



In Her Place: Nashville Artists in the Twenty-First Century



919 Broadway
Nashville, TN 37203
FristArtMuseum.org/art-trunks

Women have long been at the center of Nashville's vibrant visual arts community. Especially now, during the city's current period of growth, an outsized number of local women artists are receiving prestigious grants, residencies, and awards; are written about by respected critics; and are showing their work across the globe. Many have also dedicated years, even decades, to teaching or building impactful community organizations.

In Her Place highlights this prominent position of women artists here in Music City and beyond through nearly one hundred artworks spanning painting, sculpture, textile, and installation. Selected works by this intergenerational group of Nashville-based women relate broadly to place—whether conceived of as the view of a garden outside a studio window, the influence of being raised in the American South, a moment in time, or the evocation of an ancestral homeland outside of the United States.

Critiquing the exclusion of women from the art-historical canon, scholar Linda Nochlin famously asked in 1971, "Why have there been no great women artists?" In response to her rhetorical question, we offer this exhibition in our largest gallery space as part of our twenty-fifth anniversary to celebrate the achievements of women artists right here in Nashville over the last four decades.

Organized by the Frist Art Museum and cocurated by Sai Clayton, independent curator and artist; Katie Delmez, Frist Art Museum senior curator; and Shaun Giles, Frist Art Museum community engagement director

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Vadis Turner. *Celestial Megaliths*, 2024. Bed sheets, dye, thread, resin, Tyvek, and aluminum; 105 x 113 x 6 in. Courtesy of the artist and Mindy Solomon Gallery, Miami. © Vadis Turner.

Photo: John Schweikert

Materials used in art often carry associations with time, place, and identity. Those chosen by many of the artists featured in this exhibition are central to their art-making practices. They creatively repurpose these media, transforming them into representations of personal stories or shared traditions.

Vadis Turner's textile-driven works challenge narratives historically associated with women. Working with materials with gendered and domestic associations such as ribbons, curtains, and bedsheets, Turner tears, dyes, braids, and binds them and combines them with resin, gravel, concrete, or ash. In doing so, she aims to demonstrate how women can defy expectations and behavioral norms.

In *Celestial Megaliths*, Turner uses soft materials that bring fluidity to a rigid form. At nearly ten-by-ten feet, *Celestial Megaliths* references the Neolithic Era megaliths, or prehistoric structures made of one or more large stones, and the formation of gender roles as humans moved from hunter-gatherer societies to agrarian civilizations.

Questions

- Why do you think Vadis Turner combines soft, domestic materials with heavy, industrial ones? What message might that send?
- What materials do you think are used in this artwork? Now, check the label. Are you surprised by any of the materials listed? How do the materials look, feel, or behave in ways that are different than you might expect?
- What materials, symbols, or colors would you choose to represent your own memories?

Activity: Expressive Fabric Sculpture

Objective

Use a wire base and a variety of fabrics to create an expressive sculpture that represents a meaningful emotion or memory.

Materials

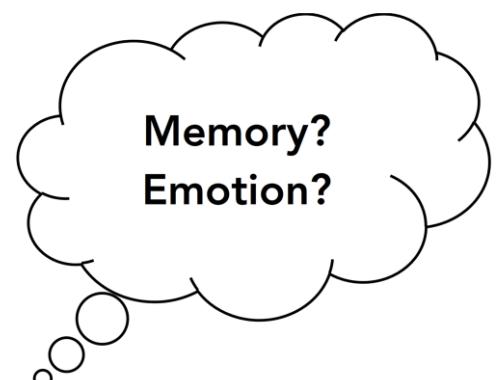
- Wire
- Biodegradable packing peanuts
- Scissors
- Assorted fabrics
- Yarn
- Glue
- Washi tape
- Large chenille stems

