



COLIN QUASHIE ART



*“Quashie is a nationally significant
artist that happens to live in
Charleston. I think his work offers a
scathing critique of America. His voice
is strong, his ideas provocative, and
his message - essential.”*

- Susan Cohen, Charleston City Paper



STATEMENT :

"My art is an ode to chronic annoyance - an unapologetic response designed to evoke and provoke. It lives somewhere between comedy, tragedy, satire, and cynicism and is as visually diverse as the audiences it aggravates or agrees with."

B I O G R A P H Y : Colin Quashie was born in London, England, in 1963 and grew up in the West Indies and Bahamas. His family emigrated to the United States in 1970 and settled in Daytona Beach, Florida. A childhood pursuit, art ignited into a passion after a stint in the Navy as a submariner, after which, he settled in Charleston, SC. A self-taught artist, his lifelong fascination with the efficient messaging of advertising shaped his creative journey. Motivated by a desire to address social issues, his art became the conduit and was described as *"...current as yesterday's headlines, bold and brash like rap music, the equivalent of a three-second sound byte; quick, easy, and to the point."*

Frustrated after a series of censored exhibitions, in 1996 he took a hiatus from art, commuted to Los Angeles, and became a sketch comedy writer. After several years, six television shows and an Emmy, he returned to art fully - his craft honed and polished to a satirical edge. His art slowly regained traction, but exposure and sales were not enough to sustain him. He suspended art-making for a second time and, at the age of 50, went back to college and became a registered nurse. Equipped with a career, he finally had the means to pursue his art without interruption.

While living in the South provides Quashie with fertile material for his art, acceptance and exposure still elude him. Unrepresented by a commercial gallery throughout his three-decade career (only two years of which have been self-sustaining), he has achieved moderate success and is only now beginning to expand his reach. Highlights of his tumultuous and sporadic career include a residency at the McColl Center and a successful exhibition at the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art. Recent museum acquisitions by institutions such as the Greenville County Museum of Art, Ackland Museum of Art, Columbia Museum of Art, Weatherspoon Museum, and Nasher Museum of Art, among others, bolster the hope that he is heading in the right direction and will be able to continue on his creative path.

This unusual hanging sculpture is an example of the social criticism frequently incorporated into Quashie's works, which often ridicule the foibles of society with amusing originality accented by a wry sense of humor. The implication here is that eating pork is part of some subliminal need for seeking out or returning to the ancestral African homeland by Americans of African descent who are attracted to the ingestion of pork through a kind of genetically ingrained homing device. Such an assumption is idiotic, but is analogous to the absurd but standard social assumptions made daily that feed common popular cultural ideas on which stereotypes are based. Disjointed assumptions based on xenophobic ignorance of ethnic diversity feed many of the worst social problems of modern culture.

- Frank Martin



BLACK PEOPLE LOVE PORK...

Mixed Media / 32" x 66" / 2005

SLAVESHIP SARDINES

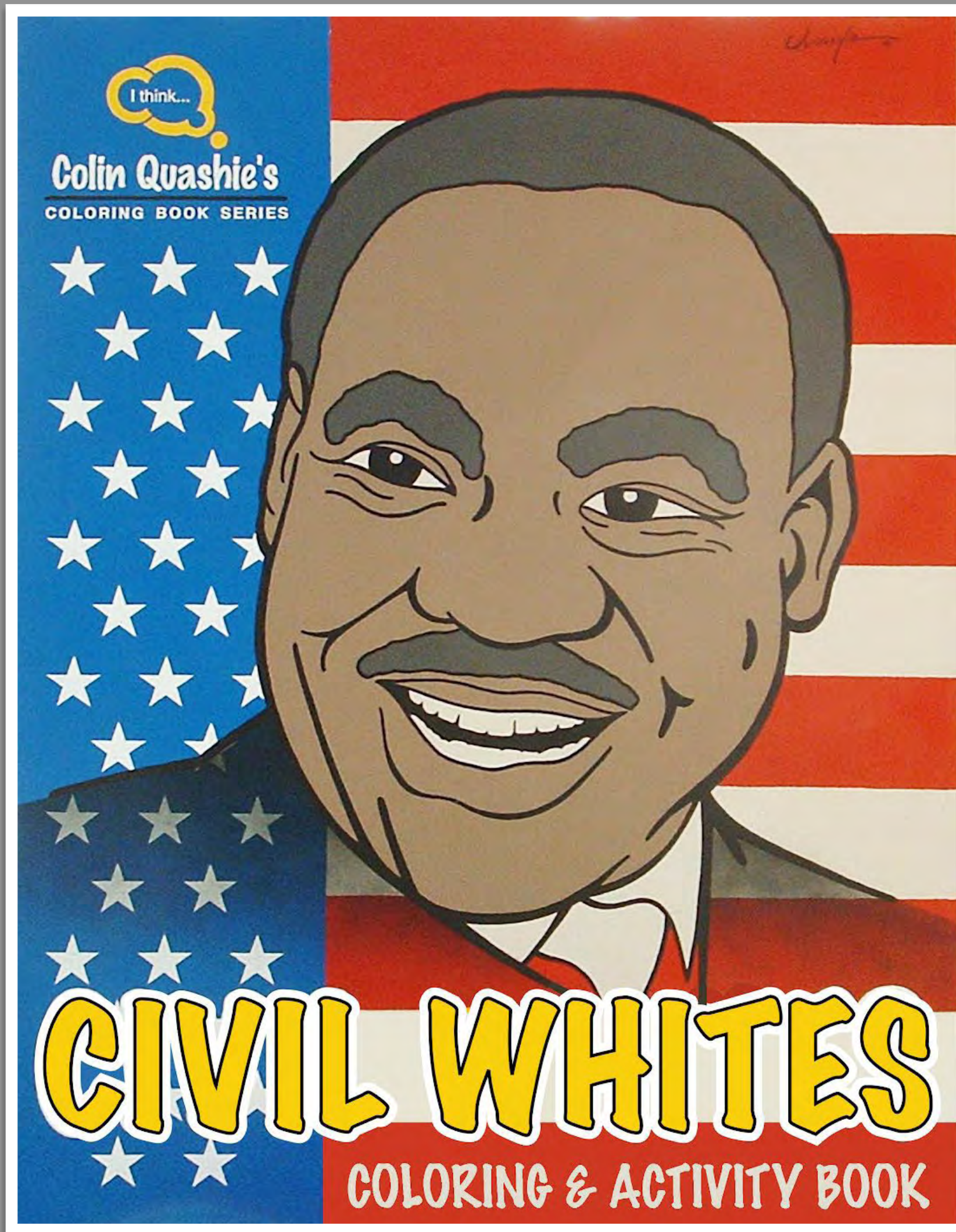
Simulated Product Packaging
Digital Printed Label on Sardine Can



