

DAMIEN DAVIS

COLLAPSE: A BLACK WALL STREET STUDY



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DAMIEN DAVIS

COLLAPSE: A BLACK WALL STREET STUDY

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on view at UNTITLED, ART

with LatchKey Gallery

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January 24 - March 1, 2020

on view at Weeksville Heritage Center

Brooklyn, NY

Cover: *Pre-check (Blackamoors #282)*,

see page 30

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COLLAPSE: A Black Wall Street Study at Weeksville Heritage Center

by Natalya Mills, Curator

Damien Davis' series of art works informs us about black subjectivity as it navigates through the fabric of time. Works such as *COLLAPSE: Black Wall Street Study* is successful in connecting the past, present and future of blackness and its historicity. From a curatorial perspective, this is a prime example of the ways in which we can bridge contemporary art and artists with the past. Exhibiting *COLLAPSE: Black Wall Street Study* at historical sites such as Weeksville Heritage Center in Brooklyn, New York, now Crown Heights and Bedford-Stuyvesant adds another layer to his work. Weeksville Heritage Center consists of the historic Hunterfly Road museum houses that have been dedicated to preserving the history of one of the largest free black communities in pre-Civil War America founded by James Weeks.

In the 1850s, Weeksville became a successful community with over 500 residence. Weeksville becoming a sight for emancipation, homeownership, entrepreneurship and sustainability. Weeksville established its own churches, schools, homes for the elderly, homes for orphaned children, cemetery and published its own newspaper *The Freedman's Torchlight*.

The duality and historical significance expressed in Davis' art series *COLLAPSE: Black Wall Street Study* and the story of Weeksville was the driving force behind the much-needed conversation. As we approach the 100th anniversary of the horrific events that transpired in the Greenwood massacre, Tulsa, Oklahoma, the recouping of this history alongside its predecessor Weeksville forces us to think about the future of black communities, the black body and its visibility.



Installation view, *COLLAPSE: A BLACK WALL STREET STUDY* by Damien Davis,
Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn, N.Y



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COLLAPSE: Black Wall Street Study illuminates the historic community and freedom colony of Greenwood in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Greenwood was one of the most prominent communities for Black businesses during the early 20th century, and popularly known as America's "Black Wall Street." In 1921, white residents massacred approximately 300 black residents, injured hundreds more, and completely destroyed the neighborhood within hours. Today, we know this event as the Tulsa race riot which Davis explores, highlights the destruction of this successful black community and the disruption of its financial stability and power. This series of art works re-centers the oppressed narratives by acknowledging both the inherent danger of daring to take up space as a black person and by developing navigational strategies for infiltration and reorientation of the same narratives.

In this series, Davis' use of laser cut plexiglass, plastics, wood, geometry and color theory creates a lexicon of shapes that ignite conversations around currency, community and the effects of hypervisibility for the black body.

The use of iridescent golds and silvers, most often associated with affluence, wealth, luxury and power, are applied to his art work. Through his use of seductive materials and surfaces, it opens up a space for more difficult conversations to occur.

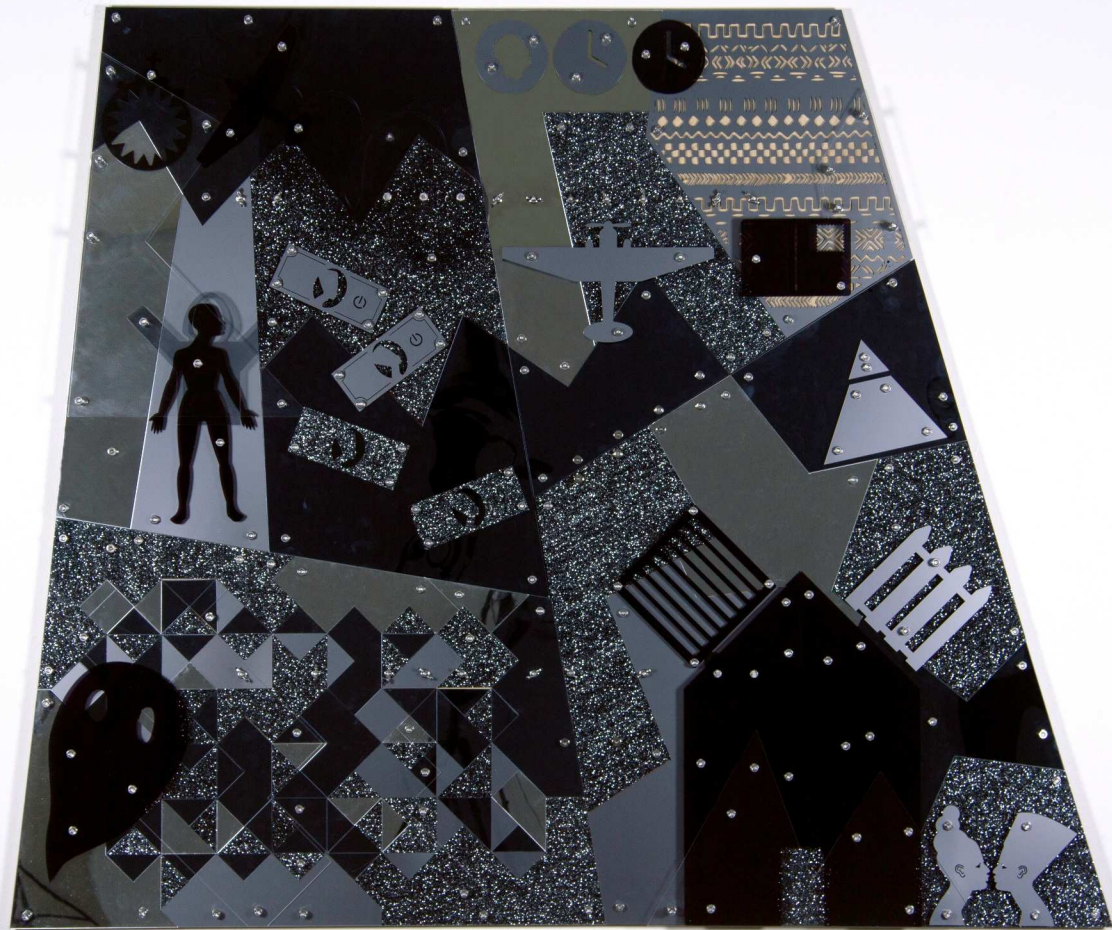
The story of Weeksville mirrors the story of Greenwood Tulsa and many other communities throughout the African Diaspora that speak to freedom, activism, sustainability, visibility and the entrepreneurial spirit of black people. It also compels us to think and reconsider the future of the black community in the advent of gentrification. What does it mean for a successful black community in the future? Are we in danger of the Greenwood massacre happening again? How can we promote black subjectivity and sustainability for our secured futures? These are some of the challenging questions that Davis' *COLLAPSE: Black Wall Street Study* forces us to address.



Rebuild (Blackamoors Collage #292)

