



## The Fabric Workshop and Museum

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### ***Sonya Clark: Monumental Cloth, The Flag We Should Know*** **March 29 – August 4, 2019**



Philadelphia, PA, February 8, 2019 — The Fabric Workshop and Museum (FWM) is pleased to present ***Sonya Clark: Monumental Cloth, The Flag We Should Know***, on view **March 29 through August 4, 2019**. The opening reception will be held on Friday, March 29, 2019 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm.

In the spring of 1865, a seemingly unremarkable dishcloth played a crucial role in ending the Civil War. Pressed into service as the South's flag of surrender at Appomattox, this cloth became known as the Confederate Flag of Truce. Over 150 years later, textile and social practice artist Sonya Clark elevates this lesser-known cultural symbol as she challenges the power of propaganda, erasures, and omissions in *Monumental Cloth, The Flag We Should Know*.

In presenting this exhibition, Sonya Clark questions: "*Why do we know the Confederate Battle Flag instead of the Confederate Truce Flag that marked surrender, brokered peace, and was a promise of reconciliation? What would it mean to the psychology of this nation if the Truce Flag replaced the flag associated with hate and white supremacy?*" By making the Truce Flag into a monumental alternative to the infamous Confederate Battle Flag and its pervasive divisiveness, Clark instigates a role reversal and aims to correct a historical imbalance.

The exhibition will feature five installations across two floors of gallery space. *Monumental* is a woven recreation of the Truce Flag measuring ten times its original size at 15 x 30 feet. *Many* is an adjacent installation of 100 true-to-scale replicas – woven by FWM Studio staff using traditional methods and historically accurate dyes – of the original (in the collection of the Smithsonian Museum of American History). *Propaganda*, a text installation, will present an exhaustive list of commercially available items featuring the Confederate Battle Flag, including hats, bumper stickers, towels, and bikinis.

Through a duo of participatory installations titled *Reconstruction Exercise* and *Lesson Plan (Confederate Truce Flag)*, visitors will come to know and understand the Truce Flag by weaving replicas and making rubbings of its texture. Clark will also activate the gallery with a public performance – *Reversals* – on Saturday, March 30. Using a dishcloth commercially printed with the Battle Flag symbol, the artist will clean a dusty floor to reveal text from the Preamble to the Declaration of Independence. Additional public programs – some organized in collaboration with the African American Museum in Philadelphia, Monument Lab, and other local institutions – will allow audiences to engage with themes related to the exhibition on a deeper level. In the fall of 2019, FWM will publish an illustrated catalogue for *Monumental Cloth, The Flag We Should Know*.

The Fabric Workshop and Museum is housed in a former flag factory, a particularly fitting place to ask questions about the symbolic power cloth can hold in the consciousness of our nation. FWM's Executive Director, Susan Lubowsky Talbott, emphasizes the exhibition's importance amidst our current political and cultural climate: "*Race is a driving issue in America, particularly at this moment in our history. Sonya Clark's show gets at the core of why the cultural symbols we stand behind matter.*" *Monumental Cloth, The Flag We Should Know* is a timely catalyst for dialogue about the scars of the Confederacy and America's ability to acknowledge and reckon with racial injustice.

The exhibition at FWM will coincide with *Sonya Clark: Self-Evident*, on view at the African American Museum in Philadelphia (May 25 – September 8, 2019).

Support for *Sonya Clark: Monumental Cloth, The Flag We Should Know* is provided by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Amherst College, Agnes Gund, the National Endowment for the Arts, Goya Contemporary Gallery & Goya-Girl Press, Rotasa Fund, John Meyerhoff, M.D. and Lenel Srochi-Meyerhoff, and Judith S. Weisman. Looms generously donated by the following: Craft + Materials Studies at The University of the Arts; Fibers & Material Studies at Tyler School of Art, Temple University; Textile Design at Jefferson (Philadelphia University + Thomas Jefferson University) School of Design and Engineering; and Becky Flax.

## **About the Artist**

*Monumental Cloth, The Flag We Should Know* is the culmination of Sonya Clark's residency at The Fabric Workshop and Museum, as well as a homecoming of sorts. The artist began her career as an Apprentice at FWM in 1993. Since that time, she has received numerous awards, including the James Renwick Alliance Distinguished Educator Award (2018), Anonymous Was A Woman Award (2016), ArtPrize Juried Grand Prize (co-winner, 2014), Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship (2010 and 2011), and Pollock Krasner award, among others. Clark's work has been exhibited in over 350 museums and galleries throughout the world. For 12 years, she served as a professor and chair of the Department of Craft and Material Studies at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Richmond, Virginia, and is currently Professor of Art and the History of Art at Amherst College where she received an honorary doctorate in 2015. Deeply committed to the field of craft, Clark has also served on the board of the American Craft Council (Minneapolis, MN), Textile Museum (Washington, DC), and Haystack Mountain School of Crafts (Deer Isle, ME).

## **About the Fabric Workshop and Museum**

Founded in 1977, FWM both makes and presents, encouraging artists to experiment with new materials and new media in a veritable living laboratory. Through its renowned Artist-in-Residence (AIR) Program, FWM collaborates with artists to expand their practices, while documenting the course of artistic production from inspiration to realization. FWM presents large scale exhibitions, installations, and performative work, utilizing innovative fiber and other media. Today, FWM is the only US institution devoted to creating work in textile and new media in collaboration with some of the most significant artists of our time.

Major support of FWM is provided by the Marion Boulton “Kippy” Stroud Foundation. FWM receives state art funding support through a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. Additional support is provided by the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, Agnes Gund, and the Board of Directors and Members of The Fabric Workshop and Museum.

###

### Media Contacts

For further information, images and interviews, please refer to the following contacts:

David Simantov

Blue Medium, Inc.

Tel: +1-212-675-1800

[david@bluemedium.com](mailto:david@bluemedium.com)

Philadelphia-based inquiries:

Erin Sweeny

FWM Communications

Tel: 215-561-888 x224

[erin@fabricworkshopandmuseum.org](mailto:erin@fabricworkshopandmuseum.org)