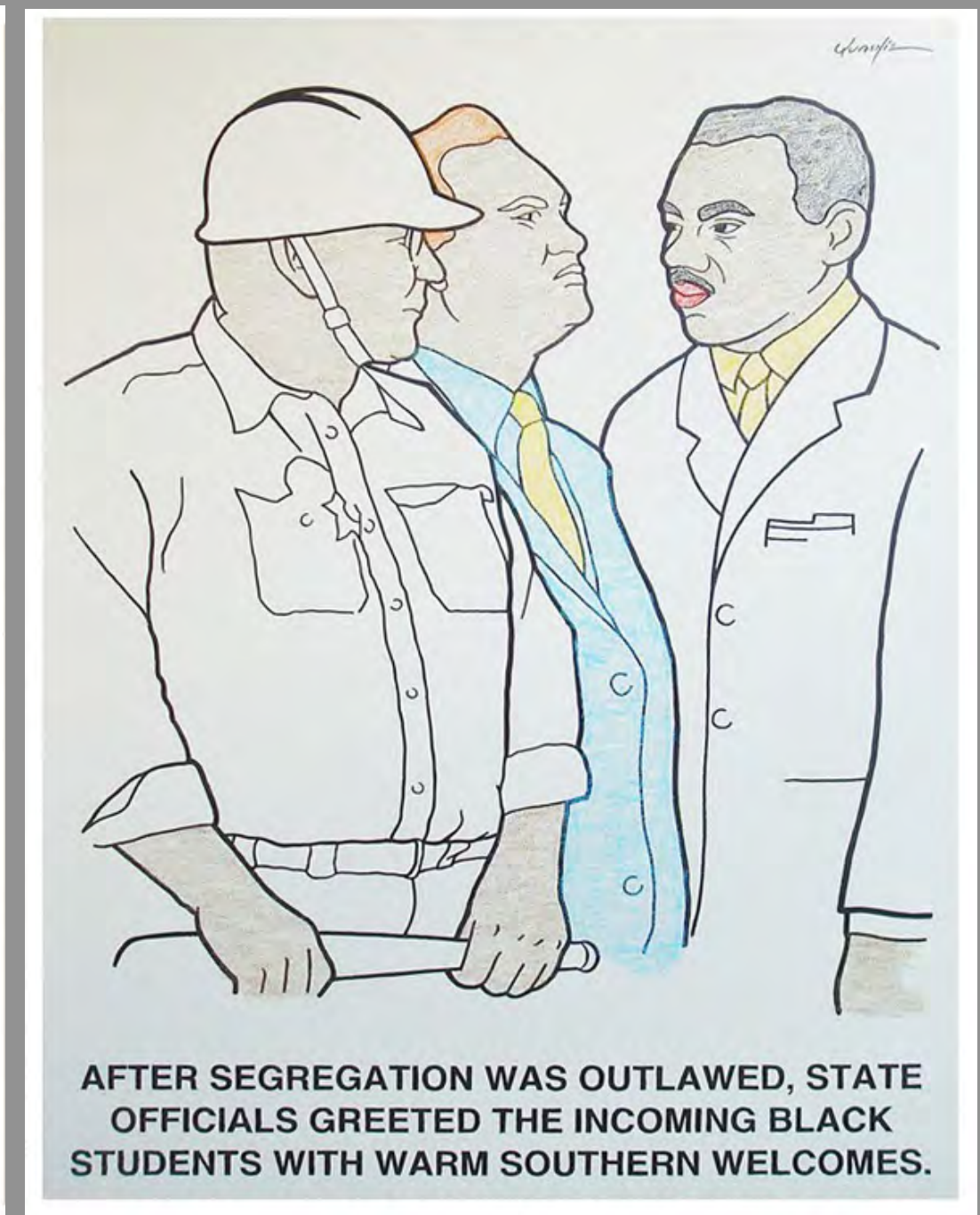
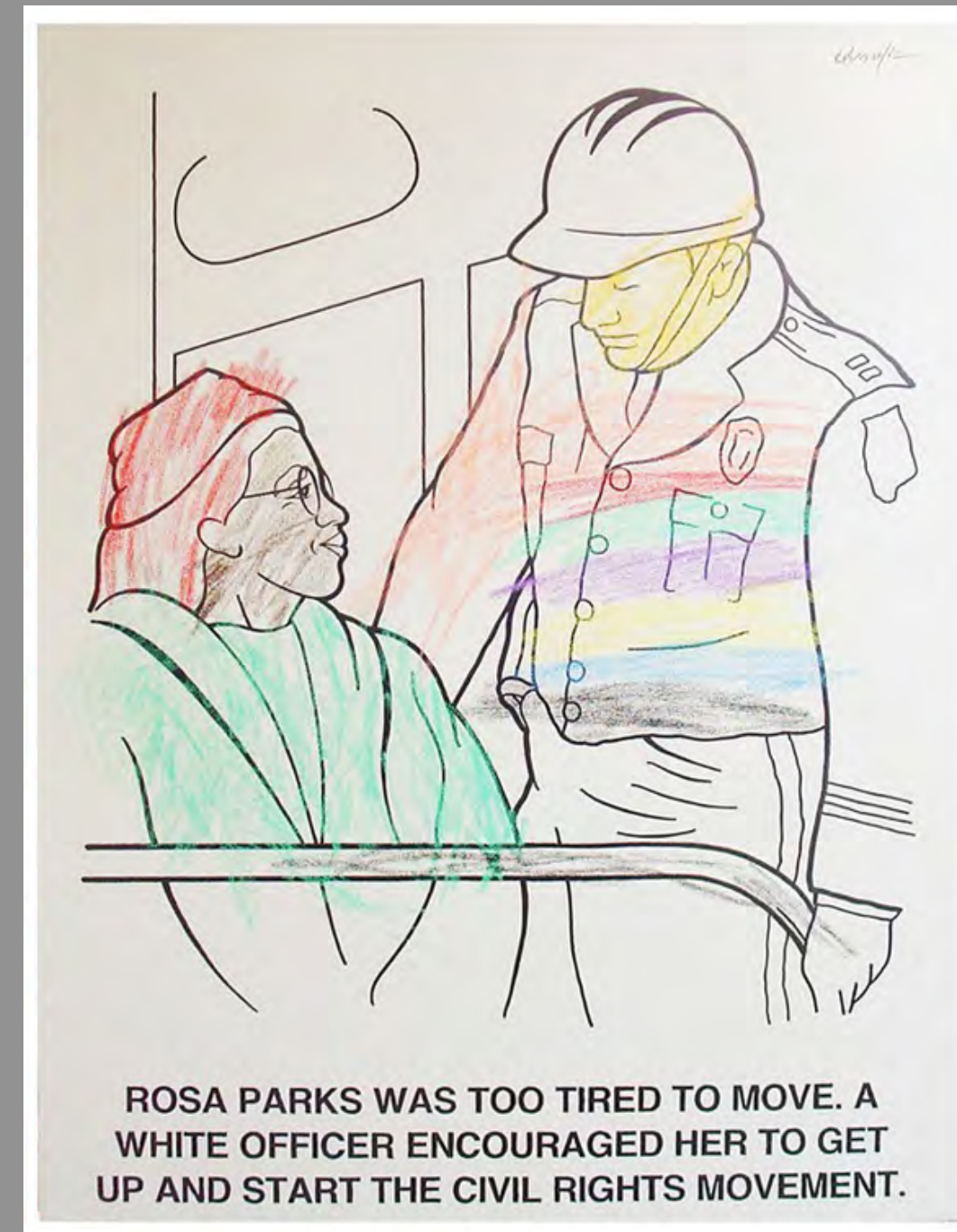
CENSORED

CIVIL WHITES COLORING & ACTIVITY BOOK

Acrylic on Birch Panel / (4 of 8 panels) / 32" x 40" / 2004



In this 8-page coloring and activity book, the artist satirically portrays key moments from a tumultuous era, emphasizing how adults simplify complex topics to make them palatable for children, especially those related to race throughout American history. Concurrently, there has been a resurgence of a conservative movement aiming to 'reassess' and promote a whitewashed version of American history. Many Republican state legislators are passing laws to regulate curriculum in response to the introduction of Critical Race Theory in academia. The political battle over the nation's adverse racial history has intensified and now revolves around which viewpoint will take prominence and whose voice will narrate it.



“South Carolina’s resident political artist / humorist Colin Quashie, opens his ‘Civil Whites Coloring and Activity Book’ for this show. The works are sad and shocking and funny at the same time. An artist who can engage all these emotions is rare indeed.”

- Jeffrey Day, *The State*

BLACK AMERICAN GOTHIC

Acrylic on Canvas / 50" x 67" (Each) / 2009



Black American Gothic was inspired by Grant Wood's 'American Gothic,' which portrays the depression-era understanding of an authentic American scene. Its parallel imagery is drawn from inauthentic portrayals of black America used to market products. Characters like Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Rastus (the black mascot on the Cream of Wheat box) represent historical stereotypes: the sassy plantation nanny, her emasculated husband, and unnamed black men relegated to positions of service. These depictions reflect a nostalgic vision of black America that many Americans have grown comfortable with and accepted as part of their

reality. Through crafty marketing by Madison Avenue, these representations transcended their lower-class status and were placed in influential positions on grocery store shelves. The artist's inclusion of prominent black Americans like Oprah Winfrey, Colin Powell, and Tiger Woods was intended to question the concept of transcendence. Much like the generic images they replaced on the packaging, this group of persuasive black Americans has transcended their race and is now viewed as influential spokespeople for products, ideologies, and agendas with the same, if not greater, level of acceptance and trust."

“With wit and passion, Quashie uses the language of media marketing to dissect stereotypical views of cultural relationships and expose them as separatist constructs. He uses the seduction promised by contemporary advertising to lure the viewer into a conversation that can be haunting in the depth of the issues raised.”

- Mary Bentz-Gilkerson,
*The Post Modern Sense of Regionalism:
A Shift of Consciousness*



SWEET JESUS

Acrylic and Oil on Canvas
66" x 96" / 2005

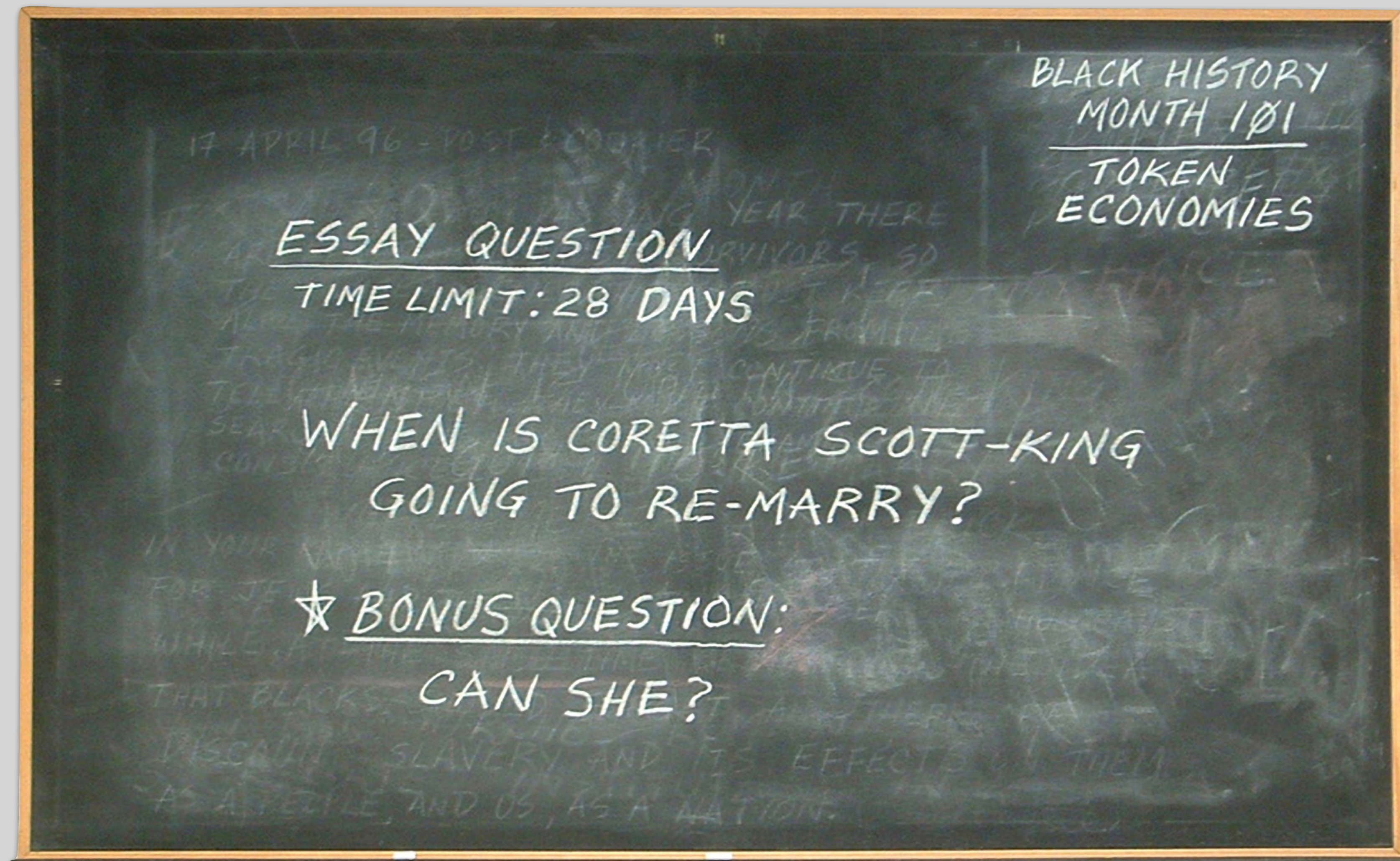
This image addresses the divide between the church and members of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as the evolution or regression of doctrinal stances on what has historically been considered taboo. With the rise of television shows like 'Will and Grace,' 'Ellen,' and, most importantly, 'Queer Eye for the Straight Guy,' LGBTQ+ characters and lifestyles have entered the mainstream of our collective consciousness, primarily through mass media consumption. This has fostered greater social acceptance, marking a subtle shift in public attitudes. However, this shift is met with an equally measured response in the form of increased political exploitation of so-called traditional American values championed by conservatives, who continue to maintain a hostile, albeit tempered, approach to the ongoing transformation. Through 'Sweet Jesus,' the artist endeavors to provide an artistic bridge connecting these disparate forces. Each teaser article was intentionally crafted to cross-pollinate conservative and liberal perspectives, employing clever wordplay to comically highlight profound issues.