Laser-cut reflective and plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

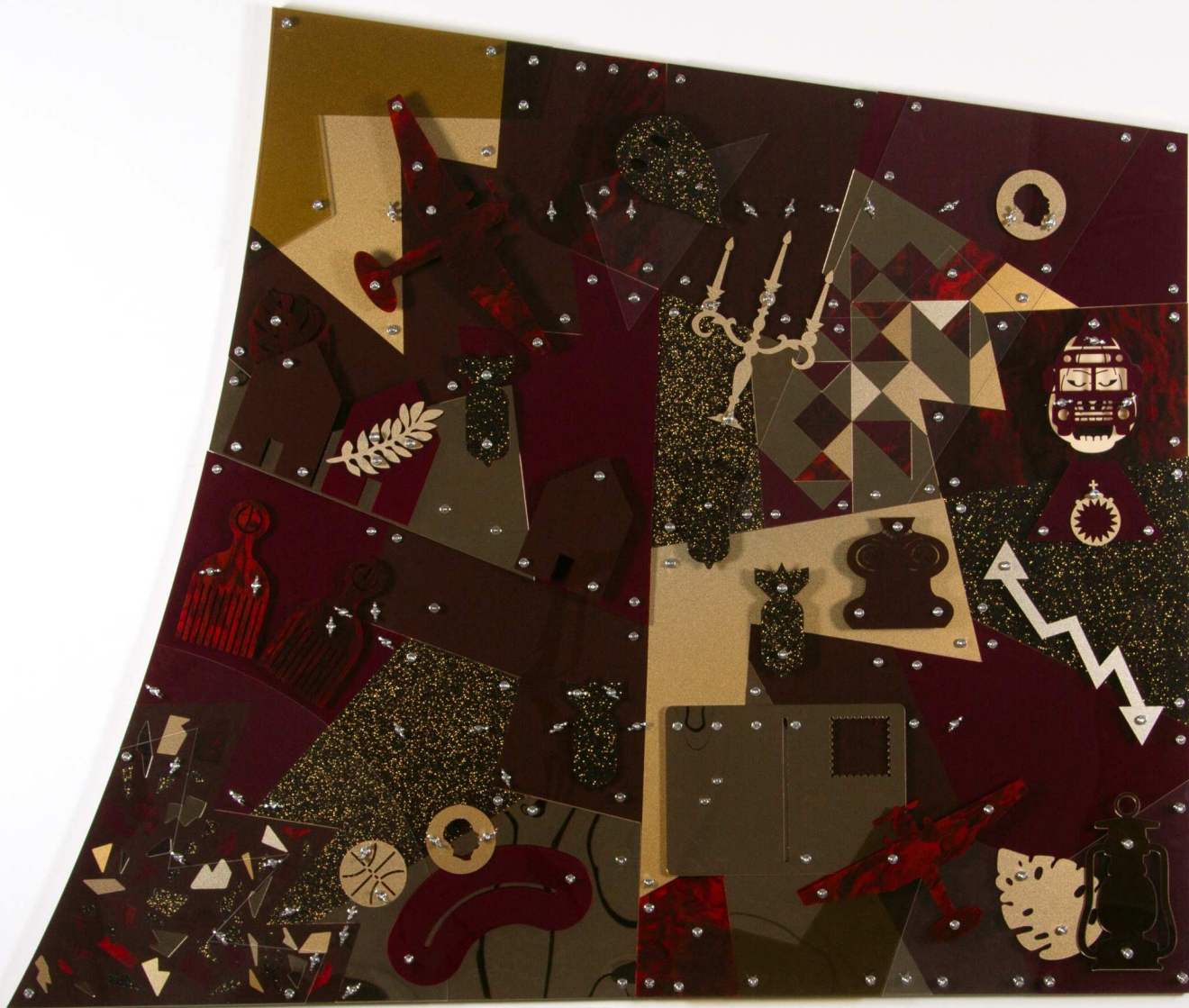
50 x 60 x 2 in



Gunmetal (Blackamoors Collage #294)

Laser-cut reflective and plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

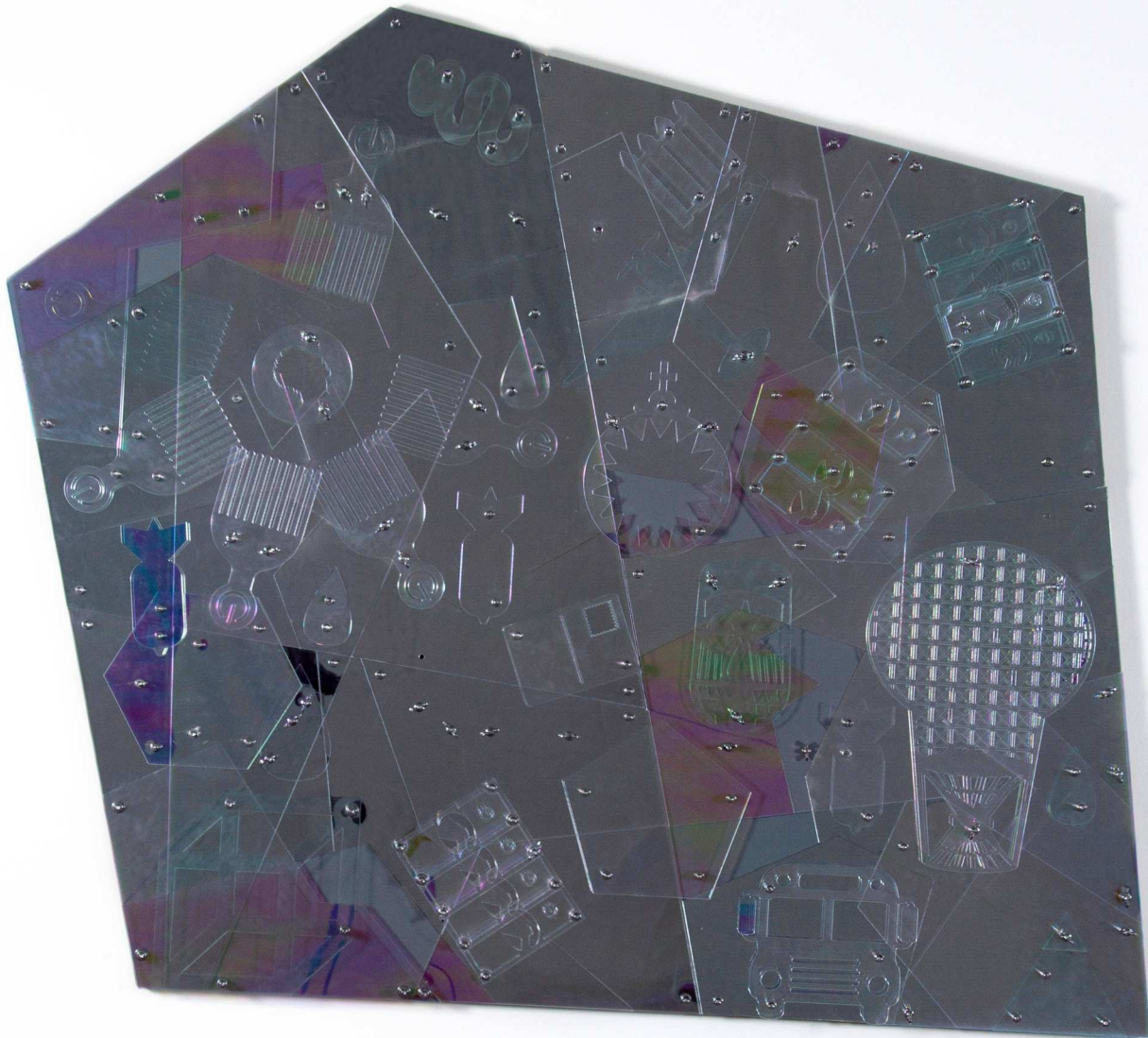
50 x 60 x 2 in



Penny Collector (Blackamoors Collage #300)

Laser-cut reflective and plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

50 x 60 x 2 in



All My Black Friends (Blackamoors Collage #293)

