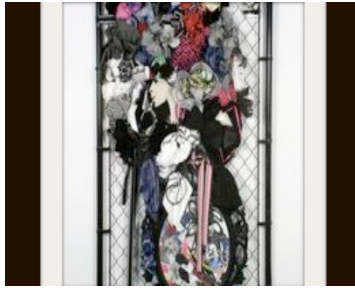


Shinique Smith exhibit in Los Angeles offers students more than a glimpse of art

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"this year's girl" by Shinique Smith (2009) Clothing, fabric, rope, ribbon, chain-link gate, spray paint, frame, and collage (74 x 39 x 9 inches)

It's been said, "One man's trash is another man's treasure".

But artist Shinique Smith adds new meaning to this idiom.

She's been known to take "trash" and transform it into art.

Smith's newest work will be part of a Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) exhibition entitled "Shinique Smith: Firsthand", which opens on February 9 at the Charles White Elementary School Art Gallery in Los Angeles. Also included in the exhibit will be several exclusive items from LACMA's Costume and Textiles Department, which were coordinated and selected by Smith; as well, the artwork of nearly one hundred students from Charles White Elementary School will also be on display.

Smith, a New York-based artist whose artwork has been exhibited throughout the U.S. and Europe, began her work with LACMA's *Art Programs with the Community: LACMA On-Site* last September. Its purpose is to provide art programs and materials to local schools, libraries, and community organizations, which it has successfully been doing since 2006.

When Smith began working with the students at Charles White, she quickly became a mentor--and inspiration--for the children, helping them to discover that art really can extend far beyond the canvas.

Smith's own artistic creations are seldom confined to a two-dimensional, flat, conventional surface. More than a decade ago, she gained recognition for her unusual sculptures in which she often used secondhand clothes and other discards. So too, earlier in her career, she was busy creating unique fabric collages.

Her interest in fabric and textures can rightly be traced to her early years as a child growing up in Baltimore. Her mother was a designer and style magazine editor, so Smith had the opportunity to meet well-known designers; visiting fabric stores became an enjoyable pastime.

In choosing the work of designers Geoffrey Beene and Bill Blass for this exhibit, Smith remembered how they had served as an inspiration to her when she was a child.

As for her two newest artworks "Bright Matter" and "This was Something We Shared (For Vernissa)", which will be unveiled at this exhibit, she credits Yves Saint Laurent as being one influence...and her visits to MacArthur Park as another.

For some people, the connection between the two may seem vague. Yet, Smith will tell you that inspiration can be found everywhere and anywhere.

In fact, that was one of the tenets of LACMA's educational project at Charles White.

After Smith's initial visit to the school last fall, over the next several months, students attended a series of art workshops. With the assistance of program facilitators Sarah Jesse, Eidelriz Senga and Roseanne Kleinerman, the youngsters were encouraged to discover how things in their everyday lives could be sources of beauty and components of art.

The results of the children's quest were thoroughly creative and, at times, far-reaching, as when one boy showed his enthusiasm for an empty, plastic B-B-Q sauce bottle, recalled Jesse.

Over time, as they continued to explore, the children couldn't help but discover a variety of artistic elements, including textures and shapes, color and space...and perhaps the most important discovery of all--the artists within themselves.

("Shinique Smith: Firsthand" opens on Saturday, February 9, from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at Charles White Elementary School Gallery, 2401 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles 90057. Admission is free. (This will also be a "Family Day" when the gallery will conduct family-friendly tours, and visitors will have the opportunity to participate in a hands-on art workshop and a scavenger hunt.)

The exhibit will run thru June 8, and is open Thursdays and Fridays from 2:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. and every second Saturday of the month from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

(As well, the exhibit may be visited from June 9-July 19, by appointment only. Contact esenga@lacma.org to make arrangements.)