‘KFC’ L A R E N C E

Simulated Product Packaging - Digitally Printed on Card Stock
Box w/ Faux Chicken and Biscuit / 3"x 3"x 6" / 2022

By his own admission, Clarence Thomas is the product of a rather stereotypical black American background. Through the application of moral strictness, due diligence, and the exploitation of system parameters (race-based quotas), he has risen through the judicial ranks and now sits on the highest court in the land. His ascendancy has been the subject of much criticism. Chosen to replace Thurgood Marshall, who, before becoming a Supreme Court Justice, had argued many cases before the high court, including the landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education*. Marshall's resume and successful legacy of activism cast a long shadow over the modest legal background of Thomas, who was, and still is, seen as inadequate - a 'snack box' compared to Marshall's complete meal. Regarded as a politically charged appointment, many believe Thomas benefited from his dark skin appearance and his conservative views. Since his appointment to the Supreme Court, he has done little to dispel those notions and, in fact, has solidified his status as a leader of the neo-conservative movement on the high court, which has voted to overturn affirmative action - a program Justice Thomas benefitted from - as well as *Roe v. Wade*, which protected abortion rights for women.



“Sloan called Quashie, “an equal opportunity critic” with “fine-tuned antenna,” a provocateur willing to pose questions and challenge both white and black communities.”

- Adam Parker, *Post and Courier*

This work operates as both a painting and a sculpture. The educational aspect of the work takes on overtones of social criticism due to the nature of the 'message' and 'question' it presents. The current message, presented in the form of an academic course assignment, carries a myriad of connotations, the most disturbing of which suggests that Mrs. King has built a career and economic market around the personal misfortune of her husband's assassination and martyrdom. The cynicism and sarcasm embedded in this question, within the context of our tabloid-oriented and profoundly materialistic culture, serve as essential tools for translating the artist's self-questioning examination of two significant cultural icons: the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his famous widow.

BLACKBORED

Installation - Chalk on Canvas / 44" x 66"

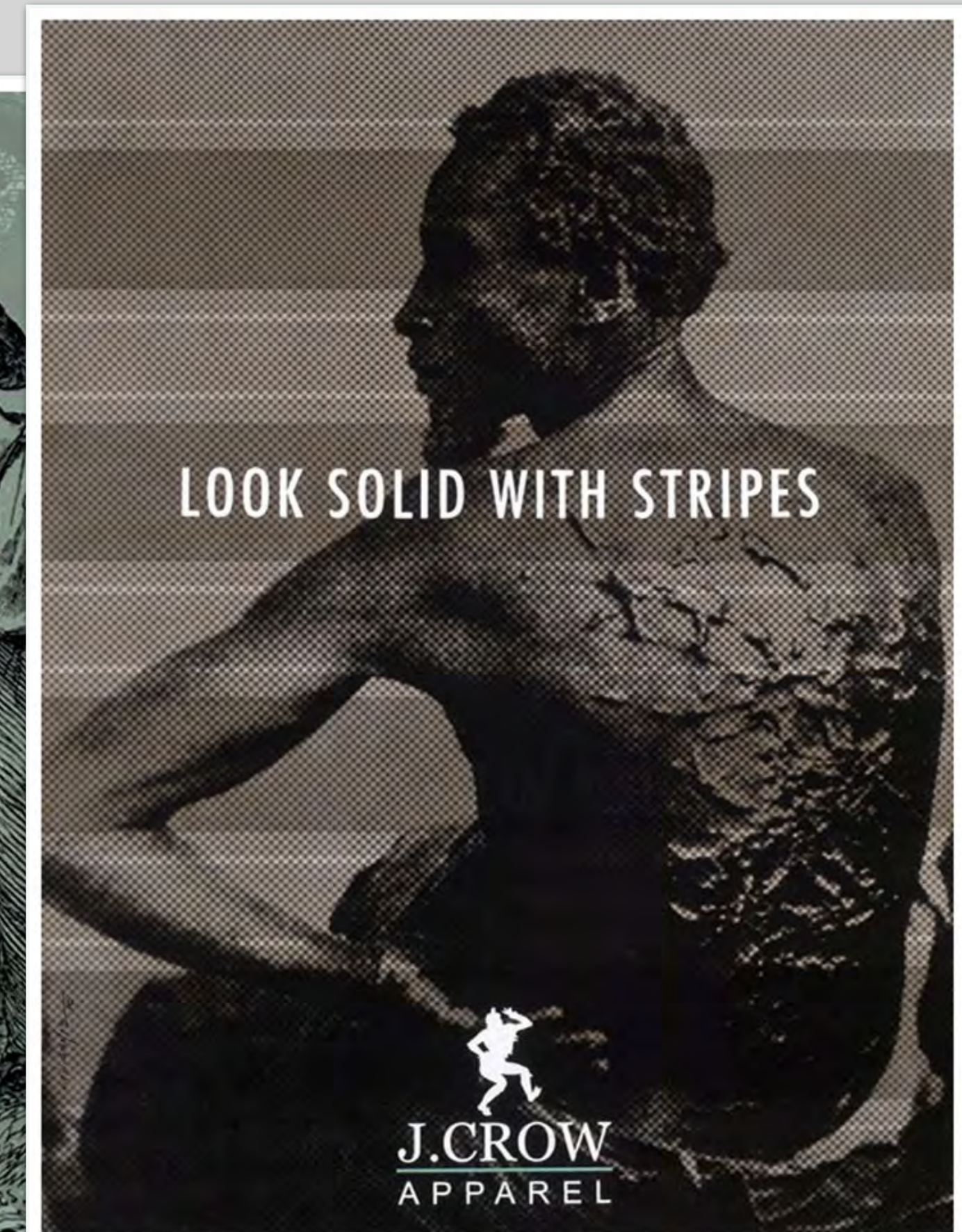
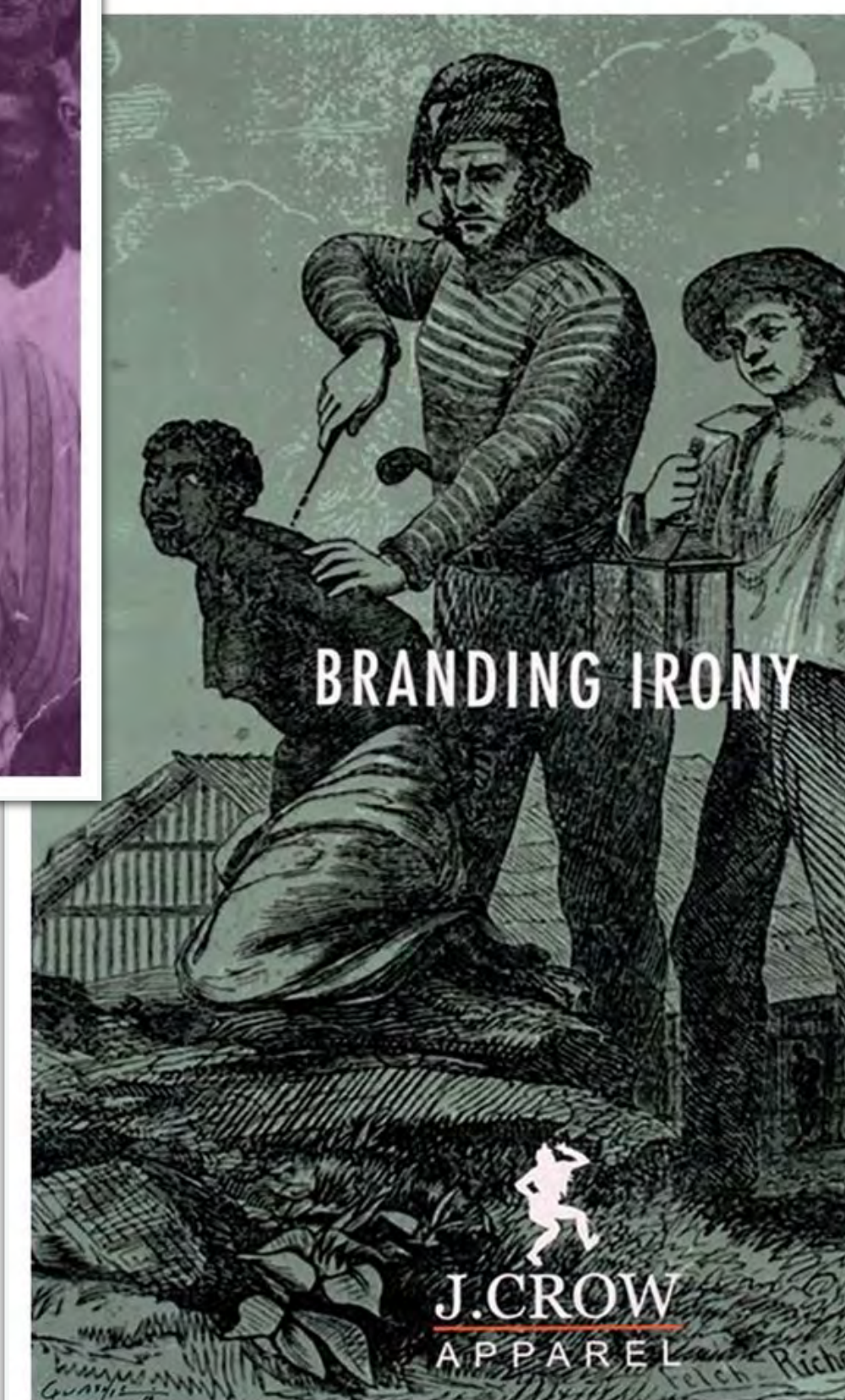
CENSORED



