Normal Editions Workshop, a professional print research facility in the School of Art at Illinois State University.

Collins' work has been exhibited at: The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa; Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis; Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Alabama; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio; Locust Projects, Miami; DePaul Art Museum, Chicago; Hudgens Center for the Arts, Duluth, Georgia; and The Center for Book Arts, New York, among others. Her work is included in the collections of The Art Institute of Chicago; Birmingham Museum of Art, Atlanta; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; and Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, Montgomery, among others. Collins was the 2015 recipient of the Hudgens Prize at the Hudgens Center for the Arts in Duluth, Georgia, and a 2018 recipient of the Efroymsen Contemporary Arts Fellowship. She has also received grants, awards, and residencies from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, Hyde Park Art Center, The Studio Museum in Harlem, Artadia, and the Rural Alabama Initiative, among others. Collins was born in Montgomery, Alabama, and currently lives and works in Chicago. She received her MFA at Georgia State University and her BA at University of Alabama. She is represented by Patron Gallery, Chicago, and Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago and New York.

University Galleries is located at Uptown Station at the corner of Beaufort and Broadway streets. Parking is available directly above in the Uptown Station parking deck, and the first hour is free, as well as any time after 5:01pm. If you need special accommodations to participate in any event, please contact University Galleries at 309.438.5487 or gallery@IllinoisState.edu. All events at University Galleries are free and open to the public.

For more information, visit galleries.IllinoisState.edu or call 309.438.5487. Find us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Sign up to receive emails by clicking the Newsletter link on our website.