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# Colorful Canvas Files: Kenya (Robinson)

by Sky Obercam

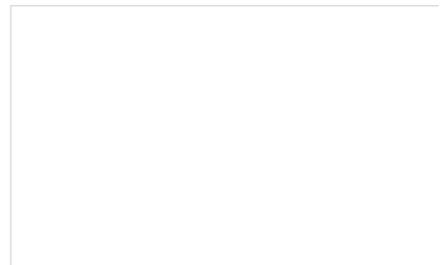
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Who is Kenya (Robinson)? The multi-disciplined artist describes herself as "a self-taught visual-conceptual-performance-artist, who is constantly seeking ways to expand my creative practice." Just one look at her growing list of accomplishments proves (Robinson), as she prefers her last name to appear, is a bona fide creative on the rise. The Gainesville native has exhibited work at The Museum of Contemporary Diasporan Arts, The Jersey City Museum, The Aljira Center for

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Contemporary Art and The 60 Wall Street Gallery at Deutsche Bank. Places such as The Kitchen, Rush Arts Gallery, MoMA PS1, The DUMBO Arts Festival have been home to her authentic, and insightful performance art.

An observant cultural critic, Kenya Robinson's work explores a variety of issues, from the limiting concept of race (a.k.a., the "CoonBox"), gender and consumerism. The conceptual artist likens herself to an archeologist from a future world, uncovering "artifacts of a uniquely American, mass consumerist landscape" for the use of expression. Sound recordings, film, novelty items, advertising/product copy and even hardware tools – the seemingly mundane – are just some of the objects she uses to convey the richness and complexity of modern culture.

Born and raised in Gainesville, Florida, Robinson attended the University of Florida, and eventually the Los Angeles Trade Technical College. The artist describes that her "journey has been meandering, although each step was made with purpose." During a productive stint as a freelance fashion designer, Robinson was able to hone her own personal creative projects. And in 2008, her debut exhibition of "HAIRPOLITIC: Pursuit of Nappiness," premiered at the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Art.

HAIRPOLITIC featured the use of combs, synthetic hair, women's magazines and paint to explore the unspoken rules of acceptable beauty standards in America. Robinson told [Black Voices](#), "HAIRPOLITIC is an attempt to open a dialogue about choices, how they populate the world in such a wide array, sprinkled everywhere, waiting for you to choose. You have the right to choose from the full range of opportunities, not an abbreviated listing." On Black hair in a Eurocentric culture, she continued, "Black hair is truly a manifestation of the multifaceted black American collective experience. It means Saturday gossip and conspiracy theorist gatherings over the hum of clippers, or the through the haze of oil sheen spray. And it's also the self-consciousness that often accompanies the quest for acceptance. But ultimately Black hair is about embracing the freedom to define one's own sense of comfort and beauty. Or it means none of that, because a definition is as varied as the people who possess 'Black hair.'"

In February 2010, Robinson exhibited a variation of the exhibit in her hometown. "HAIRPOLITIC: Pomade in America," was a mixed media exhibit, using both sculpture and multimedia to explore Black hair and iconic images of beauty.

Comparing the experience of her debut at the MoCADA in Brooklyn as a coming out party, the new art scene inductee applied – and received acceptance – to the [Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's WorkSpace Program](#). "This is a major coup for me," Robinson said. "I'm the only one [of the chosen] who has not gone to a formal art school. I'm self-taught," Robinson told the Gainesville Sun of her 2009-2010 residency with the



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Kenya (Robinson) · 4 years ago

What an absolute honor to be included on the CLUTCH website! There is an array of women creating arresting work. Please keep sharing through the Colorful Canvas Files...

K®

^ | v · Reply · Share



Whit · 4 years ago

GREAT PIECE. Thanks for including more arts pieces!

^ | v · Reply · Share



LesBoom · 4 years ago

Great piece! I look forward to more like it. Kenya is an inspiration.

^ | v · Reply · Share



chakalaka · 4 years ago

This is wonderful! keep up the good work!

^ | v · Reply · Share



Golden Silence · 4 years ago

This artist looked familiar to me and I couldn't put my finger on where I remembered hearing about her from, until I saw the mention of "The Inflatable Mattress" project.

Kenya's very interesting and she's definitely got a message to share!

^ | v · Reply · Share

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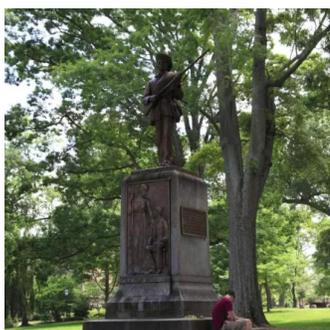
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