‘J. CROW’ AD CAMPAIGN

Acrylic and Transfer on Birch Panel / 32” x 40” (Each) / 2012

While the Confederacy during the American Civil War was not a traditional business or commercial entity, it did have elements comparable to branding, particularly in the way it promoted and represented itself in the Southern states. One of the most effective ways was via Jim Crow, a system of racial segregation and discrimination that was enforced in the Southern United States primarily from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century. ‘J. CROW,’ the fictitious Southern brand, imagines what modern-day print ads targeting segregationist audiences and promoting antebellum ideology would have looked like.



“Quashie makes commentary, particularly around issues of race, that is often so pointed and controversial that he is not exhibited as often as he should be.”

- Mary Bentz-Gilkerson, *Columbia Free Times*



‘LINKED’
SERIES (6 of 21 images)

Digital Prints / 32” x 32” (Each) / 2020

‘Rose Colored’ (Harriett Tubman)

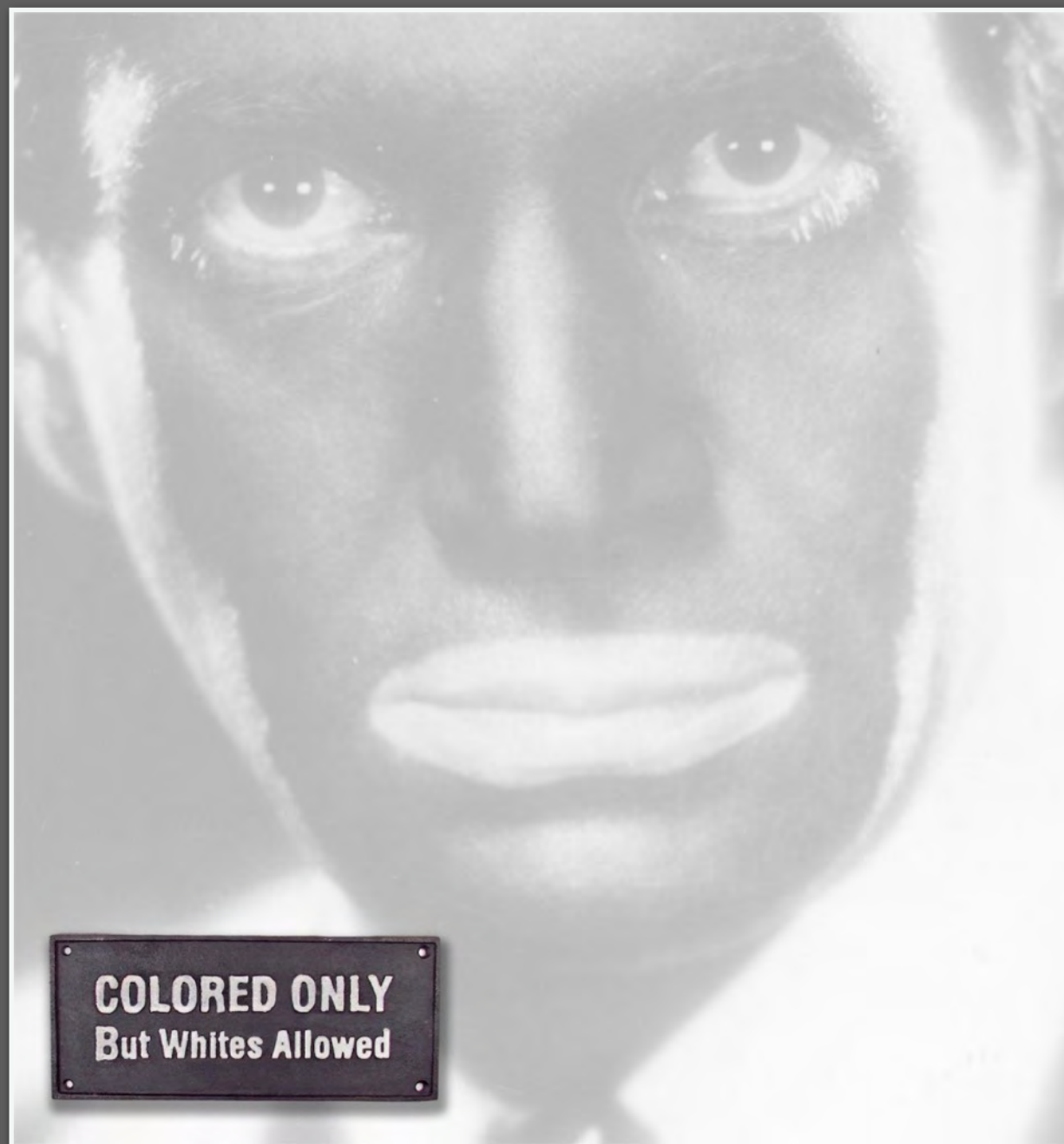
‘Shhhhackled’ (Colin Kaepernick)

‘Blactose Tolerant’ (Wet Nurse)

‘Gabriel’ (Louis Armstrong)

‘White Privilege’ (Al Jolson)

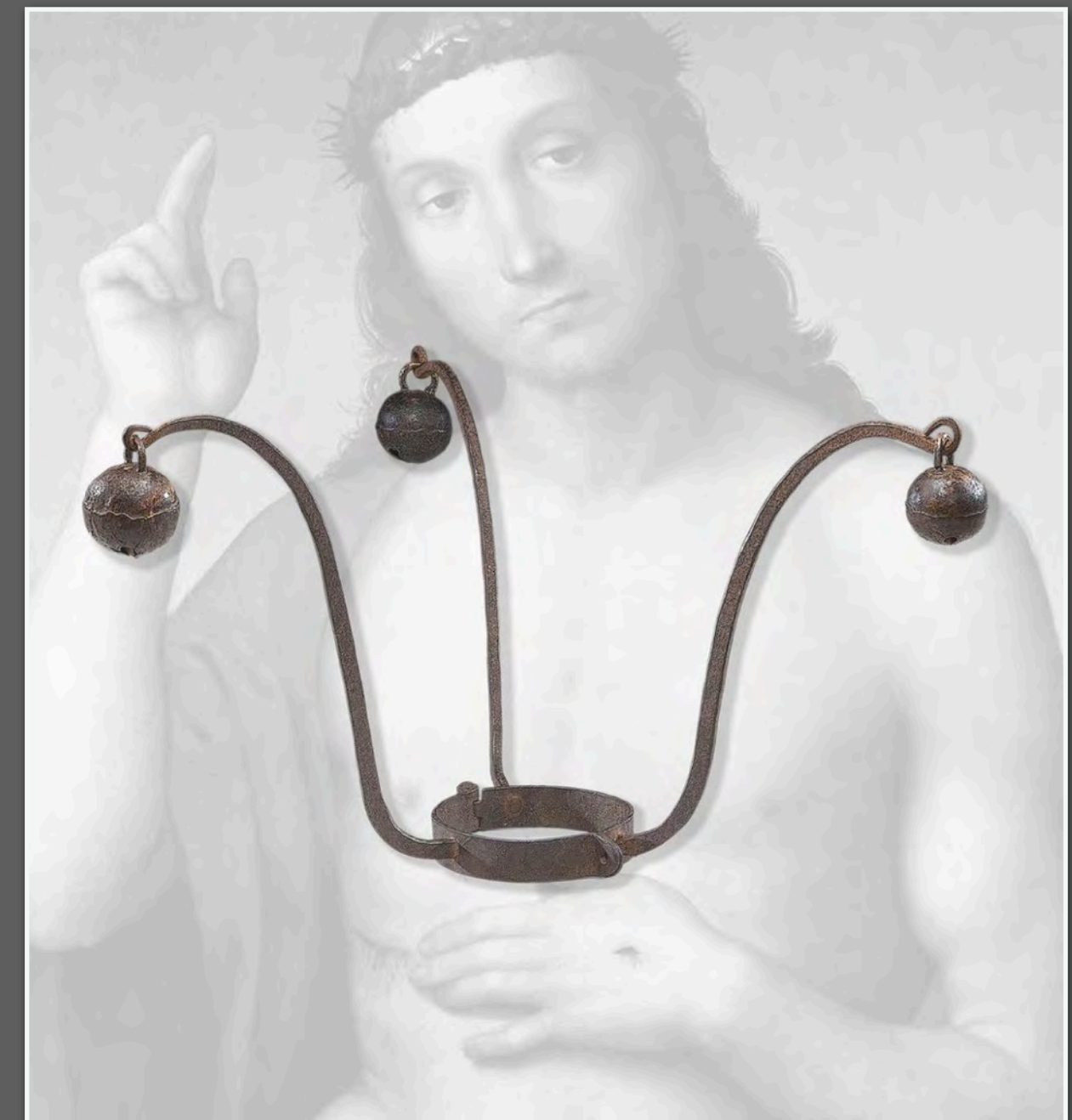
‘Our Lord and Slavior’ (Jesus Christ)



COLORED ONLY
But Whites Allowed

“Psychic pain and historic truths aren’t good for business. But artists aren’t meant to make us comfortable but to break through the frozen seas of self-satisfaction. Quashie is very good at bringing an ax to the collective un-remembering.”