Laser-cut reflective and plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

50 x 60 x 2 in

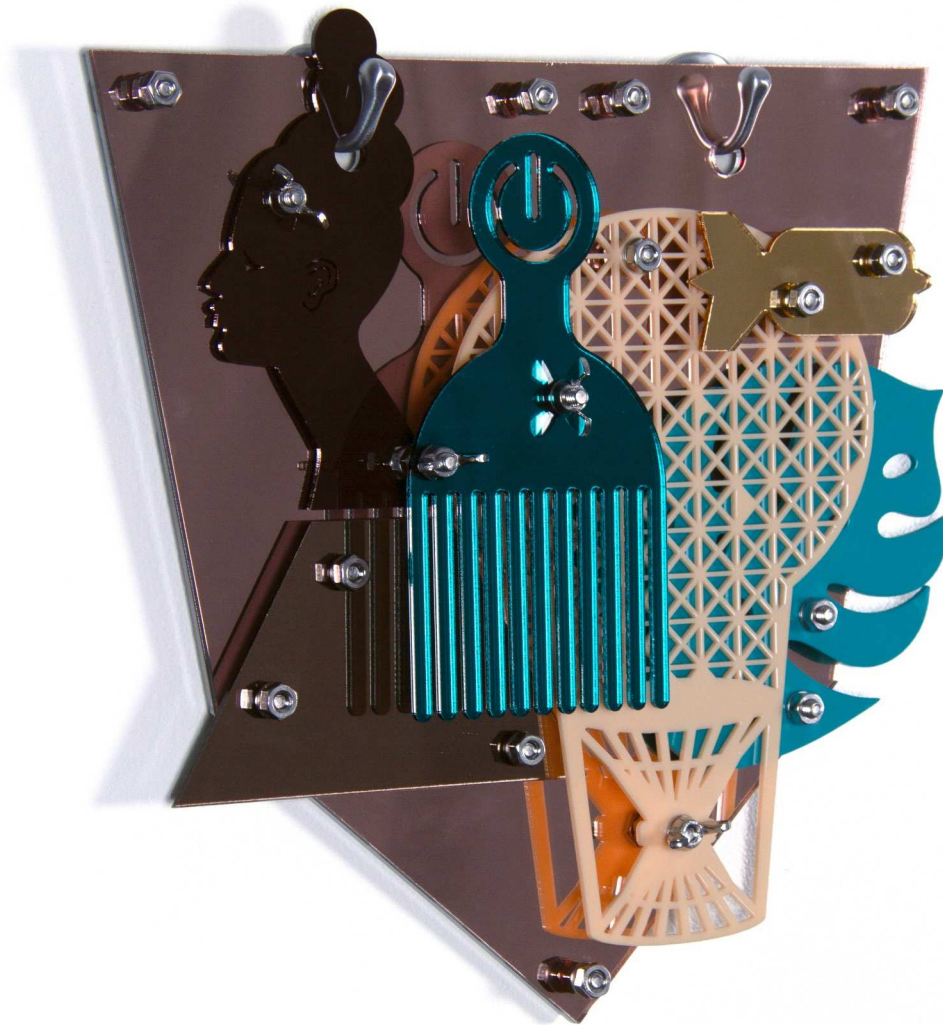
Private Collection, New York, NY



Black Gold Miner (Blackamoors Collage #279)

Laser-cut reflective and plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

12 x 13 x 2.5 in

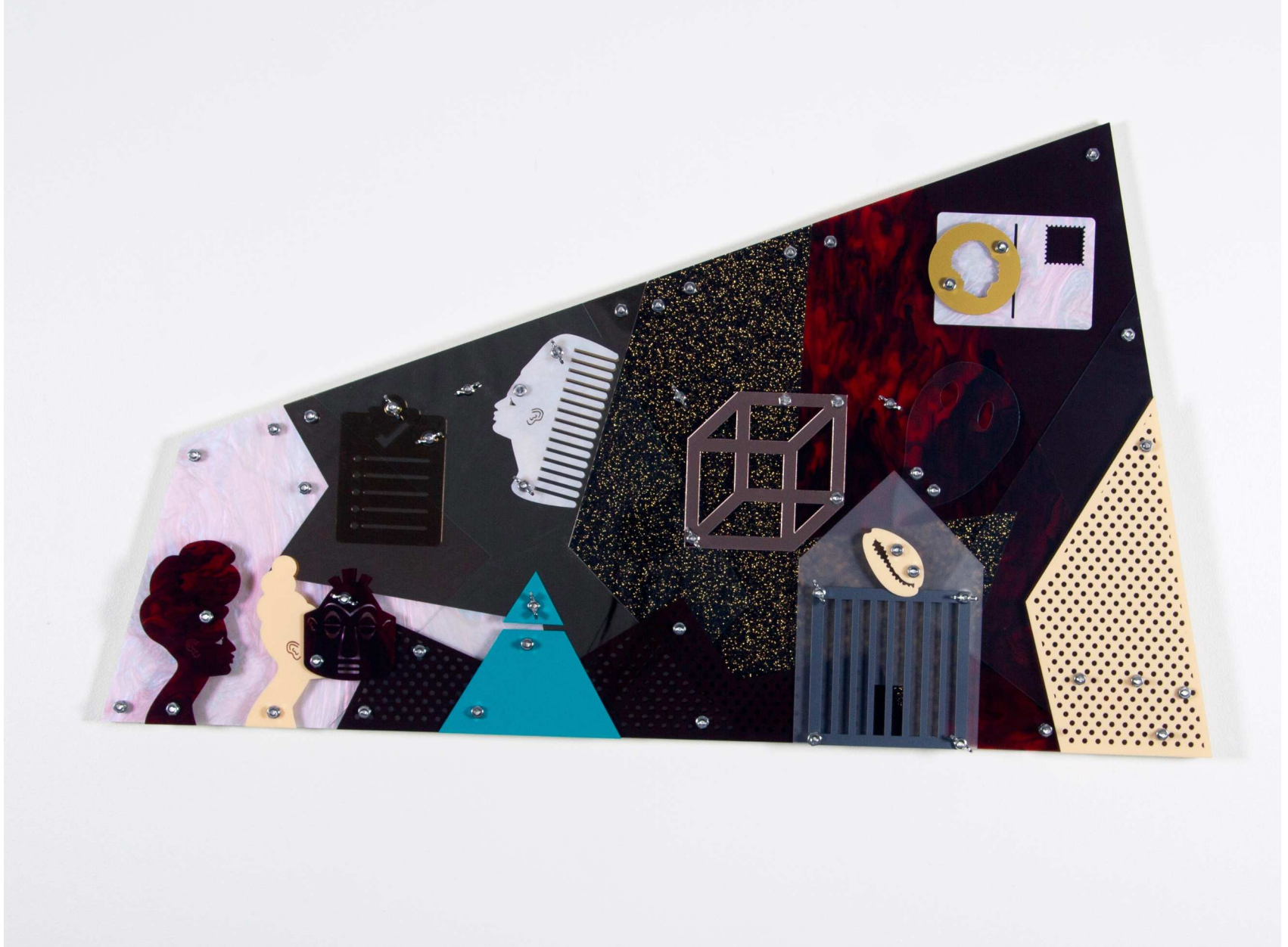


Store Front (Blackamoors Collage #284)

Laser-cut plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

13.06 x 13 x 2 in





Punchlist (Blackamoors Collage #290)

Laser-cut reflective and plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

24 x 42 x 2 in

Collection of Lorenzo McRae & Nancy Brown, Washington, DC.



That Initial Spark (Blackamoors Collage #299)

Laser-cut plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

24 x 42 x 2 in



Antique Shop (Blackamoors Collage #298)
Laser-cut plexiglass and stainless steel hardware
26 x 44 x 2 in