Steps

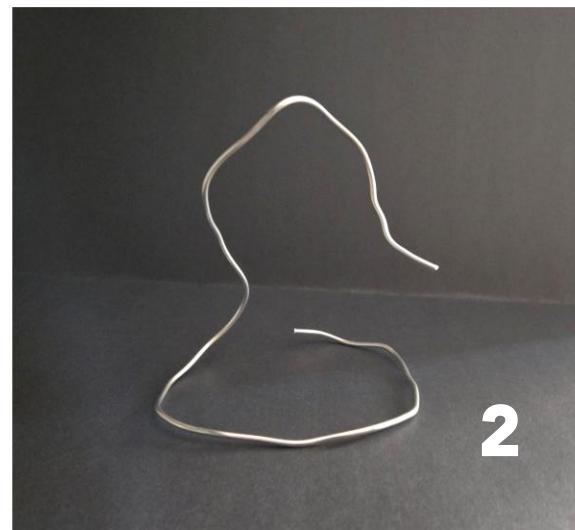
1. Think of a memory or emotion you would like to express through your sculpture.
2. Consider how you will make your sculpture using the wire provided. Experiment with forming 3D shapes by bending, folding, or rolling the wire. If you have a specific shape in mind, try making it.
3. String packing peanuts end to end by centering each piece and pressing the wire through. Add packing peanuts until the length of the wire is covered.
4. Select the pieces of fabric, washi tape, or yarn you would like to use to cover your sculpture. Are there specific colors or patterns you want to include? Are there certain types of fabrics that you associate with specific emotions or memories? Cut or tear fabric into strips.
5. Apply glue to one side of the fabric strips or yarn and wrap around the sculpture. Packing peanuts and wire should not be visible once materials are added.
6. Share and discuss your sculpture with other participants.

Adaptation

Alternatively, sculptures may be created without wire by lightly dabbing the ends of the packing peanuts with water and sticking them together to form a shape. This activity may also be adapted for younger participants and those with less time by using large chenille stems (pipe cleaners) to make sculptures.



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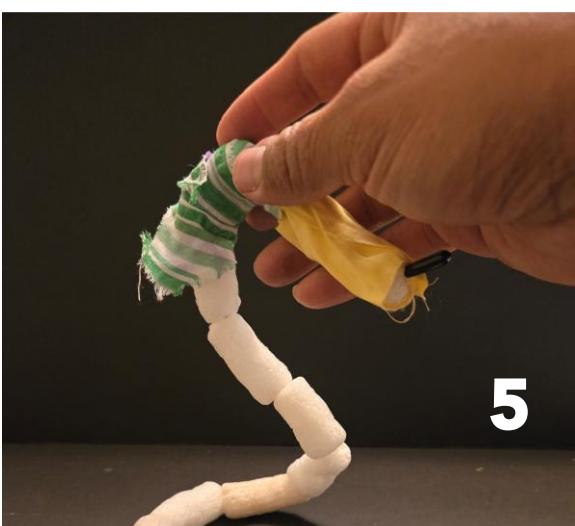
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Lakesha Calvin. *Revival*, 2025.
Mixed media; 31 1/2 x 16 1/2 in.
Courtesy of the artist. © Lakesha Calvin. Photo: John Schweikert



Lakesha Calvin. *Cadence*, 2025.
Mixed media; 31 1/2 x 16 1/2 in.
Courtesy of the artist. © Lakesha Calvin. Photo: John Schweikert

Artist and educator Lakesha Calvin draws heavily on memory and personal experience as sources of inspiration for her practice. Much of her recent work reflects her journey of healing and subsequent motherhood. The deep red and golden yellow seen in *Cadence* evokes the colors of beets and turmeric, which Calvin attributes her recovery to. Depictions of rays of light symbolize hope. She gathered the ginkgo leaves incorporated in *Revival* during walks through Fisk University's campus, where she teaches. Silhouettes of babies represent the artist's younger brother and her infant daughter, reminding viewers of the restorative power of family and the possibility of a new life.

