

**Elizabeth Talford Scott** (b.1916- d.2011)

was born near Chester, South Carolina on the land her parents worked as sharecroppers, and where previously her grandparents were held as slaves. The sixth of fourteen children who lived on the Blackstalk Plantation, Elizabeth was trained by age nine to repurpose scrapped materials into usable objects to accommodate basic survival needs. Quilting was a familiar part of the black American experience, especially in the South. It was a keystone for innovation, recycling, constructed iconography, and passing historical narratives from one generation to the next. The artist honed her quilting skills at a young age, though her invention within the medium would develop over many years, moving away from domestic function into sculptural wall hangings that live squarely within the vernacular of fine art.



Migrating to Baltimore in the early 1940s, Elizabeth and Charlie Scott, Jr., welcomed into the world their daughter, celebrated artist and MacArthur fellow Dr. Joyce J. Scott. During this period, Elizabeth Scott worked as a caterer, a caregiver to other people's children, and a mother. With limited time in her demanding work schedule, Elizabeth Scott took a hiatus from quilting. It was not until her daughter was self-sufficient, in the 1970s, that the artist returned to her creative practice with dedication, vigor and potency. Developing techniques that acknowledged her family history yet moved beyond, Scott began to innovate, creating fiber works that incorporated stones, buttons, shells, bones, sequence, beads, knotted material, glass, and other unconventional objects amassed in bright and lively compositions that boasted bold colors and heavily layered surfaces in organic and unstructured shapes.

Immersed and embedded within the lush surfaces of these works live personal and worldly narratives, and an alphabet of symbols that tell us as much about emotion as they do about personal history. E.T. Scott's evolved iconography makes references to nature, flowers, animals, insects, sea creatures, monsters, fantastical beings, magic, superstitions and good luck charms which converge in a cacophony of pure visual energy. In Scott's hands, commonplace materials are transformed into a lesson on abstract design informed by all that she could see and imagine.

During her lifetime, Elizabeth exhibited in Baltimore as well as national venues including The Studio Museum of Harlem, NY; The Museum of American Folk Art, NY; and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY. In 1998, she was the subject of a retrospective exhibition titled *Eyewinkers, Tumbleturds, and Candlebugs: The Art of Elizabeth Talford Scott* that opened at the Maryland Institute College of Art and traveled to the Smithsonian Institution's Anacostia Community Museum in Washington, DC among other venues in New England and North Carolina. In 1987, Elizabeth Talford Scott was bequeathed the Women's Caucus Award for Outstanding Achievements in the Visual Arts. The artist regularly produced workshops, frequently collaborating with her daughter, Joyce J. Scott, to educate students on methods and material usage in her craft.

Elizabeth Talford Scott died in 2011. In 2019, the estate management was awarded to Goya Contemporary Gallery. In that same year, E.T. Scott was the joint subject of the exhibition "*Hitching Their Dreams to Untamed Stars: Joyce J. Scott & Elizabeth Talford Scott*" at the Baltimore Museum of Art and "*Reality, Times Two: Joyce J. Scott & Elizabeth Talford Scott*" at their primary gallery, Goya Contemporary, in Baltimore. In 2020-2021, E.T. Scott's work was added to several museum collections and exhibitions including at the Philbrook Museum, Toledo Museum, and the Mint Museum. Her posthumous success points to the long-standing, systemic institutional structures that failed to recognize the work of significant female makers in their lifetimes. Many of these institutions have recently prompted reinvestigations into these overlooked, yet important artistic practices. Elizabeth Talford Scott has been cited by many contemporary, celebrated artists as an influence, counting her own daughter, Joyce J. Scott among those she influenced. E.T. Scott's works feel as fresh and relevant today as the day they were constructed, proving Scott a significant artist who was not only of her time, but who is timeless.