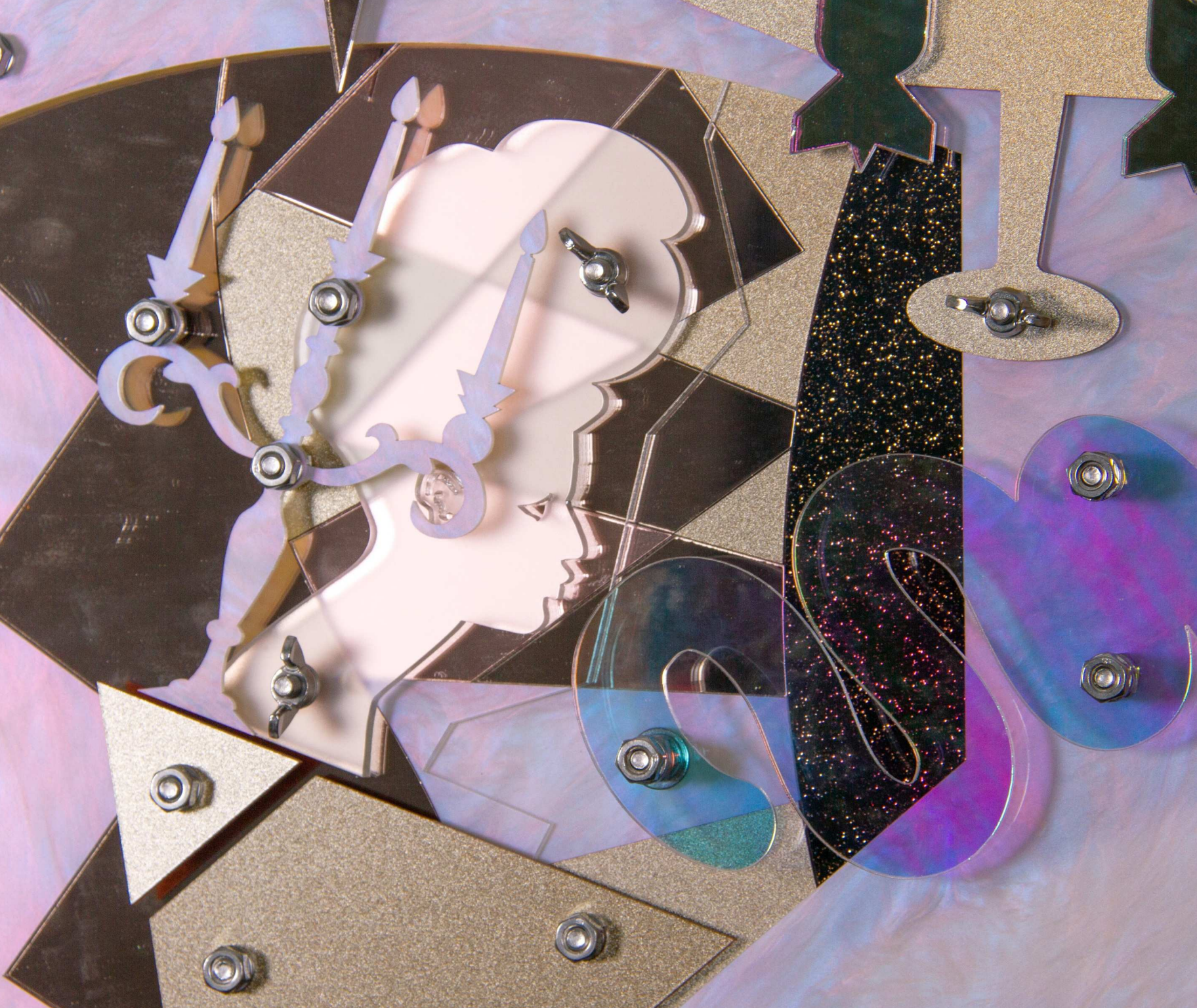


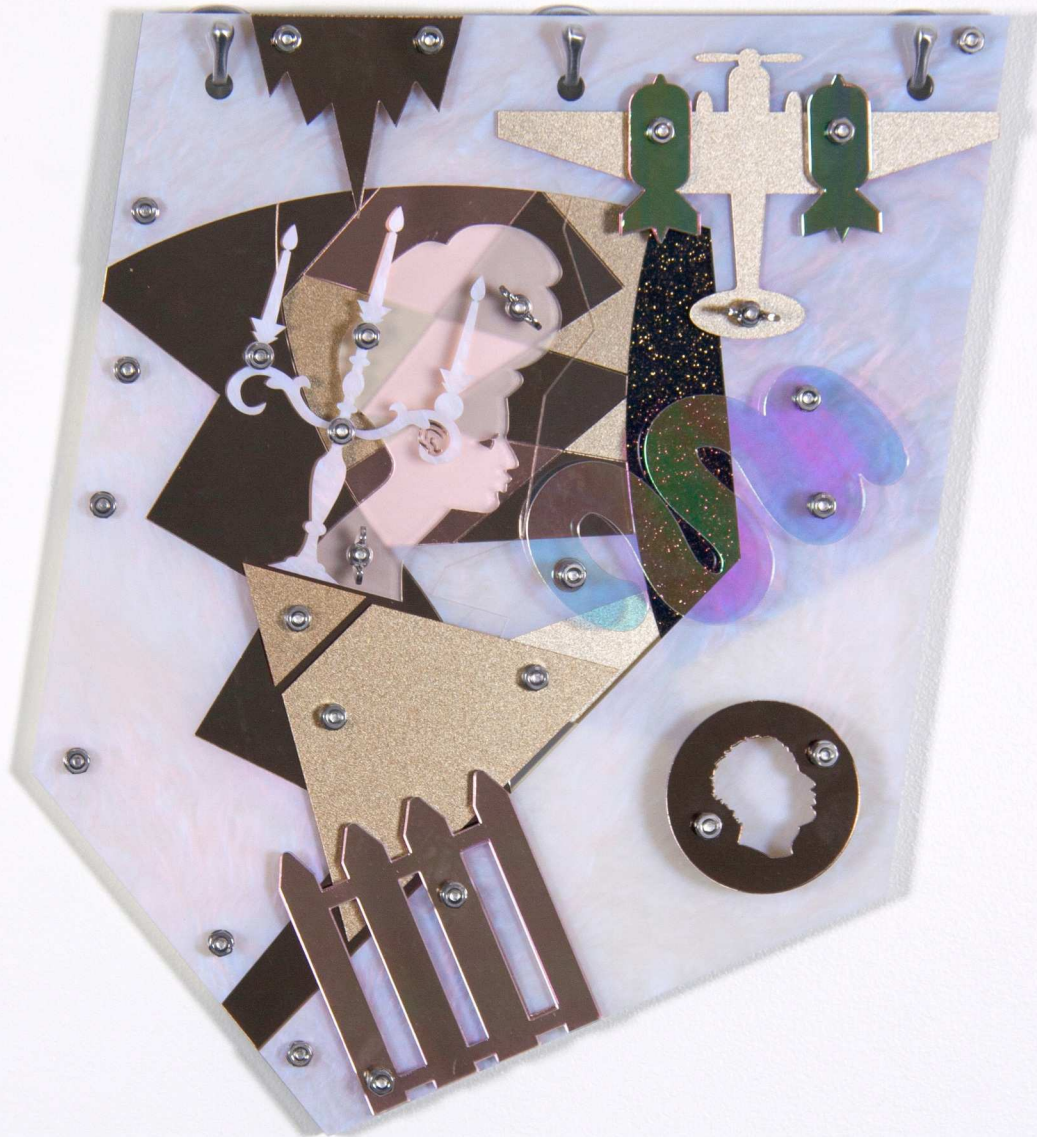


Rose Colored Glasses (Blackamoors Collage #291)

