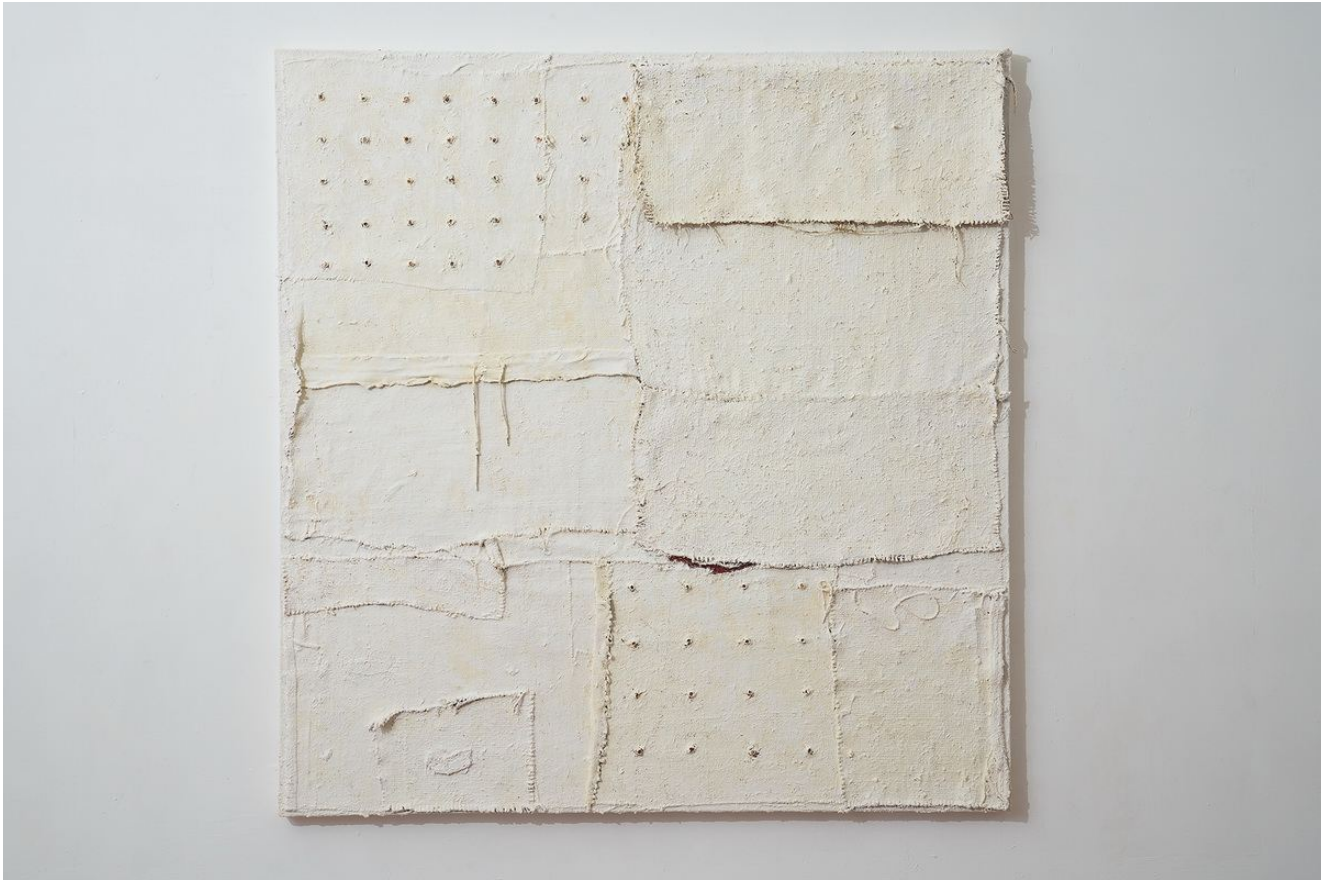


WIDEWALLS

Five Decades of Harmony Hammond's Art In Focus



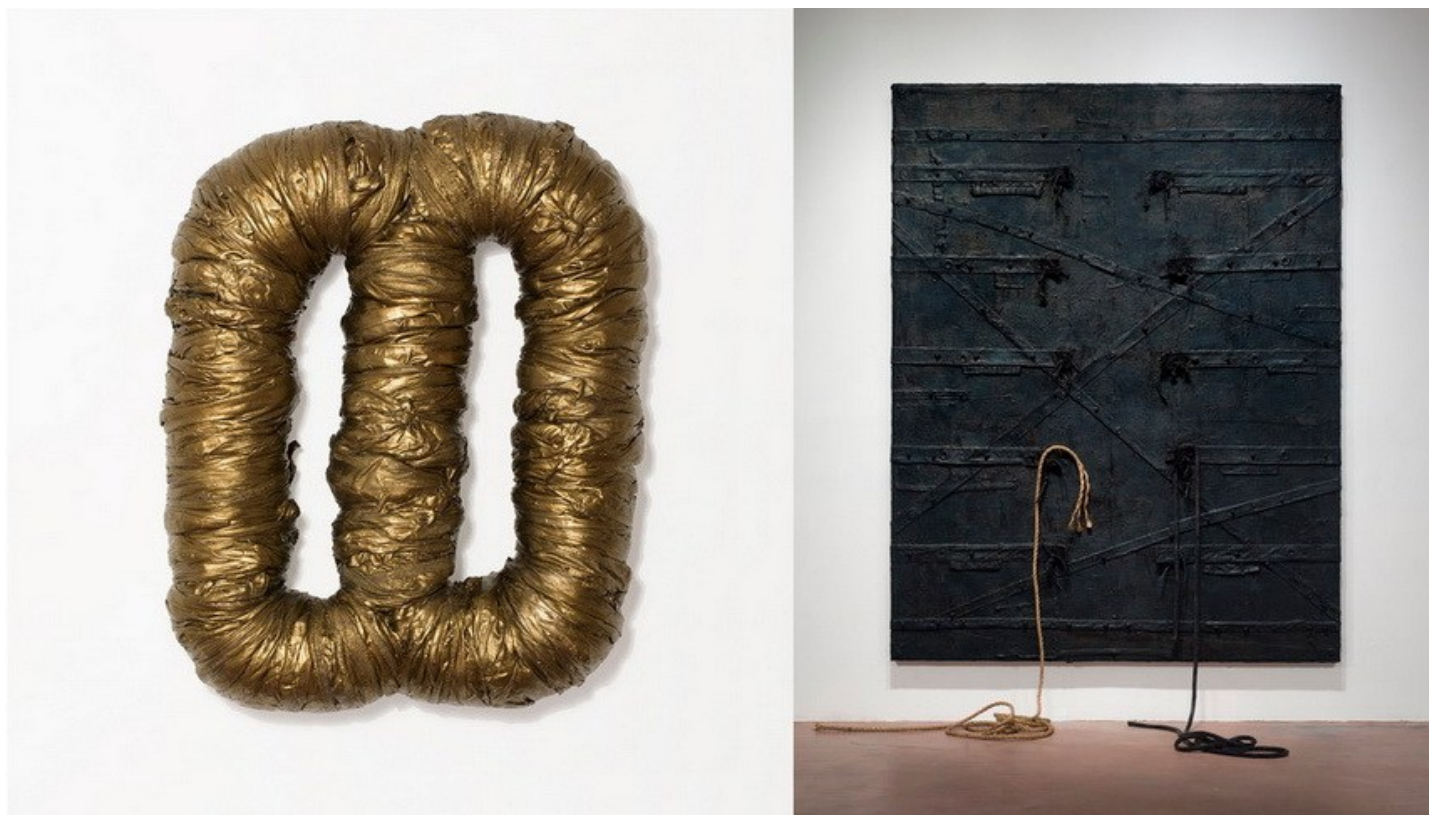
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Blasz Takac

Balasz Takac is the alias of Vladimir Bjelic who is actively engaged in art criticism, curatorial and artistic practice.