Calvin has proudly stated that she first discovered her creativity as a student in the classrooms of Metro Nashville Public Schools. She now continues that legacy by inspiring new generations of students as an assistant professor and gallery coordinator at Fisk University. In addition to being a native Nashvillian, Calvin also has a strong connection to the Caribbean. From 2010 to 2013, she lived in Saint Thomas, US Virgin Islands, where she taught art at Charlotte Amalie High School. Influenced by her family, friends, and surroundings, she creates layered landscapes of color and forms that merge dreams with materiality. She considers the process of mixing her palette and preparing her materials to be a meditative act that underscores her appreciation for art's ability to heal, connect, and inspire others.

Questions

- If you made a collage about a time in your life, what materials might you include to suggest that time?
- What materials, symbols, or colors in this collage would you choose to represent your memories?
- How can an artist's choice of materials help communicate emotions or experiences?



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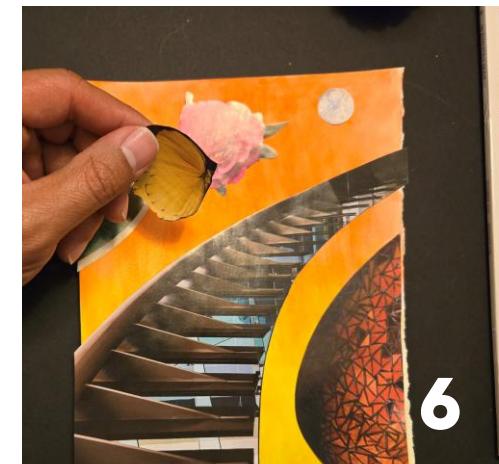
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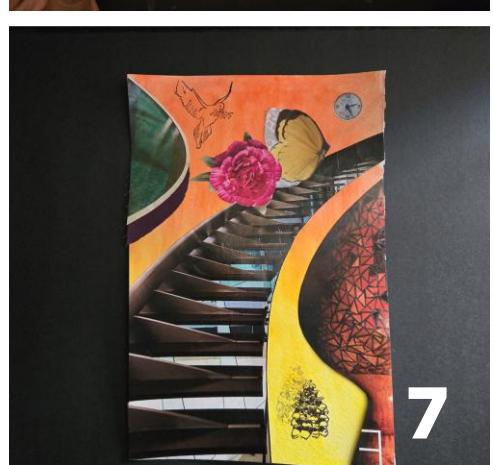
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Activity: Personal Collage

Objective

Create a collage incorporating meaningful colors, symbols, and materials that represent a memory, a notable event, or someone important to you.

Materials

- Pencils
- Drawing paper
- Bristol paper
- Assorted fabrics
- Assorted decorative papers
- Glue
- Magazines
- Stamps
- Stamp pads
- Markers
- Watercolors
- Water cups
- Scissors
- Stencils

Steps

1. Think about a memory, notable event, or person in your life that you would like to make the subject of your collage. Consider the colors, symbols, materials, and images you want to include.
2. Decide what kinds of images you want to include. Do you want portraits of people, or maybe pictures of animals, flowers, or architecture? Look through magazines for images to include in your collage. Collect your images and set them aside. You may also choose to draw images directly onto your Bristol paper later.
3. Select pieces of fabric and decorative paper to include in your collage. Are there certain colors, patterns, or types of fabrics that communicate your message best?
4. Identify at least one object to use as a symbol in your collage. You may draw it freehand, use a stencil or stamps, or choose images from magazines. Practice sketching, stenciling, or stamping it on drawing paper before adding it to the collage. Use symbol(s) once or multiple times in the collage.
5. Before drawing or attaching images, paper, and fabric to your Bristol paper, use watercolors or markers to add color to the background. Are there specific colors that remind you of this person, event, or memory?
6. Arrange your images, fabrics, and other components, then glue them to the Bristol paper.
7. Once everything is attached, you may use stamps, pencils, markers, and watercolors to add drawings and details. Share and discuss your sculpture with other participants.