Laser-cut reflective and plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

24 x 42 x 2 in

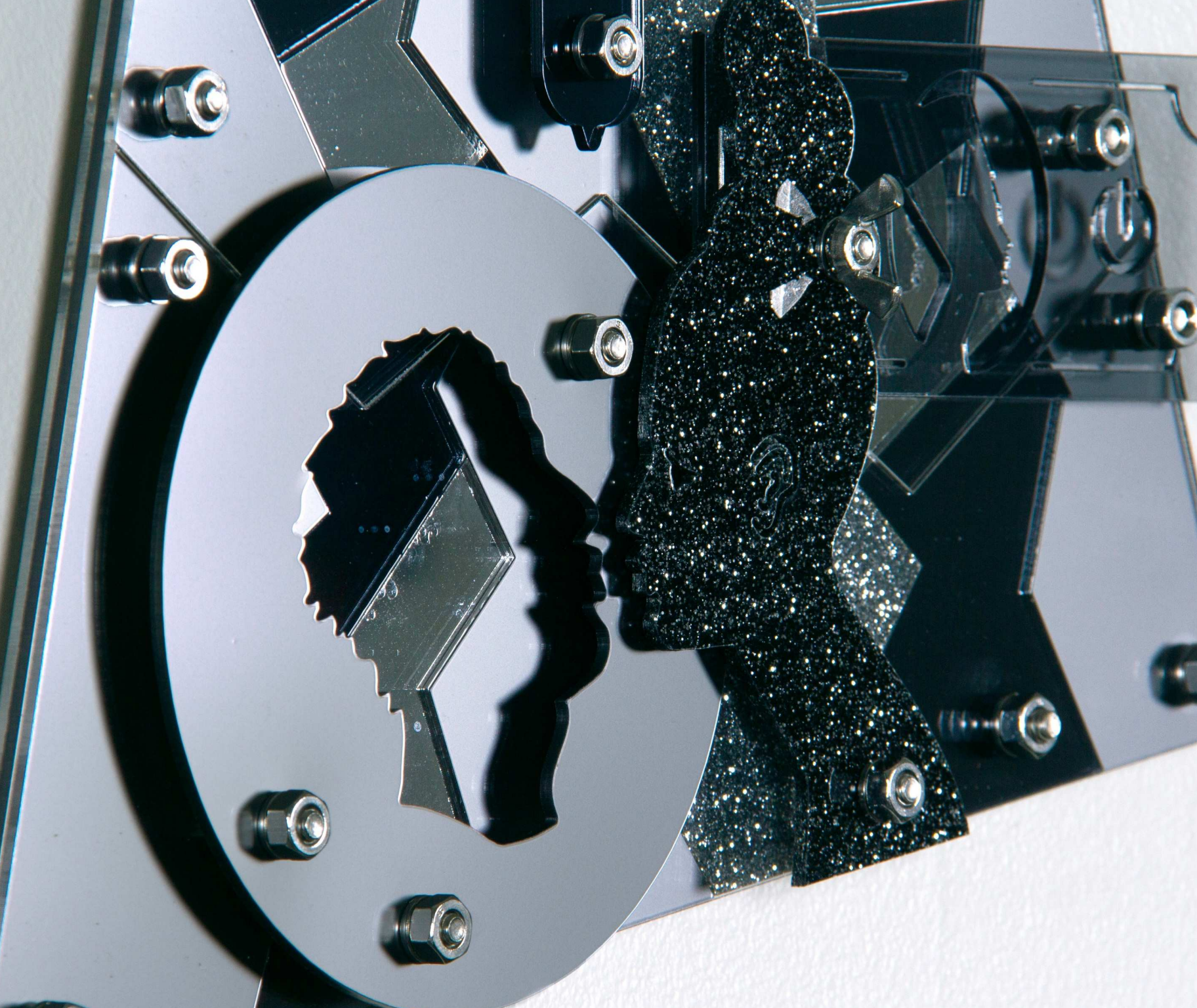


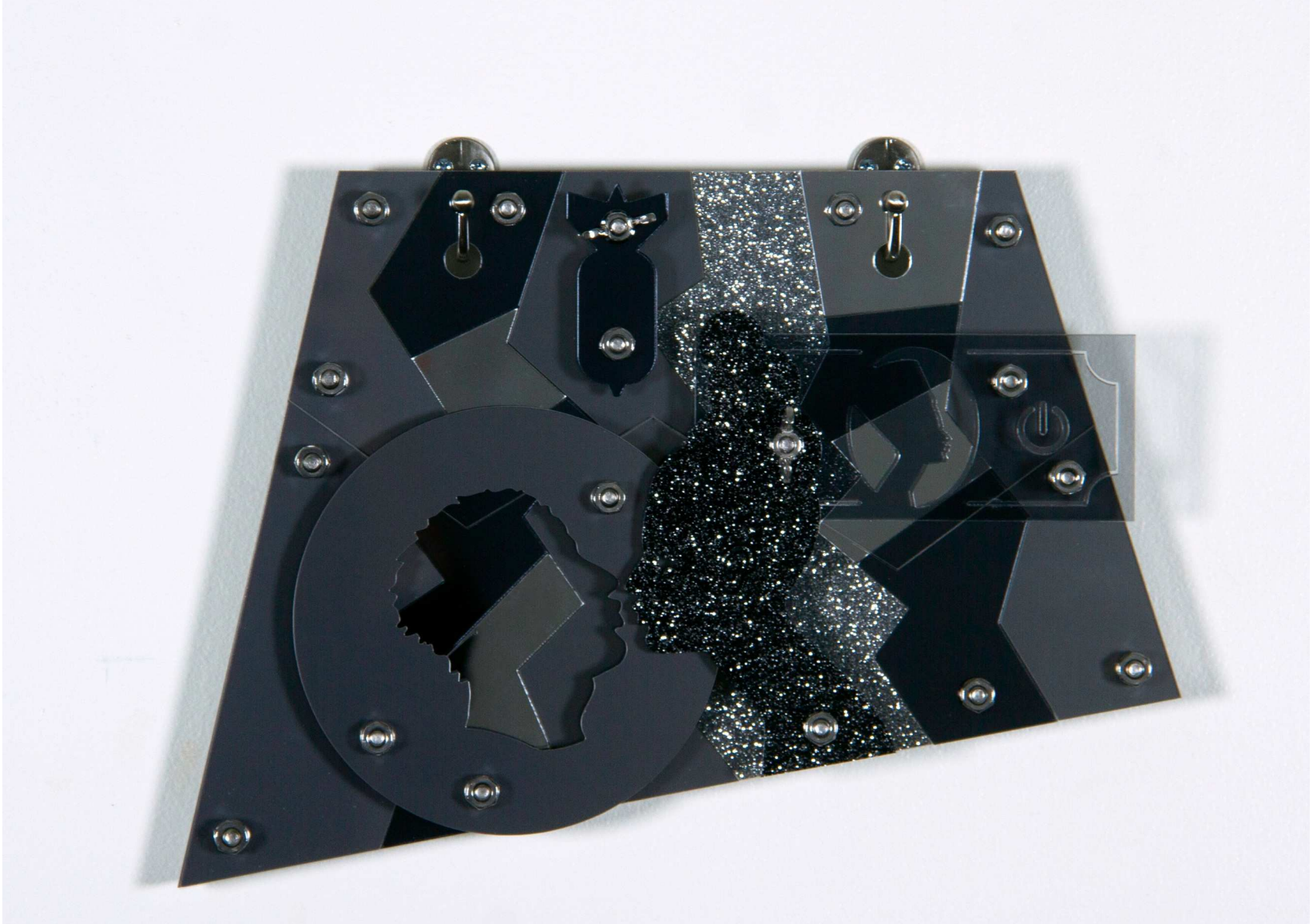


Good Neighbors (Blackamoors Collage #286)

