

ARTFORUM



Elizabeth Talford Scott, *The Family of the Whosits*, 1995, fabric, buttons, beads, rocks, thread, sequins, shells, netting, metal, and pins, 57 x 50".

BALTIMORE

Elizabeth Talford Scott

GOYA CONTEMPORARY
3000 Chestnut Avenue Mill Centre #214
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Though Elizabeth Talford Scott's stalwart contributions to fiber art warrant great acclaim, she is, unfortunately, underappreciated beyond Baltimore, where she lived from the early 1940s until her death at the age of ninety-five in 2011. She was not lauded in the landmark traveling exhibition "Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power," 2017–20, which debuted at the Tate Modern in London, or in the more recent survey "Called to Create: Black Artists of the American South," 2022–23, at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. A substantial yet concise retrospective here—covering nearly two decades of Scott's textile-based output across thirteen extraordinary works—partly remedies these omissions.

Born in 1916 on a plantation near Chester, South Carolina, to a family of sharecroppers, Scott was taught to repurpose discarded materials and learned to quilt at an early age. These indelible lessons formed the cornerstone of her untrammelled art, which is often festooned by a catholic array of shiny objects. Gaze upon the bedazzled surfaces of these fastidiously sutured amalgamations and behold a haptic smorgasbord fit to satisfy even the most insatiable viewer. Take *The Family of the Whosits*, 1995, a roughly five-foot-high ovoid ecstatically adorned with patterned fabric, buttons, beads, rocks, shells, sequins, and other miscellany. Or consider *Upside Downwards*, 1992, another unbridled wall-mounted and bric-a-brac-laden piece of similar scale. As with fractals, the more one looks, the more there is to discover. The visual feast continues and reaches a celebratory crescendo in *Birthday*, 1997, which is emblazoned with dozens of faux pearls along its undulating border. Scott's byzantine creations play by their own rules and rejoice in a type of unfettered abundance that is generous, dizzying, and truly unforgettable.

— Andy Martinelli Clark