- Arthur Dobrin, *Psychology Today*





INTERRACIAL SWIRL OREOS

Simulated Product Packaging - Digitally Printed on Card Stock

Snack Pack w/ Sandwich Cookies / 2" x 2" x 7.5" / 2022

More than 50 years after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down laws banning interracial marriage (*Loving v. Virginia*), a growing number of ads now feature multicultural couples with biracial children. Though controversial, these ads represent a growing media trend and are more reflective of a diverse America. Companies such as Nabisco have shown a commitment to fostering inclusivity and 'championing the idea that collectively we can help make the world a more accepting, affirming, and compassionate place.'

The Interracial Swirl OREO may be a work of fiction today, but one day soon it may become just another offering in their diverse product line.

Black People
questions \$1.00



Franklin

The Approachable
NEGRO is IN

Did you vote for Obama because he's black? Why do black men like women with big asses? What is the name of that rapper? You call each other the 'N' word, why can't I? Can you show me how to do that dance? Excuse me, do you work here? You're different - where are you from, originally?

THIS IS NUTS!

Acrylic on Canvas / 55" X 80"

Fans of the iconic 'Peanuts' cartoon were undoubtedly familiar with 'Franklin,' the only recognizable black character in the Charles Schulz comic universe.

Consequently, he would have likely suffered the fate that many African Americans face when left to represent a diverse and dynamic culture — the role of a spokesperson. In predominantly white environments, racial minorities often find themselves in situations where they are expected to not only be individuals but also ambassadors for their entire race. This burden can be both exhausting and unfair, as individuals like Franklin are forced to navigate and respond to questions and stereotypes that their white peers seldom encounter. They become the point of reference for inquiries about their culture and experiences, and sometimes, they must grapple with uncomfortable inquiries and misunderstandings that stem from ignorance or prejudice. Franklin's position as the lone black character in 'Peanuts' mirrors the isolation and responsibility that many racial minorities feel when they are one of the few non-white individuals in their social or professional circles.

“This is precisely what makes Quashie’s work so challenging, not only to the average viewer, but to many art insiders as well. His imagery is very accessible, luring the viewer into a dialogue that then turns their preconceptions upside down. Images that were associated with comfort and ease are turned around to force a sense of unease.”

- Mary Bentz-Gilkerson, *Columbia Free Times*



FRENCH TOILE, NEGRO TOIL

Fabric / Wallpaper Print
Dimensions Variable - Repeating Pattern

The classic 18th-century French fabric 'toile de Jouy' is characterized by its intricate, repeating patterns featuring pastoral scenes and romantic motifs. Its elegance and timeless appeal have made toiles enduring classics in the world of textiles and interior design. Using this particular toile pattern, the artist suggests that the lifestyle enjoyed by many European socialites was financed by the toil of African slaves. By combining the two halves of the economic trade - the romantic visage of European leisure and plantation life with the torturous reality of slavery - on a singular palette, the entire story becomes visible. The five repeating scenes illustrate the vicious cycle of acquisition, sale, discipline, domestication, and revolt/freedom.

‘OVERSEERSUCKER’

(w/ 'French Toile, Negro Toil' lining)

Fabric / Wallpaper Print

Dimensions Variable - Repeating Pattern - 2023

Seersucker, the iconic fabric of the South, is traditionally associated with the refined attire of Southern gentlemen. In a region known for its warm and humid climate, seersucker's lightweight and breathable qualities made it a practical choice, contributing to its popularity. However, the fact that seersucker symbolizes Southern white male fashion underscores the stark racial and social divides of the time. While white men comfortably wore seersucker suits, the enslaved endured brutal labor on the very plantations that sustained this Southern tradition.

Recontextualizing and rebranding seersucker as "overseersucker" by replacing its familiar lined pattern with the names of workers enslaved on plantations (in this case, the McCleod Plantation, Charleston, SC), is a powerful commentary on the historical injustices and inequalities associated with Southern slavery. This transformation challenges the romanticized notions of Southern heritage and the uncomfortable truth that luxury for some was built upon the suffering of others. It serves as a reminder that history encompasses not only the dominant culture but also the marginalized voices and experiences that have been systematically suppressed. This rebranding prompts us to reevaluate our understanding of history and question the narratives that have shaped our perception of the past.



“Someone has gone rogue, installing street signs meant to provide a bit of social commentary on Charleston’s changing racial make up. At least eight orange road signs at key entry points to Charleston’s peninsula have appeared in recent days. When asked about the signs, local artist Colin Quashie - who is known for confronting social, racial and political issues in his work, often in provocative ways - neither confirmed nor denied involvement. “At least someone is doing something about gentrification”, he said.”

- Adam Parker, Post and Courier



SIGN OF THE TIMES

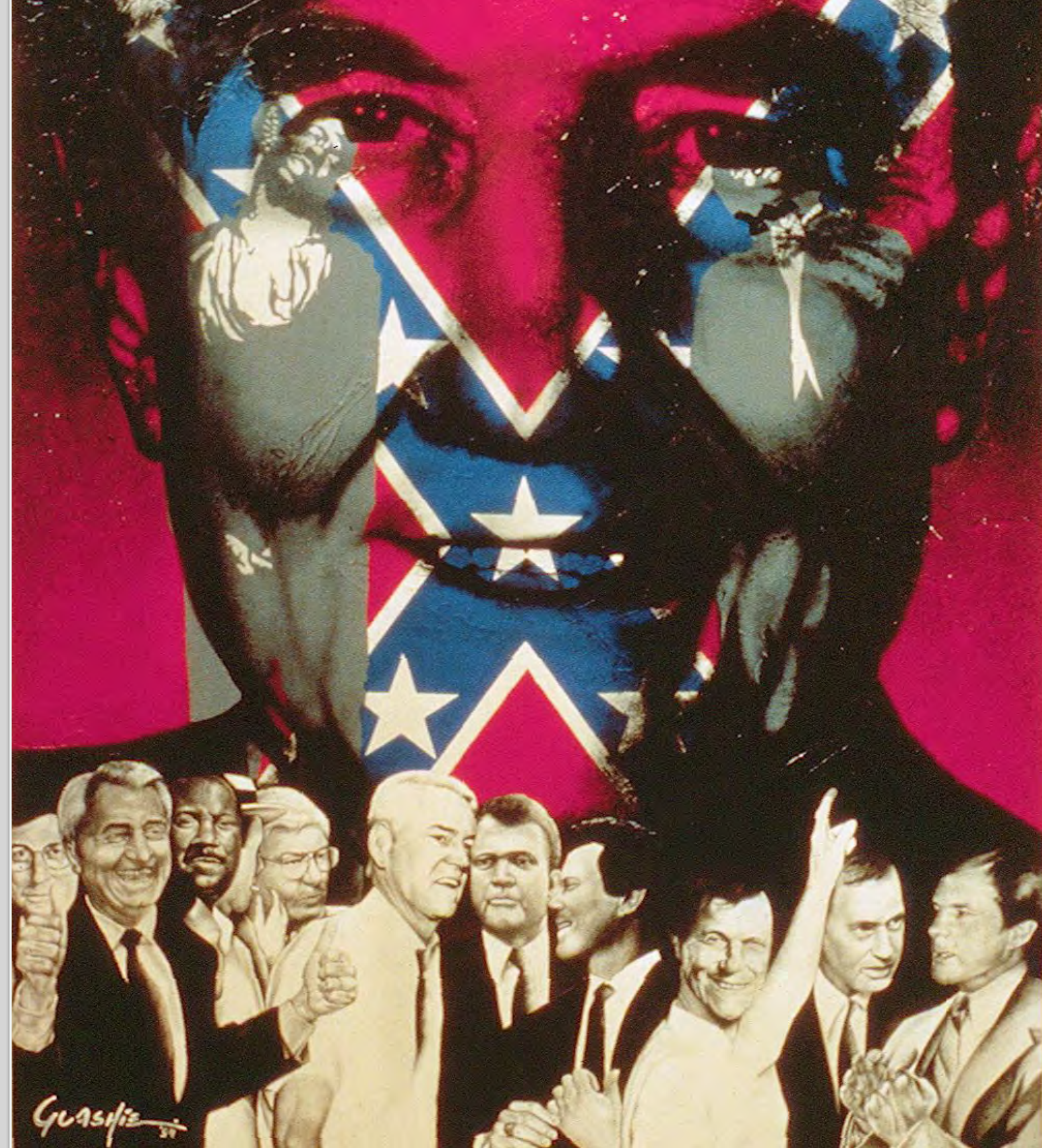
Guerrilla Art Installation
Aluminum Traffic Signs (1 of 10) / 32" x 32" / 2023



LOOKED AWAY, DIXIELAND (STROM'S SONG)

Acrylic and Oil on Canvas / 63" x 80" / 1993

This image pays homage to the power and influence of South Carolina's Republican U.S. Senator, Strom Thurmond, while also making a statement about the controversy surrounding the flying of the Confederate battle flag atop South Carolina's state capitol building. The battle flag unfurled beneath the looming portrait of Strom Thurmond, who represented the quintessential old-guard, Southern political ideals, underscores his pervasive influence within the political machinery of the state. Per the artist, "had Strom removed his support, the flag would have been removed." The inclusion of two lynched black men incorporated into Thurmond's portrait within eyesight evokes the terrorism endorsed by the Confederacy. The lynch mob consists of powerful state politicians and their supporters who advocated against the removal of the battle flag.



CENSORED

THE BLACK AMERICAN DREAM

Silkscreen on Ceramic Tile / 8" x 8" (26 tiles) / 1995

“The first message in Quashie’s series of 26 tiles from ‘The Black American Dream’ is his most painful, hypocritical and dramatic. “I want to be like the white man.” This statement in fact, implies that a black (American), is speaking (thinking), suggesting that life in imitation of his/her theoretical oppressor, is a desirable choice, a goal to be attained. Clearly, this is a result of an irrational or incomplete thought process, (or centuries of brainwashing).”