Laser-cut plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

20 x 17.5 x 2 in

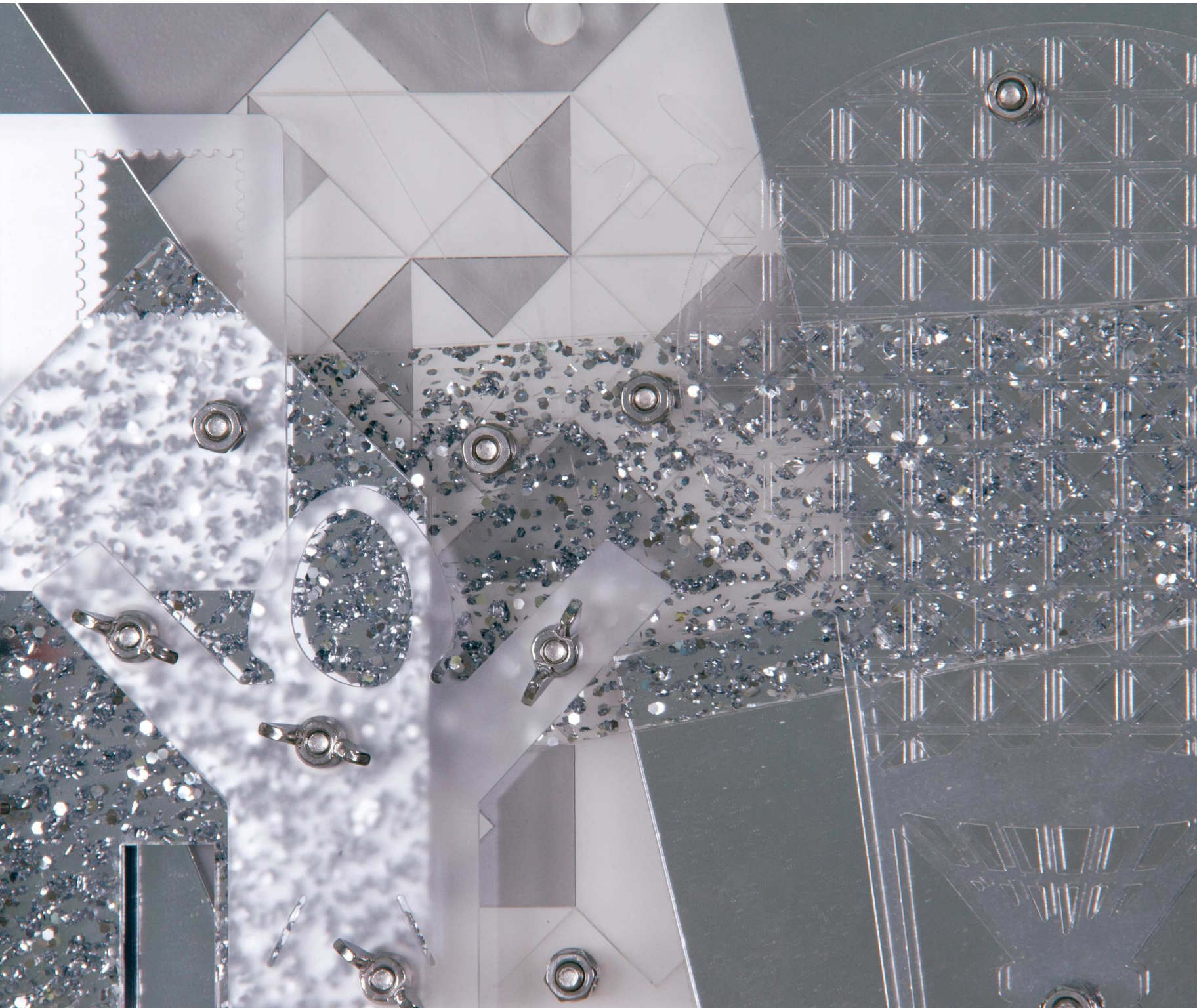


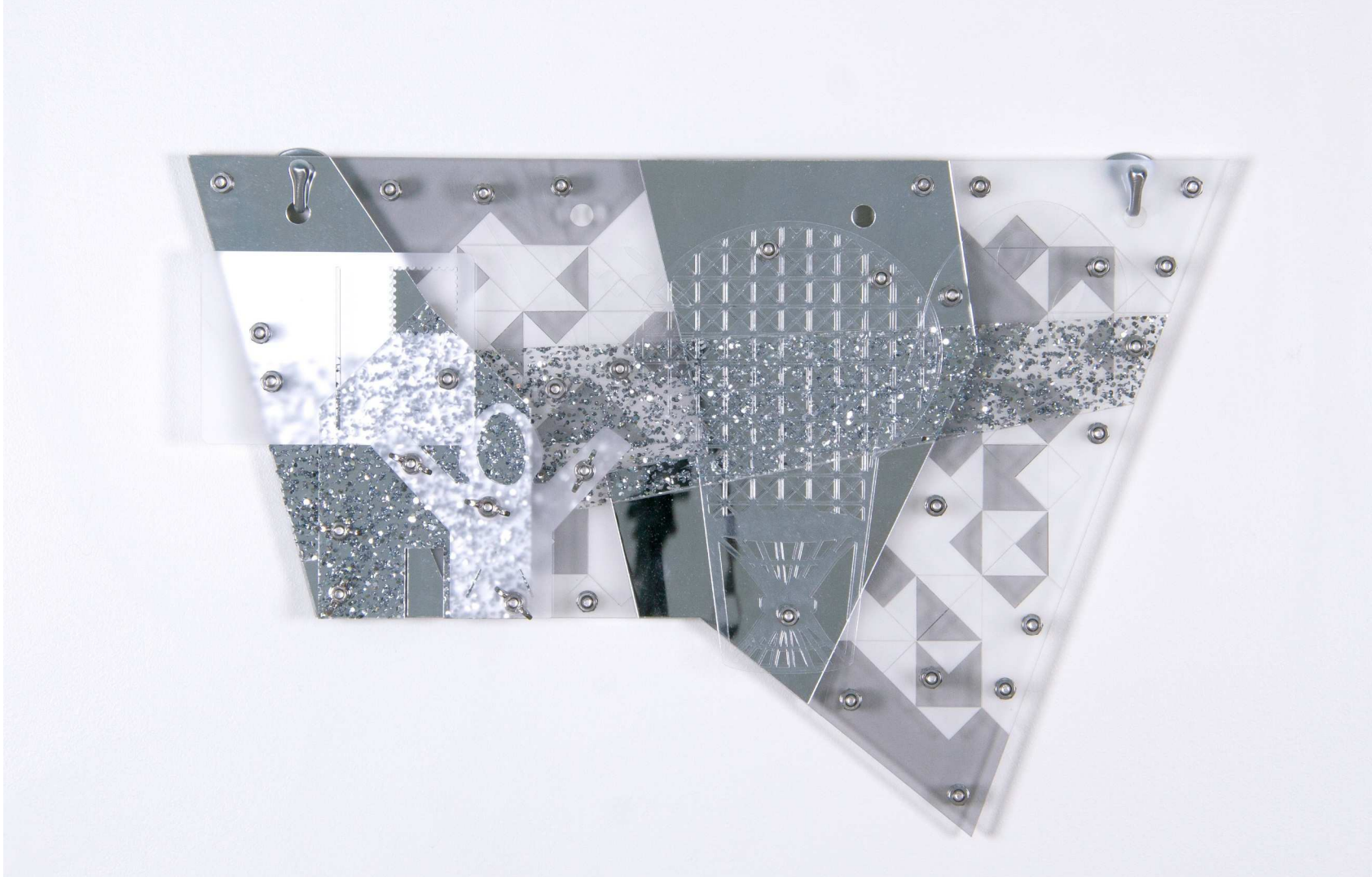


Major Coins (Blackamoors Collage #281)

Laser-cut plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

10 x 14 x 2 in





Spirits (Blackamoors Collage #296)

Laser-cut plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

20 x 17.5 x 2 in

Private Collection, New York, NY



Elevator Encounter (Blackamoors Collage #283)

Laser-cut plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

16 x 22 x 2 in

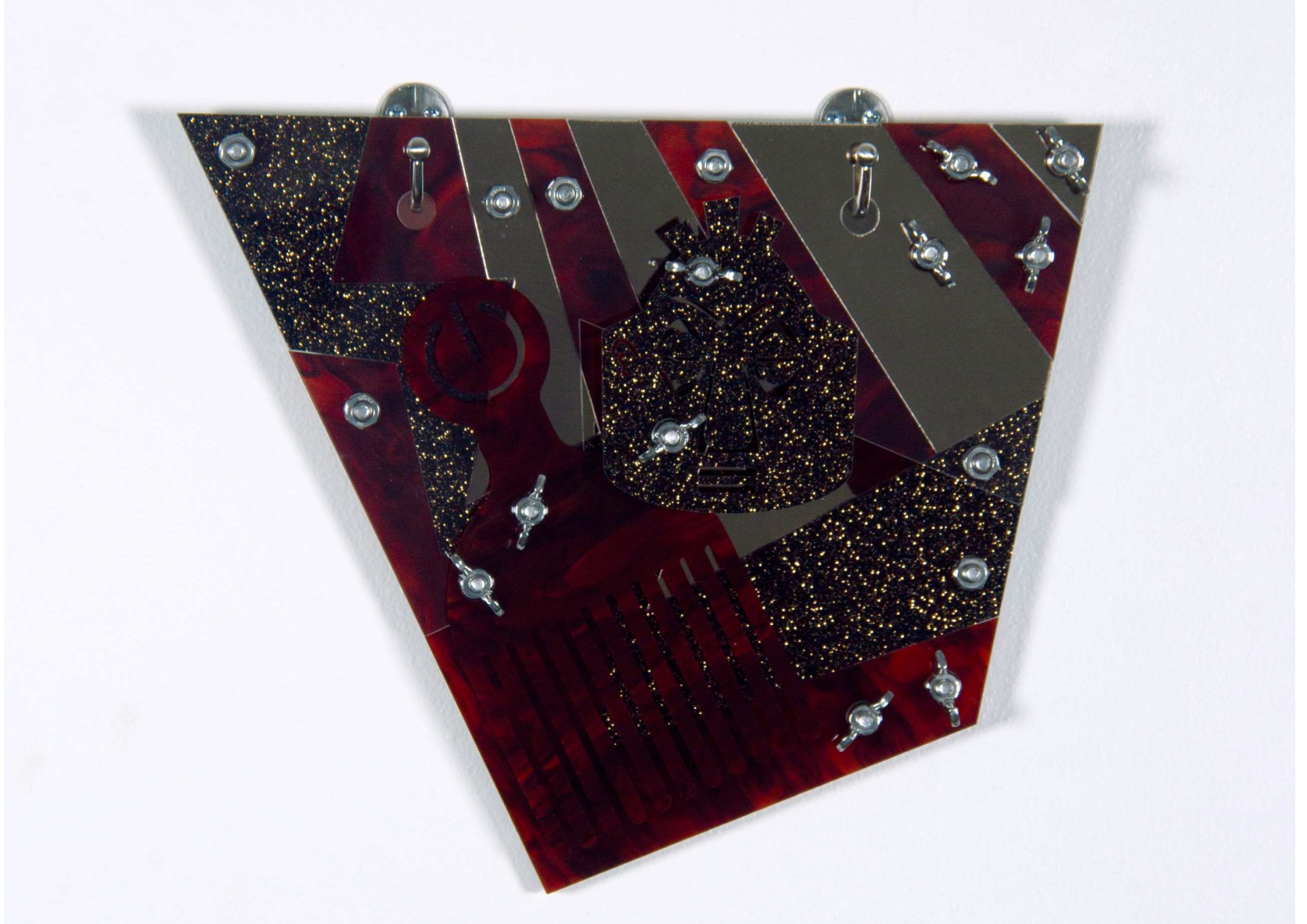
The Murray Collection, Charlotte, NC



My Last Stand With You (Blackamoors Collage #297)

