

# Sumter County Gallery of Art in Sumter, SC, Offers Two New Exhibits



View of "The Supper Table" from above

The Sumter County Gallery of Art in Sumter, SC, is proud to present two "sister" exhibitions - in every sense of the word: *The Supper Table* and *Maria Britton, Dream Bodies*, both on view through Apr. 10, 2020.

*The Supper Table* is modeled after, and is an homage to, the 40th anniversary of Judy Chicago's 1979 ground breaking feminist art installation *The Dinner Party*, which had as its concept to bring greater attention to the contributions of women to Western culture and history. A multidisciplinary arts project, *The Supper Table* celebrates the history and contributions of 12 extraordinary South Carolina women and features the work of almost 60 of South Carolina's most outstanding contemporary women artists in the visual, literary, theatrical, and film arts.



Eartha Kitt place setting by Mana Hewitt

Imagine a 12' x 12' x 12' triangular-shaped table set with unique place settings each inspired by one of 13 diverse women (one setting is an homage to two sisters), from SC history whose lives were dedicated to the betterment of the lives of South Carolinians and beyond. Twelve short films, each featuring one of the honored guests at the table will also be screened. In addition to the installation, the exhibition will also feature 12 evocative charcoal portraits by artist Kirkland Smith of each of the women honored with a place at the supper table.

All of the 60 artists are involved in this ambitious exhibition are women, and all call South Carolina home. *The Supper Table* is the creative vision of Cindi Boiter, the Editor of *Jasper Arts Magazine*, and an important and passionate advocate for the arts in South Carolina.

Why create *The Supper Table*? In the mid-20th century, at the dawn of the Civil Rights Movement and Women's Movement, history books revealed that, other than the women who were married to famous men, women were mostly absent. Historians and laypeople asked: What were the women doing? *The Supper Table* answers this question about South Carolina history through art. We learn about two SC women who founded colleges; two women who devoted their lives to abolishing slavery; several more who worked tirelessly for human rights; a woman whose work in medicine changed the course in healthcare in the state; women who broke down barriers in athletics, law, entertainment, and the military; the woman whose work in indigo saved the

fledgling American colonies, and more.

The actual place-settings - plate, napkin, eating utensils, drinking glass - were each designed by a notable South Carolina woman visual artist, including Artfields grand prize winner Michaela Pilar Brown, Mana Hewitt, Tonya Gregg, and Eileen Blyth. The artists have created their place-settings out of material that ranges from ceramics to coiled paper to copper wire and found objects.

A collection of essays honoring the 13 subjects (2 sisters), written by outstanding SC women writers, such as SC Poet Laureate Marjory Wentworth, USC's Qiana Whitted, and journalist Claudia Smith Brinson. There is also a theatre component that we are very excited to present in the gallery space, where actors playing each woman will perform a 4-minute monologue about their importance in South Carolina history.

The women honored at The Supper Table include: Mary McLeod Bethune - Educator & civil rights activist, founder of Bethune-Cookman University, known as "The First Lady of the Struggle." Alice Childress - Black novelist, playwright, actor whose literary work centered on society's have-nots. Septima Clark - Civil Rights Activist, known as the "Mother of the Movement." Matilda Evans - First Black woman licensed to practice medicine in SC and strong health care advocate. Althea Gibson - First Black athlete to break racial lines in international tennis. Angelina & Sarah Grimke - White sisters who became suffragists and abolitionists.

Also included are: Eartha Kitt - Singer, songwriter, and Emmy Award winning actor. Sarah Leverette - First female law professor at USC; civil rights and women's rights advocate. Julia Peterkin - Pulitzer Prize winning novelist who, although white, wrote about the Black experience. Eliza Pinckney - Businessperson and entrepreneur whose work in botany/indigo changed the colonial economy. Modjeska Simkins - Civil Rights crusader, public health and human rights activist. Elizabeth Evelyn Wright - Educator and Founder of Voorhees College.



Julia Peterkin place setting by B.A. Hohman

Participating artists include: Bohumila Augustinova, Eileen Blyth, Tonya Gregg, Mana Hewitt, B.A. Hohman, Heidi Darr-Hope, Lori Isom, Flavia Lovatelli, Laurie Brownell McIntosh, Michaela

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Pilar Brown, Renee Roullier, Olga Yuhkno, Jennifer Bartell, Carla Damron, Joyce Rose Harris, Kristine Hartvigsen, Meeghan Kane, Monifa Lemons, Eva Moore, Marjory Wentworth, Qiana Whitted, Candace Wiley, Christina Xan, Claudia Smith Brinson, Kirkland Smith, Jordan Morris, Betsy Newman, Mahkia Greene, Vicky Saye Henderson, Lee Ann Kornegay, Brenda Oliver, Kathryn Van Aernum, Cindi Boiter, Joestra Robinson & Tamara Finkbeiner, Katly Hong, Laura Kissel, Roni Nicole, Lee Ann Kornegay, Ebony Wilson, Betsey Newman, Carleen Maur, Faye Riley, Jordan Mullen, Steffi Brink, and Lillian Burke.

*Dream Bodies* presents recent works by multimedia artist Maria Britton. Using combinations of painting and sewing Britton constructs textile-based wall works from worn patterned bed sheets, which she has been incorporating into her work for over decade. Her work explores notions of femininity and feminism, high and low forms of art making, and dreams and disasters.

Britton views the surface of a bed as a place where one both experiences and escapes reality, a gateway between two realms, Britton transforms patterned bed sheets into flowing forms that hover between painting and sculpture. Influenced by clothing construction, bodily curves, curtains, windows, sails, and portals, the works included in *Dream Bodies* disrupt and modify the familiar patterns of everyday. These nostalgic, dated patterns act as windows for peering into specific times and places from the past. Like skin, fabric retains a physical memory of experiences; it wrinkles from habitual behaviors and environmental conditions. Over time, memories change by expanding, fading, transforming or disappearing.

Britton works spontaneously and intuitively, responding to the mechanically reproduced floral and other patterns of the bed sheets. She also references fragmented floral imagery either remembered or imagined. The process of drying flowers and cyclical elements from nature, especially decay, inform her artistic process.



Work by Maria Britton

Maria Britton lives and works in Carrboro, NC. Her work has been included in exhibitions with LoBo, New York, NY; Smith Gallery at Appalachian State, Boone, NC; Camayuh, Atlanta, GA; Lump, Raleigh, NC; Tempus Projects, Tampa, FL; SOIL Gallery, Seattle, WA; BAM, Brooklyn, NY; The Stephen & George Laundry Line, Queens, NY; The Scrap Exchange, Durham, NC; and Harbor Gallery, New York, NY among others.

Britton has participated in artist residencies through the Hambidge Center, Byrdcliffe Arts Colony, Petrified Forest National Park, and Vermont Studio Center. Her work has been featured in *New American Paintings* (#82). She earned her BFA from Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC, and her MFA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Britton is a contributor to *The Coastal Post* and Co-Director of LOG, an experimental art gallery with roots in Chapel Hill, NC.

Britton will give her artist talk the night of the opening reception. On Mar. 7, at 2pm. There will be a theatrical production

*continued on Page 19*