- Frank Martin, *Skepticism on the Validity of Western Values*

I want to be like the White Man.

COLORING BOOK PAGES
'LEVITRA & CIALIS' / 'MANTAN' / 'WACK'

Acrylic and Oil Pastel on Canvas
60" x 40" (Each) / 2007



Levitra and Cialis were happy! They were cast as a 'Dumb Bitch' and a 'Stupid Ho' in a rap video.



Even though it looked tasty, Mantan knew better than to eat watermelon, fried chicken or bananas in front of white people.



After the NAACP's call to reduce 'black on black' crime, Wack made it a point to only rob and kill white people.

“While other artists exploring race look at it from a societal perspective, Quashie burrows under the skin (how ironic), probing and exposing the painful internal struggle of the individual.”

- Jeffrey Day, *The State*

MALCOLM IS AMERICA

Silkscreen on Unprimed Canvas / 24" X 36" / 2004

Malcolm X's remarkable journey from a troubled past to a civil rights icon exemplifies the transformative power of redemption, self-education, and unwavering dedication. His evolution from a troubled youth marked by adversity and criminal encounters to a charismatic spokesperson for the Nation of Islam revealed his capacity for personal growth.

As Malcolm distanced himself from the Nation of Islam and embraced a more inclusive vision of civil rights, his pilgrimage to Mecca became a turning point, fostering a commitment to unity and racial equality. His legacy is defined by his relentless advocacy for justice and equality, symbolizing resilience in the face of adversity. Malcolm X's life serves as a powerful reminder that individuals can evolve, learn, and contribute to a better society, even when faced with challenging beginnings.



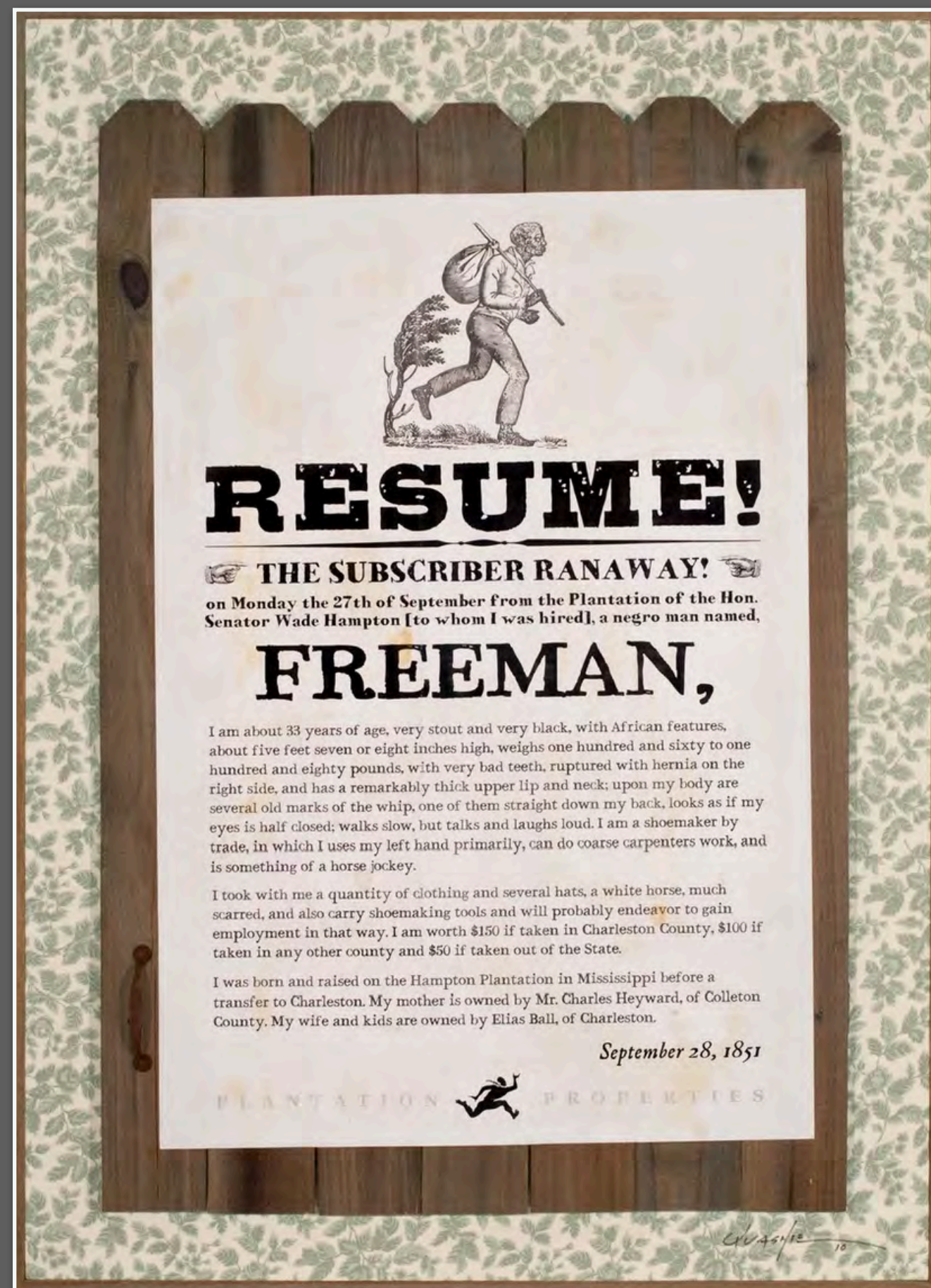


RUN, NIGGER, RUN! *(Plantation Yo-Yo)*

Silkscreen on Unprimed Canvas, 55" X 80"

The artwork depicts a runaway slave, his neck ensnared by a noose, in stark contrast to a modern African-American executive who appears enslaved by the trappings of a luxurious lifestyle, working twice as hard just to maintain their position. The artist poses a poignant question: "Has slavery truly been abolished, or has it been re-imposed by our own choices?" This piece was created in response to a concerning trend in the South where affluent housing developments incorporate 'plantation' into their names. Such names are meant to evoke a sense of Southern nostalgia, romanticizing a lifestyle often associated with serene, idyllic, and genteel images of the South. However, it is crucial to remember that for enslaved individuals, this lifestyle was a result of their forced labor. Plantations were, in reality, nothing more than forced labor camps where their suffering and meager existence sharply contrasted with their owners' privileges.

The irony lies in the fact that the enslaved endured immense hardship and uncertainty, and risked their lives to escape the plantation system. Yet today, some class-conscious African-Americans who have successfully overcome similar challenges and uncertainties aspire to live on plantations.



THE RESUME: FREEMAN

Mixed Media / 32" x 44" / 2011

While both resumes and slave reward broadsides incorporate skills and experiences, their purpose and implications are vastly different. Reward posters for runaway slaves were instruments of control and subjugation, whereas resumes are tools of self-presentation and empowerment in the context of choice in employment, representing a fundamental shift from a history marked by oppression into a society where individuals have the opportunity to shape their own destinies.

RESUME!

👉 THE SUBSCRIBER RANAWAY! 👈

on Monday the 27th of September from the Plantation of the Hon. Senator Wade Hampton [to whom I was hired], a negro man named,

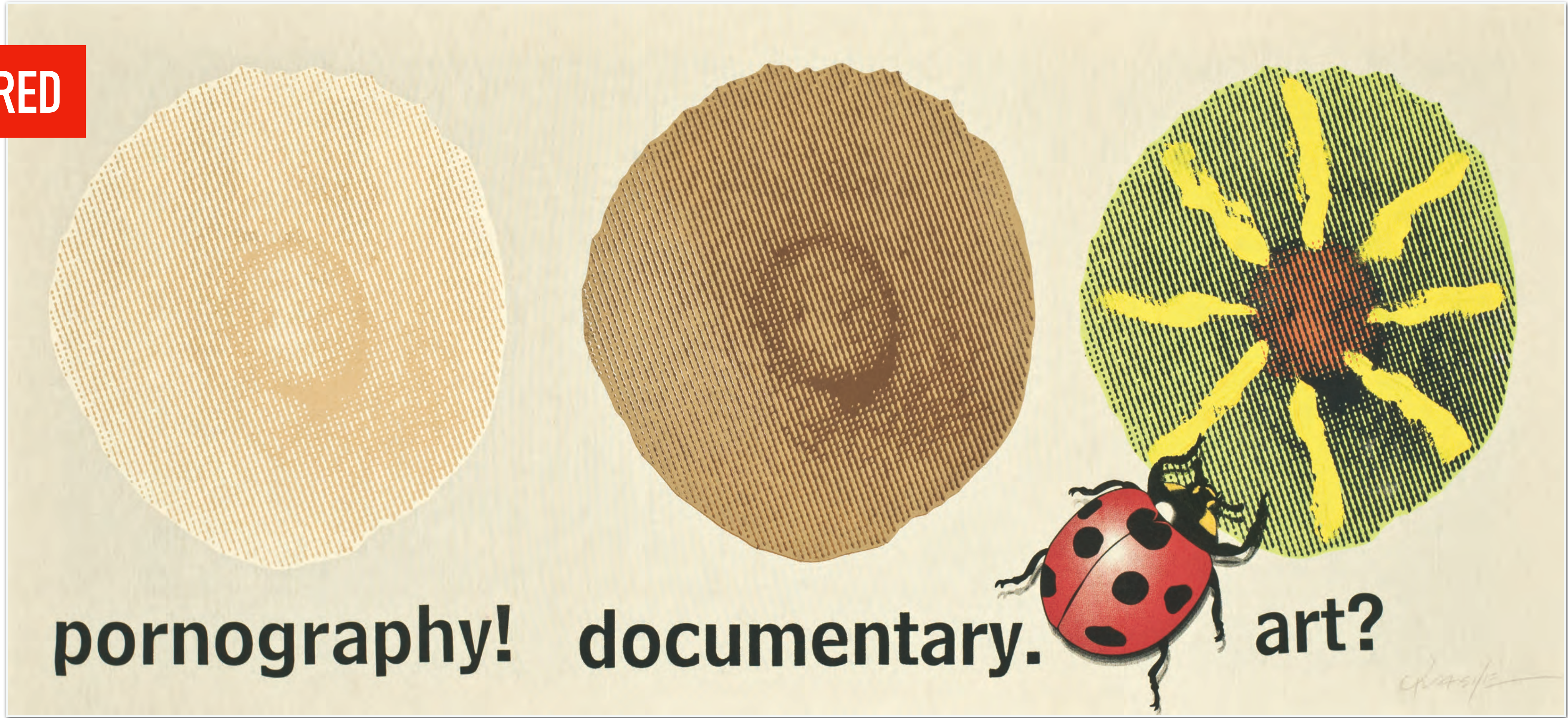
FREEMAN,

I am about 33 years of age, very stout and very black, with African features, about five feet seven or eight inches high, weighs one hundred and sixty to one hundred and eighty pounds, with very bad teeth, ruptured with hernia on the right side, and has a remarkably thick upper lip and meck; upon my body are several old marks of the whip, one of them straight down my back, looks as if my eyes is half closed; walks slow, but talks and laughs loud. I am a shoemaker by trade, in which I uses my left hand primarily, can do coarse carpenters work, and is something of a horse jockey.