Laser-cut plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

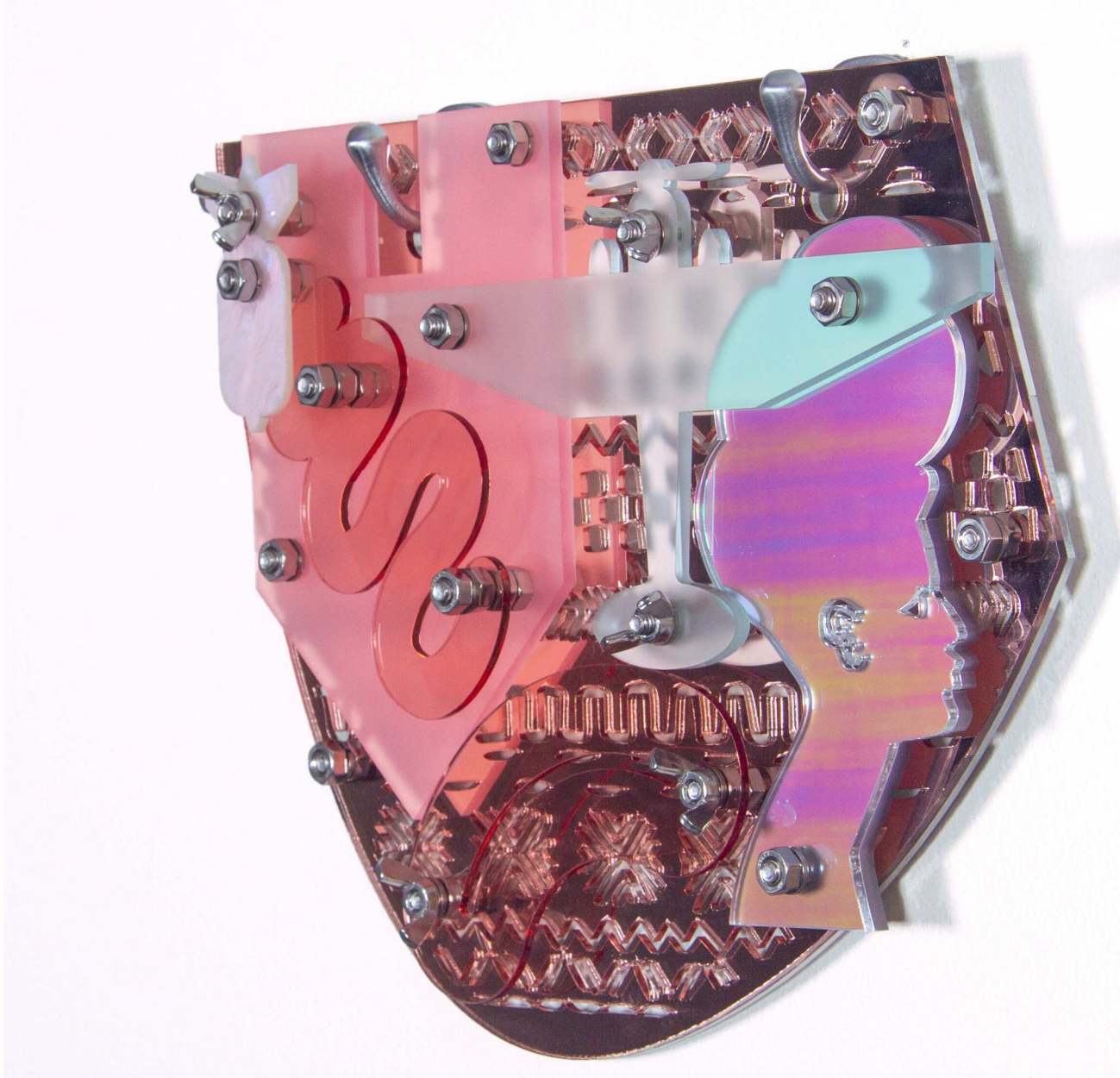
13.5 x 13 x 2 in



Homegoing Letters (Blackamoors Collage #)

Laser-cut plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

10.5 x 12.5 x 2 in



Muddy (Blackamoors Collage #301)

Laser-cut plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

12.5 x 10 x 2 in

Private Collection, Brooklyn NY



Pre-check (Blackamoors Collage #282)

Laser-cut plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

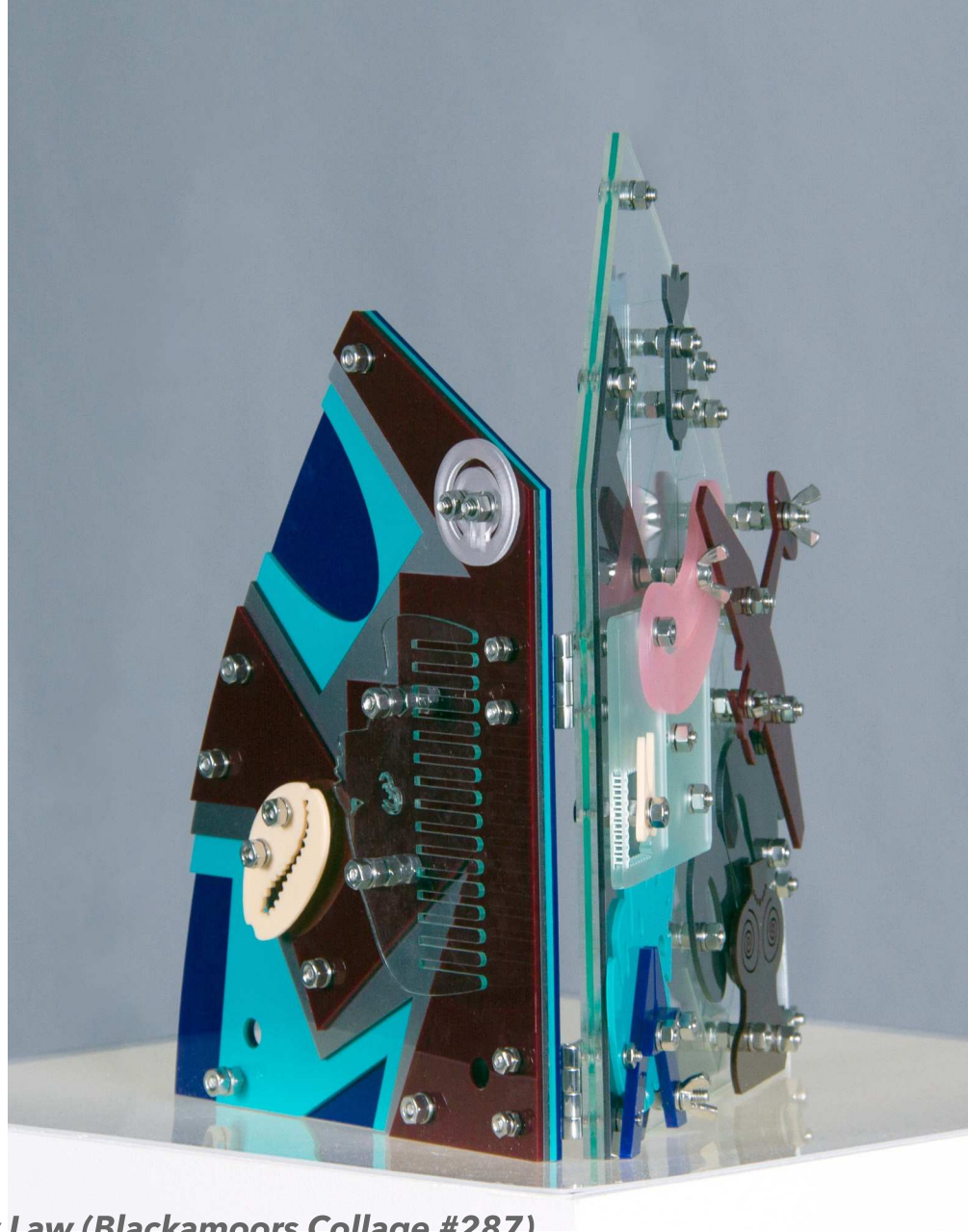
14 x 10 x 2 in



Neighborhood Watch (Blackamoors Collage #288)

