

For immediate release

Contact:
Holly McCullough
hmccullough@restonarts.org
703.471.9242

BEAD

January 15 – February 28, 2015

Reston, VA: The Greater Reston Arts Center is pleased to present *BEAD*, an exhibition exploring the use of beads in contemporary mixed-media art. Featuring fifteen talented artists drawn from around the country, *BEAD* explores the surprising and compelling ways in which contemporary artists are incorporating beads into their work. A corollary to the STITCH exhibition mounted at GRACE in January 2014, *BEAD* features artists Chris Allen, Paulette Baron, Ingrid Bernhardt, Karin Birch, David Chatt, Sonya Clark, Gail Gorlitzz, Nancy Terry Hooten, Mary Ann Lomonaco, Lindsay Obermeyer, Joyce Scott, Sherry Simms, Rebecca Starry, Teresa Sullivan, and Sandra Wilcoxon.

For centuries, in cultures around the world, beads have been used for purposes ranging from the adornment of clothing, jewelry, and ceremonial objects; to prayer and meditation in spiritual aids such as the Catholic rosary or Buddhist prayer beads; to, more sinisterly, currency as “trade beads” used to acquire goods and slaves in Africa and elsewhere. Contemporary artists have considerably expanded the traditional applications of beading, utilizing it as a multi-purpose creative medium and building upon its historical associations. *BEAD* features objects ranging from jewelry that mimics natural forms or incorporates live ammunition; to sculptural assemblages mixing beads with materials such as hand-blown glass, animal skulls, and repurposed mops; to two- and three-dimensional works exploring heady themes including identity, gender, race, and nature.

Legendary beader **Joyce Scott** of Baltimore contributes works from her provocative “Mammy” series, exploring the historical reality and lingering stereotypes associated with domestic servitude. Other works by Scott investigate interracial and gender relationships, and reveal her inventive approach to beadwork, blending beads with blown and fused glass, metal, ceramic objects, and even vintage photography. Virginia Commonwealth University professor **Sonya**

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Clark produces multi-part beaded compositions charged with racial and social commentary. Clark's repeated hand imagery was conceived as a tribute to her grandmother, who taught her to sew, and to all her ancestors who worked with their hands. Olympia, Washington-based **Teresa Sullivan** utilizes beads—traditionally considered “women’s work”—to champion a vintage comic-book heroine and engage in social commentary. Skilled at creating sculptural figures entirely from beads, Sullivan’s work reveals her self-confessed love of the surreal and irreverent.

Nature is the clear inspiration in other works. **Sandra Wilcoxon** of Illinois creates elaborate beaded adornments for a variety of animal skulls, embellishing what she considers to be natural sculptures, and honoring the spirit of the animal in the process. In her *Visible Soul* series, **Chris Allen** of Minnesota stitches beaded “skins” for lake rocks, creating fetish-like objects representing the relationship between body and soul. **Gail Gorlitz** of Washington, DC, encrusts repurposed wire structures with thousands of beads to create abstract but strangely lifelike objects, recalling exotic marine organisms. Fellow Maryland resident **Paulette Baron** also draws upon organic imagery, contributing a lavish necklace resembling foliate, autumnal lichens.

Other artists present works that explore heritage and personal experience. **David Chatt** of Penland, North Carolina, presents two remarkable works conceived as still-life tributes to his mother and father. The former is composed of ordinary kitchen objects, veiled, like a memory, in a hand-stitched covering of white beads. Its companion piece features three decades worth of actual letters from the artist’s father, contained, but not hidden, within a beaded openwork “box.” **Nancy Terry Hooten** of Savannah, Georgia, exhibits a fearless work revealing her own painful experience as a battered spouse, in addition to pieces exploring literary texts and narratives surrounding her ancestors. **Karin Birch** of Brunswick, Maryland, displays compelling stitched and beaded abstract compositions, inspired by life experience and introspective themes of faith, love, and loss. Finally, **Lindsay Obermeyer** of St. Louis, Missouri, presents work from her *Chirurgi* series, examining the intersections between medical surgery and creative handicraft. The fleshy pinks and shimmering beads dominating Obermeyer’s six hand-stitched compositions resolve into depictions of leucocytes, or white blood cells, representing the biological warriors in the artist’s own personal struggle with cancer.

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Some artists have taken the history of beading itself as inspiration, rethinking objects historically associated with beadwork. Directly inspired by historical works in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, **Mary Ann Lomonaco** of New York utilizes common mop heads to create elaborate “headdresses.” Her repurposed mops are anchored by beaded patterns and tubular forms, resulting in commanding objects that blend ceremonial applications of beading with 21st-century appropriation and repurposing. **Sherry Simms**, a professor at the University of Akron in Ohio, examines the link between beads and adornment in her *Excessive Ornamentation* installation, featuring a “necklace” of huge beads, each encrusted in ornate materials and patterns. **Rebecca Starry** of Alaska challenges the benign nature of jewelry, creating pieces that juxtapose the lavish and the lethal. Her *Dangerous Goods* series features elaborately beaded collars containing live ammunition and a cuff incorporating razor blades. **Ingrid Bernhardt** of Richmond, Virginia, produces wearable objects contained within intricate, geometric cases featuring multiple complex folds and panels, lending an element of discovery and revelation to her work.

BEAD will run January 15 – February 28, 2015 at the gallery, located in Reston Town Center. Gallery hours are 11am - 5pm Tuesday through Saturday. GRACE is always free and open to the public.

Image credits:

David Chatt, *If She Knew You Were Coming*, 2015, glass beads, thread, found objects, 29 x 33 x 15 inches. Photo credit: Dana Moore

Joyce J. Scott, *Celadon II*, 2010, blown, fused and flame worked glass, glass beadwork, thread, wire, 30 x 10 x 10 inches. Courtesy of Goya Contemporary, Baltimore

Sonya Clark, *Touch*, 2002, dimensions variable.

Lindsay Obermeyer, *Leucocyte 5*, 2004, bead embroidery, 18 inches diameter

More images available upon request

For more information please visit www.restonarts.org

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 11am – 5pm

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