I took with me a quantity of clothing and several hats, a white horse, much scarred, and also carry shoemaking tools and will probably endeavor to gain employment in that way. I am worth \$150 if taken in Charleston County, \$100 if taken in any other county and \$50 if taken out of the State.

I was born and raised on the Hampton Plantation in Mississippi before a transfer to Charleston. My mother is owned by Mr. Charles Heyward, of Colleton County. My wife and kids are owned by Elias Ball, of Charleston.

CENSORED



SUBJECTIVE PERCEPTION

Silkscreen on Unprimed Canvas / 30" x 70" / 1994

COLLABORATION # 1

(With William H. Johnson)

Oil on Canvas / 48" x 66" / 2019

I've always wondered about being a contemporary of artists who've greatly influenced my work. Could we have collaborated, and if so, what might have emerged from that partnership? What insights could I have gained? This series represents my first exploration of that possibility.

One such artist who left a lasting mark is William H. Johnson. Born in 1901, he's celebrated for vibrant depictions of American life, both urban and rural. His work spanned realism to expressionism, often delving into themes of identity and race, reflecting the African American experience in the early 20th century and inspiring artists like myself.



“Whom a country chooses to feature on its currency says something about its values and priorities. Money documents the history of the United States of America. Since enslaved Africans and African-Americans have made such vital contributions to the establishment and economic success of the country, it’s only right to acknowledge those contributions on our money.”

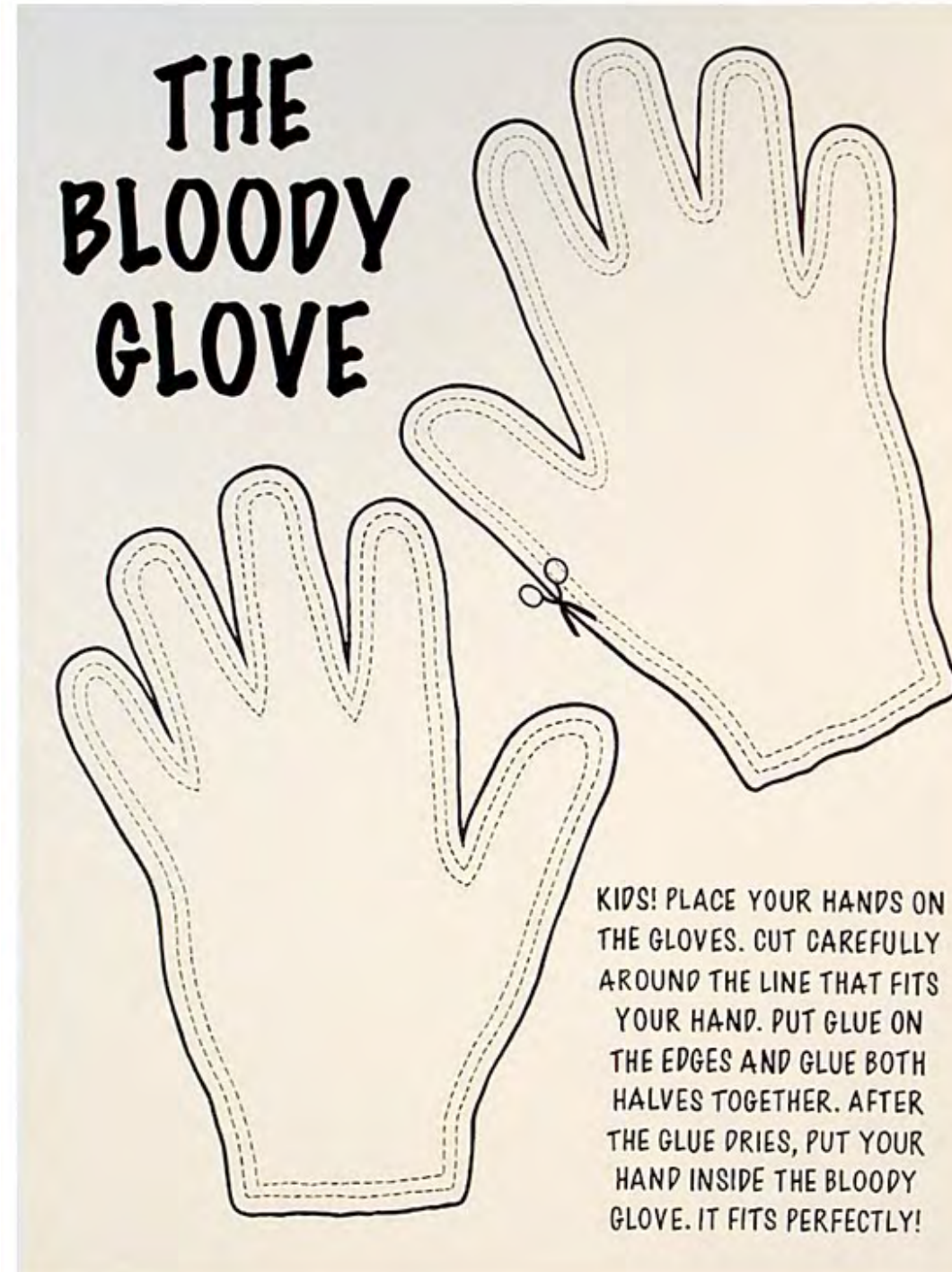
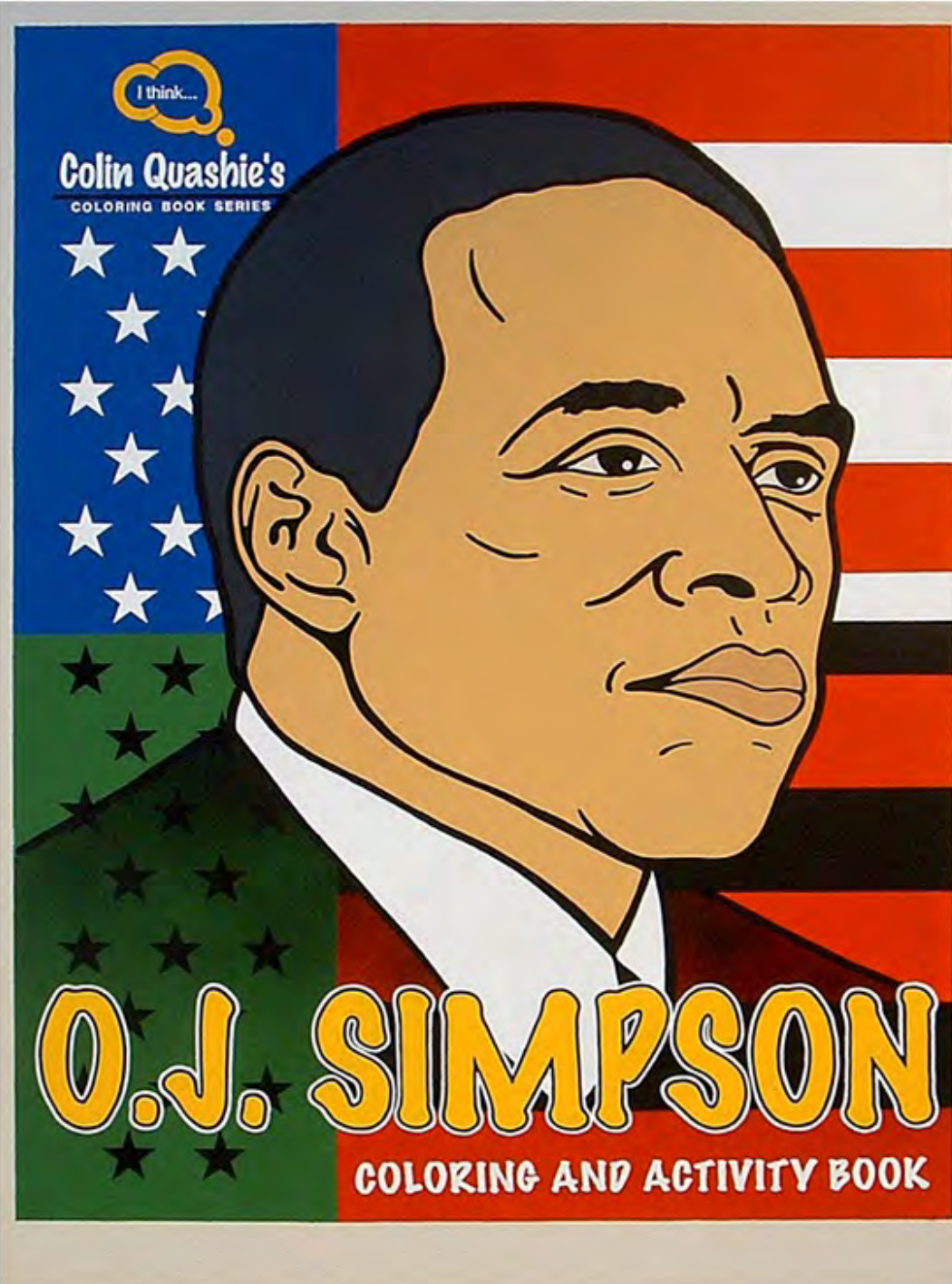
- Adam Parker, Post and Courier



