

SONYA CLARK

Biography

Sonya Clark (b. 1967, Washington D.C.) is a renowned multidisciplinary artist and educator whose work explores themes of the African diaspora, cultural heritage, memory, race, identity, visibility, and history through material-based, tactile art. Drawing from her Afro-Caribbean background—her mother from Jamaica and father of Yoruba descent—Clark's practice engages deeply with the legacies of colonization, slavery, and cultural symbolism. Utilizing materials such as hair, cloth, flags, combs, coins, and seed beads, she creates powerful works that transcend craft into platforms for social commentary, activism, and cultural critique. Her use of hair, particularly in the *Hair Craft* series, challenges societal notions of beauty and power while honoring both personal and collective histories. Her works celebrate resilience, cultural pride, and social change, while addressing race and historical erasure.

Clark's extensive body of work, including large-scale installations, sculptures, and performances, has been exhibited in over 400 museums and galleries across the Americas, Africa, Asia, Europe, and Australia. Major projects include *The Hair Craft Project*, *Kente Flag Project*, and *Unraveling*, an interactive public engagement with the Confederate flag. **Monumental Cloth: The Flag We Should Know** held at the Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia opened in 2019, and focused on Clark's work with the Confederate flag, aiming to recontextualize its symbolism. That same year she opened **Sonya Clark: Hair | Goods, An Homage to Madam CJ Walker**, held at Goya Contemporary Gallery in Baltimore, an exhibition honoring the legacy of Madam C.J. Walker which featured works that explored themes of resilience, beauty, history, and identity. In 2021, Clark opened **Sonya Clark: Tatter, Bristle, and Mend**, a comprehensive survey of Clark's 25-year career held at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C., featuring 100 works that explore themes of heritage, labor, language, and visibility. **This Present Moment: Crafting a Better World**, highlighting 171 artworks, including Clark's "Monumental Cloth," opened at the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Renwick Gallery in 2023. **Sonya Clark: We Are Each Other** opened in 2023 at the Cranbrook Art Museum in Bloomfield, MI and traveled to the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, GA and the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City throughout 2024 with a focus on the artist's community-centric, participatory projects.

Clark served as Distinguished Research Fellow and Department Chair at Virginia Commonwealth University (2006–2017) and is currently a Professor of Art at Amherst College. Previously, she was Professor of Creative Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She earned an MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art, a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, a BA from Amherst College, and several honorary doctorates, including from Amherst College (2015) and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2023).

The artist has received numerous prestigious awards, including from ArtPrize, Art Matters, United States Artists, the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, Anonymous Was a Woman, the American Craft Council, the Rappaport Prize from deCordova Museum, and the James Renwick Alliance. A Smithsonian Artist Research Fellow, Clark has been selected for residencies in Beijing, France, Italy, and the United States, and was the inaugural recipient of the Black Rock Senegal Residency Fellowship.

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Clark and her works have been featured in major publications such as *The New York Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *ARTFORUM*, *Artsy*, *Sculpture Magazine*, *LA Times*, *Hyperallergic*, *Mother Jones*, and *The Huffington Post*, among others. Represented by Goya Contemporary in Baltimore, her art is included in major museum and private collections worldwide.

Combining rigorous technique with deep cultural insight, Clark continues to shape conversations around identity, visibility, and history.