



Jayson Musson, *Flag for an Imaginary Country*, 2023, cotton, cotton batting, thread, 57 × 74½ in (144.8 × 189.2 cm)

## Jayson Musson: Allegory of the Veil

March 21 – May 23, 2024

Opening reception, March 21, 6–8pm

In *Allegory of the Veil* Jayson Musson debuts his latest body of work—quilts. A multidisciplinary artist working across, performance, painting, and fiber, Musson upends dominant art histories—sometimes with acerbic humor, at other times with reserved sophistication—to comment on contemporary cultural life. Musson explores the handmade nature of the quilt as an object imbued with cultural and personal memory. Though Musson’s quilts resemble wall-based painting and modernist abstraction in their elegant simplicity, Musson underscores the quilt’s inherent distinction. According to the artist, quilts have an “enduring dialogue with the human body, an invitation toward physical embrace that is starkly different than the retinal and cerebral calling of painting.” Musson sees the quilt as an object of protection originating from deep community and familial traditions. Quilt stitching is a form of drawing and mark making and also as evidence of time passing—concentric stitches resemble tree rings, an index of growth and time.

The improvisational sensibility, minimal geometries, and bulging and swerving quasi-rectilinear shapes of Musson’s quilts bring to mind the Black women’s quilts of Gee’s Bend, Alabama. Descendants of plantation slaves who originally worked Joseph Gee’s land, the women of this isolated rural hamlet have been making quilts since the 19th century. Originally created for warmth in unheated shacks, in recent times the quilts have been embraced as art. They are now considered by art historians, curators, and collectors as stellar examples of folk abstraction, a kind of parallel modernism to the dominant narrative.

Musson is no stranger to playing off of these art historical/folk cultural feedback loops. His Coogi series, presented as stretched canvas “paintings” made from re-combined elements of the renowned Australian-designed sweaters, shines light on Black American cultural memory and nostalgia (Coogi was worn by 1990s hip-hop artists and their fans). The gesture of presenting kitsch garments as fine art investigates the idealization of a 1990s past while wryly suggesting “heroic” Abstract Expressionist and Aboriginal dream paintings, the latter from which the Coogi brand liberally borrows.

According to Musson, while Coogi signified the social currency of the individual within a consumerist framework, the quilt has a more community-oriented sensibility. Here, as Musson explains, “supportive social units, whether they be families of blood, or communities of shared interest, come together to become a bulwark against the many annihilating forces of today’s world that seek to stamp out the refuges of humanity that are built by human hand and heart.”

Jayson Musson has had solo exhibitions at Salon 94, New York; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Fleisher/Ollman, Marginal Utility, and Space 1026, all in Philadelphia; and Zidoun Bossuyt, Luxembourg.

Musson's video installation *His History of Art*, debuted at the Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia in 2022 and traveled to H & R Block Artspace, Kansas City Art Institute, MO and Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, OH. He has been featured in numerous group exhibitions at venues including Perrotin, Paris, France; Museum Leuven, Leuven, Belgium; Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ; Pera Museum, Istanbul, Turkey; Jeffrey Deitch, Inc., NY; Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; Postmasters, New York; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; West Galeria, Den Haag, The Netherlands; Grimmuseum, Berlin, Germany; Fleisher/Ollman, Philadelphia; Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; and Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center, OH, among others. Musson received his BFA from the University of the Arts, Philadelphia in 2002 and his MFA from the University of Pennsylvania in 2011. He attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2011. His work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; and the Mudam, the Contemporary Art Museum of Luxembourg.