MLK \$2 BILL

Hand Drawn Ink Etching Printed on \$2 Bill / 2.61" x 6.14" / 2020

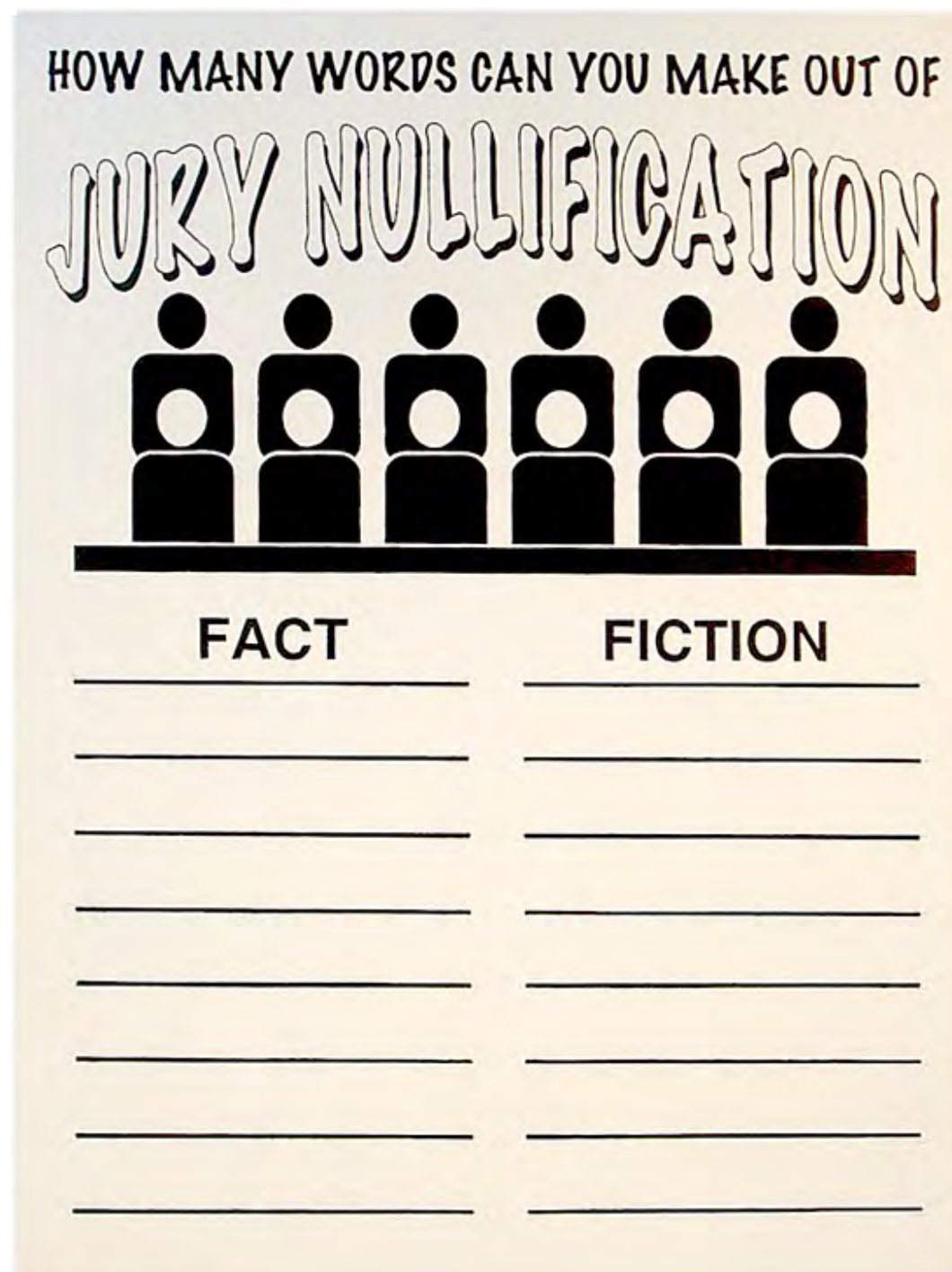
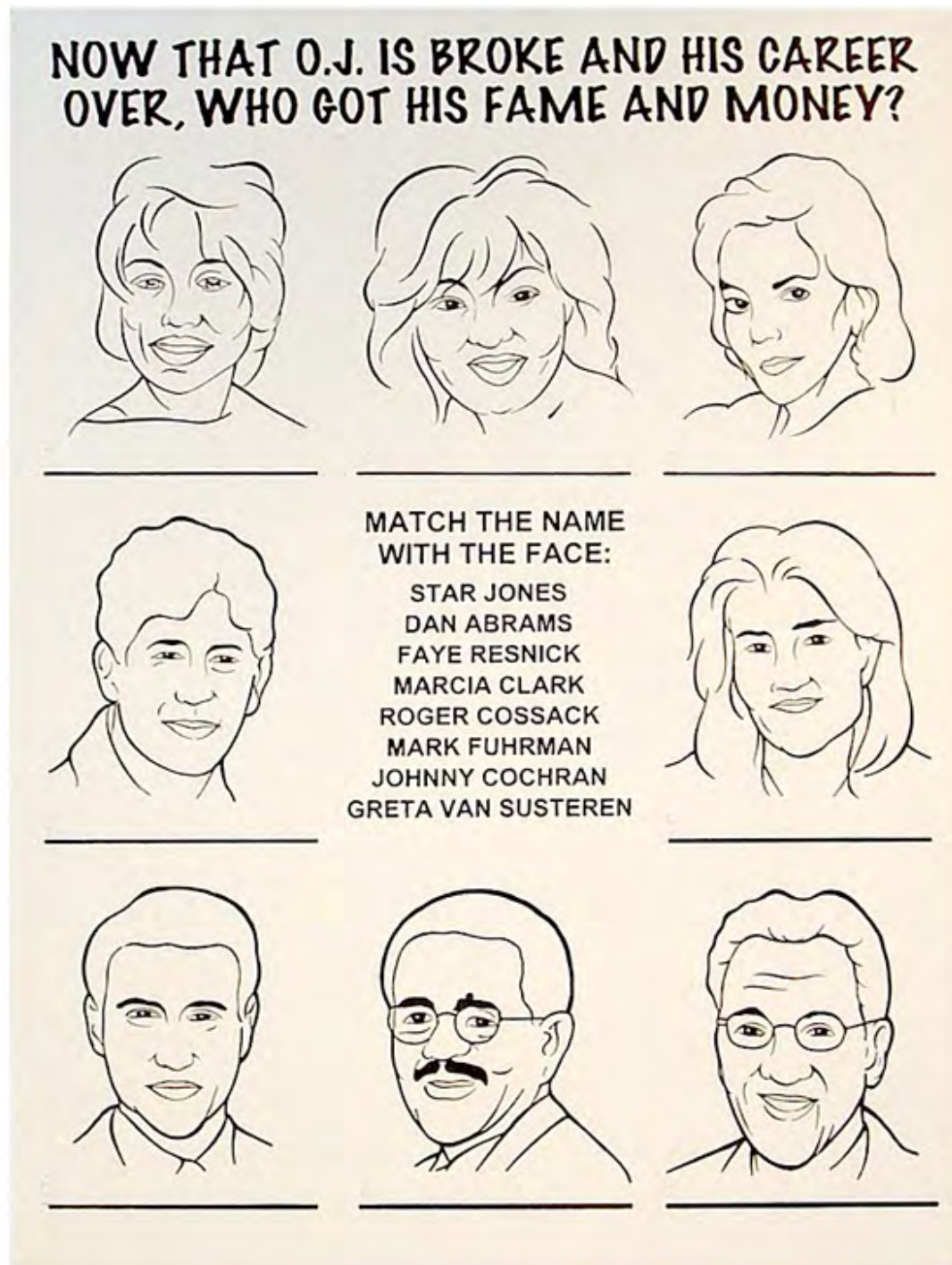




O. J. SIMPSON COLORING & ACTIVITY BOOK

Acrylic on Canvas / (4 of 8 panels) / 32" x 40" / 2005

The O.J. Simpson trial opened, or rather, exposed the tenuous relationship between the races. In one final decision, the rift was exposed in the most dramatic of terms. People who had lived and worked in fallacious harmony suddenly found themselves at curious odds, unable to articulate the reasoning behind their positions. As a media-seated jury, television audiences were given access to the courtroom where they heard and saw more than the seated jury. They co-opted the daily testimonials and arguments, re-articulated by sound byte-savvy veterans, chumming the feeding frenzy for audiences to take sides and form opinions, even if those opinions weren't their own. The panels of the 'O.J. Simpson Coloring and Activity Book' take a look at some of these issues and raise a series of questions concerning them. Through a moderated symposium, they offer an opportunity for meaningful dialogue.





THE PORTAL

(9 Locations) Mobile Installation



The Slave Mart Chalmers Street

**"Alas! How little does the memory of
these human inhabitants enhance
the beauty of the landscape!"**

- Thoreau
Walden
"Former Inhabitants"

*"Quashie built a free-standing window
and moved it around Charleston where
African-American history unfolded but
where there is no marker or memorial.
Charleston is a town that sells itself on its
history - it's not about inclusion until they
figure out a way to market it."*

- Stephen Kinzer, *New York Times*





‘SERVICE’

Commissioned ‘MISSING HISTORY MURAL’
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill



Oil on Canvas / 5’ X 50’ / 2010
<https://servicemural.unc.edu/service-mural/about/>



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