The second wave of feminism introduced a generation of bold and strong women willing to change society in many aspects. Among them were visual artists who explored an array of notions related to **womanhood**: sexuality, history, domestic work, labor have been critically articulated by individuals and collectives since the early 1970s. One of the most prominent artists belonging to this group of pioneering women was **Harmony Hammond**. This prolific figure became known for producing sculptural works centered on **the**

heritage of women's crafts, as well as for her **curatorial practice and activism**. In order to analyze her entire oeuvre, **The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum** decided to organize the first comprehensive survey of Hammond's work by featuring her earliest painted sculptures and sculpted paintings, mixed-media and large-scale 1980 and 1990 paintings, recent near monochrome works, along with ephemera, and publications.



Left: Harmony Hammond – Dogon, 1978/2015. Cloth, wood, acrylic paint, 39 x 34 in; 99.06 x 86.36 cm
/ **Right:** Harmony Hammond – Rib, 2013. Oil and mixed media on canvas, 90 3/8 x 72 1/2 in.; 229.55 x 184.15 cm. © 2018 Harmony Hammond / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. Photos: Eric Swanson

The Continuity of Harmony Hammond's Art

Since 1971, Harmony Hammond has been making works which differ categorization; she started by exploring the painterly issues typical of Minimalism and Postminimalism such as repetition, the grid, experimenting with materials, and process, from the feminist perspective. That is how she decided to combine women's craft traditions and abstraction. Truth be told, the majority of her works transmit a high level of performativity which is apparent with the selection and molding of materials (wrapping, puncturing, ripping, etc.) Here, it is important to mention that Hammond's ideas expressed through visual art are inseparable from her continues engagement with various initiatives. Namely, she is a co-founder of the **A.I.R. Gallery**, an exhibition space of great historical significance – it was the first women's cooperative art gallery in New York. She was one of the prominent members of Heresies Collective, and therefore a co-founder of *Heresies: A Feminist Publication of Art and Politics* in 1976, and an instructor at the New York Feminist Art Institute.



Harmony Hammond – Floorpiece VI, 1973. Acrylic on fabric 65 in. diameter (165.10 cm diameter). © 2018 Harmony Hammond /Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. Photo: Jeffrey Sturges

The Selection of Works

The upcoming exhibition will present Harmony Hammond's early works such as the *Presences* (1972) and the *Floorpieces* (1973), two large-scale installations after the artist moved to New York in 1969. The first one was made of discarded pieces of fabric previously used by her female friends. On the other hand, the *Floorpieces* are even more hybrid, since the thin line between painting and sculpture, as well as the one between craft and art, seem to fade. This piece resembles a rag rug made of knit fabric collected from city dumpster; five of the original seven pieces will be on display. *Chicken Lady* is a mixed-media painting Hammond made in 1989, and it refers to a woman who lived with her animals in old cars and trailers in Milford, Connecticut. The work critically questions issues of class and gender, the homeless, the misfits, the female outsiders. Similar themes hover through Hammond's recent paintings as well, which are often described as a social or queer abstraction; these works are centered on the material metaphors suggesting an urgency of connection, liberation, and restraint.



Left: Harmony Hammond – Sieve, 1999. Oil on metal and canvas, 17 x 18 1/2 in.; 43.18 x 46.99 cm. Collection of Barbara Johnson and Ruth Gresser © 2018 Harmony Hammond / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. Photo: Pete Duvall/Anything Photographic/ **Right:** Harmony Hammond – Presence V, 1972. Acrylic, dye, cloth with rope, metal and wood, 78 x 28 in.; 198.12 x 71.12 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York © 2018 Harmony Hammond / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. Photo: Eric Swanson

Harmony Hammond at The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum

This outstanding retrospective is curated by Amy Smith-Stewart, and will certainly contribute to the better understanding of recurrent motifs, themes, and approaches present in Hammond's almost five decades-long career. A fully illustrated publication, the artist's first hardcover monograph, including the curatorial text will accompany the exhibition. *Harmony Hammond: Material Witness, Five Decades of Art* will be on display at [The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum](#) in Ridgefield, Connecticut **from 3 March until 15 September 2019**. Featured image: Harmony Hammond – Chenille #6, 2017-2018. Oil and mixed media on canvas, 66 3/4 x 64 in.; 169.55 x 162.56 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York © 2018 Harmony Hammond / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. Photo: Eric Swanson. Images courtesy The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum.