

June Clark

*Unrequited Love*

November 7 – December 19, 2020



June Clark, *Moral Disengagement* (detail), 2014 – 2017, polyester, wood, oxidized metal

Daniel Faria Gallery is pleased to present *Unrequited Love*, a solo exhibition of work by artist June Clark.

Growing up in Harlem and attending school there for eight years, Clark remembers being told that she was lucky to live in “the greatest, strongest, most compassionate and free country in the world.” This began with reverence for the American flag.

As a child, my heart would become full whenever I saw the flag waving in the breeze. I was proud and it was my understanding that all who saw ‘our’ flag could and should only love it as citizens and, if not of our country, envy those who were protected by it. I was taught that all citizens, under this flag, would enjoy all rights and freedoms under the constitution.

I left the United States in 1968 not because of the country or the soil, which I loved, but because of the powers-that-were at the time. However, through my art practice, I began to try and decipher exactly what my relation

to the flag had become. As one is confused when a lover turns on one for no apparent reason, I began trying to make flags.

It was while making *Moral Disengagement* (2014-17) that Clark realized she had been creating flags on and off for almost twenty years. Like a memorized song or a muscle memory, the flags often appeared when there was “downtime” in the studio, during those hours when the mind should be at rest.

This exhibition was planned in the months leading up to the 2020 US presidential election, during which we have watched Donald Trump utilize the symbolic “America” that Clark learned about in school to promote a political campaign built on racism and fear. We have watched the president of the United States refuse to condemn white supremacists while wearing a pin of the American flag on his lapel. We have watched democracy disintegrate. As a young Black girl in America, Clark was taught to love something that would not love her back in return, but knowledge of that imbalance doesn’t rid someone of their desire for a mutual relationship. It’s an imbalance that is not specific to America; unrequited love is one of the oldest tools of colonialism. Places shape us and become a part of us, whether or not they consider us a part of them.

By bringing these works from the past two decades together for the first time, this exhibition not only explores the role that the symbolic plays in forming personal and collective identity, it also maps Clark’s material investigations over time. Materials, she writes, “are the grammar of my visual language,” a grammar that reveals itself in work made from rust, tea stains or found objects. The American flag, a symbol so deeply linked to abstract and illusory concepts – freedom, and equality among them – re-appears in different bodies of work through an interrogation of its physical structures. Through repetition the symbol both gains significance and loses meaning, like a word said aloud over and over until it feels unfamiliar. A simultaneous recreation and destruction occurs. If we pull apart the threads of something what remains intact? How deep do concepts lie within objects – and can we unravel the links?

*Unrequited Love* is dedicated to Colin Rand Kaepernick, the football quarterback who knelt during the national anthem in 2016 to call attention to the continued violence towards and oppression of Black people in America and around the world.

June Clark has earned national and international recognition for her photo-based image works, installations and interventions. She has had solo exhibitions at the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto), the Studio Museum in Harlem (New York), The Koffler Gallery (Toronto), and Mercer Union (Toronto). Her work has been included in exhibitions at the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto), the Textile Museum (Toronto), the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa), Agnès b. (Paris), and Linda Kirkland Gallery (New York). She has completed residencies at the Studio Museum in Harlem and the Ontario College of Art and Design, among others. Her work can be found in the collections of the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto), the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa), the James Van Der Zee Institute (New York) and Agnès b. (Paris).

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Hours: Tuesday to Friday 11:00 am to 6:00 pm, Saturday 10:00 am to 6:00 pm