Laser-cut plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

24 x 16 x 2 in



Broken Window Law (Blackamoors Collage #287)

Laser-cut plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

16 x 23 x 2 in



Fracture (Blackamoors Collage #285)

Laser-cut plexiglass and stainless steel hardware

23 x 16 x 2 in

CURRICULUM VITAE

b. 1984, Crowley, LA

Lives and works in New York City, NY

EDUCATION

2014 New York University, MA Visual Arts
Administration

2010 New York University, BFA Studio Art

SELECT SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 Untitled Solo Exhibition. Charlie James
Gallery Los Angeles, CA. (Forthcoming)
From Philly by Way of Richmond, With Love.
(Selections from *Damien Davis: Color Cargo*),
Adelphi University, Garden City, NY.
COLLAPSE: Black Wall Street Study,
Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn, NY.
Día de Playa, Mustakis Foundation, Santiago,
Chile.
- 2019 *COLLAPSE: Black Wall Street Study*, Untitled Art
Fair (Solo booth), Latchkey Gallery, Miami, FL.
For Demetrius, Sugar Hill Children's Museum of
Art & Storytelling, New York, NY
Color Cargo, (Traveling exhibition) The Center For
Art In Wood, Philadelphia, PA. & Visual Arts
Center of Richmond, Richmond, VA.
Autoethnography, Goggle Works Center for the
Arts, Reading, PA.
- 2018 *This Ain't No Disco*, Latchkey Gallery, New York,
NY.
Fun With A Purpose, Prattsville Art Center,
Prattsville, NY.
Waiting Room: Sickle Cell Study, Broadway
Windows @ 80WSE Gallery, New York, NY.

2017 *White Room*, METHOD Gallery, Seattle, WA.

2016 *OBJECT | AFFECTION*, Black Ball Projects,
Brooklyn, NY.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 *Uptown Triennial 2020*, Wallach Art Gallery at
Columbia University, New York, NY (Forthcoming)
Gay Guerrilla, Arcade Projects, New York, NY.
(Online exhibition)
Assembly, Mrs. Gallery, Maspeth, NY.
Inside Art, Children's Museum of Manhattan, New
York, NY. (Curated by David Rios)
Dissolving Artifacts, Studio 200, Brooklyn, NY.
(Curated by Aubrey and Lara Saget)
- 2019 *Damien Davis & Lina Puerta*, Ille Arts,
Amagansett, NY
*Serious Play: Translating Form, Subverting
Meaning*, BRIC, Brooklyn, NY.
Race and Revolution: Still Separate - Still Unequal,
(Traveling exhibition) August Wilson African
American Cultural Center, Pittsburgh, PA. (Curated
by Kathryn Fuller and Larry Ossei-Mensah)
Race and Revolution: Reimagining Monuments,
Old Stone House, Brooklyn, NY. (Curated by
Kathryn Fuller)
Human-Nature, Tiger Strikes Asteroid, Brooklyn NY.
(Curated by Erika Ranee)
Untitled, Kravets Wehby Gallery, New York, NY.
- 2018 *Cit.i.zen.ship: Reflections on Rights*, NYU Tisch
School of the Arts, Department of Photography &
Imaging, New York, NY.
In the Future When..., Welancora Gallery, Brooklyn,
NY. (Curated by Daricia Mia Demarr)
Pink is A Color That Feels Like Love, Stamp Gallery,
University of Maryland, College Park, MD.
(Curated by Katy Scarlet)

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS (continued)

- ReSignifications: The Black Mediterranean*, Manifesta Biennial, Palermo, Italy. (Curated by Awam Amkpa & Ellyn Toscano)
- BLACK BLOODED*, The New Gallery of Modern Art, Charlotte, NC.
- PATTERN RECOGNITION*, SPRING/BREAK Art Show, New York, NY. (Curated by Jessica Wallen)
- Race and Revolution: Still Separate - Still Unequal*, (Traveling exhibition) University of Connecticut at Stamford, Stamford, CT. (Curated by Kathryn Fuller and Larry Ossei-Mensah)
- 2017 *12 x 12, 2017*, Black Ball Projects, Brooklyn, NY.
- Convergence: 2017 NYU All Alumni Artist Exhibit*, NYU Kimmel Galleries, New York, NY.
- Race and Revolution: Still Separate - Still Unequal*, (Traveling exhibition) Smack Mellon, Brooklyn, NY. (Curated by Kathryn Fuller and Larry Ossei-Mensah)
- Published By The Artist 2017*, International Print Center New York, New York, NY. (Curated by Grayson Cox and Angela Conant)
- Sine Gallery: Berlin*, Sine Gallery, Berlin, Germany.
- The MYSYSPYN*, Nemeth Art Center, Park Rapids, MN. (Curated by Matthew Schum)
- Oneness*, Harlem School of the Arts, New York, NY. (Curated by Jonathan Patton)
- jux·ta·po·si·tion*, New York University, Rosenberg Gallery, New York, NY. (Curated by Lonnie Woods)
- 2016 *12" x 12"*, Black Ball Projects, Brooklyn, NY.
- Why I Want To Fuck Donald Trump*, Joshua Liner Gallery, New York, NY. (Curated by Alfred Steiner)
- Erote*, The Hollows Artspace, Brooklyn, NY.
- The Magic Flute: A Film in Pieces*, Washington Square Windows @ 80WSE Gallery, New York, NY.
- Itasca*, The Bindery Projects, St. Paul, MN. (Curated by Matthew Schum)

- 2015 *12" x 12" x 12"*, Black Ball Projects, Brooklyn, NY.
- ReSignifications*, Museo Bardini, Biagiotti Progetto Arte and Villa La Pietra, Florence, Italy. (Curated by Awam Amkpa) (catalog)
- RESPOND*, Smack Mellon, Brooklyn, NY.
- 2014 *Industry Industry*, Rob Buckley Gallery at All Angels Church, New York, NY.
- Homeland*, Prattville Art Center, Prattville, NY.
- 2013 *Coonskin: Blackness in Sequential Art*, arts Pace, New Haven, CT. (Curated by Kenya Robinson)
- The Poetics of Translation Art*, Kimmie Center, St oval Side Galleries, New York University, New York, NY.
- Wood*, Santiago International Corporation, New York, NY.
- 2012 *The Art of Mud Fest*, Prattville Art Center, Prattville, NY.
- Luxury*, Santiago International Corporation, New York, NY.
- Bicentennial 2012*, 159 Bleeker Street, New York, NY, Curated by Bruce High Quality Foundation.
- 2006 *Animal*, Rosenberg Gallery at New York University, New York, NY.
- 2005 *Peace by Piece*, Old Japan Bank, Aka-Ku, Hiroshima, Japan.
- 2003 *Post Integrity: Burnt to a Crisp*, Astrix Gallery, Brooklyn, NY.

PERFORMANCES

- 2017 *Untitled (Your World)* (Collaboration with Andria Morales) *Let Me Look at You*, Arlington Arts Center, Arlington, VA, February 11, 2017.
- 2016 *Untitled (Your World)* (Collaboration with Andria Morales) *PULSE/TRIGGER*, Sine Gallery, Newark, NJ, November 12, 2016.

PERFORMANCE continued

- Untitled (It's Your World)* (Collaboration with Andria Morales) *Home Perm 8*, Safe Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, July 14, 2016
- Untitled (A Meditation on Blackamoors)* *OBJECT | AFFECTION*, Black Ball Projects, Brooklyn, NY, June 22, 2016.
- Take Me Out* (Collaboration with Jeffrey Burdian. Featuring Mairikke Dau.) *Home Perm 7*, 245 Varet St, Brooklyn, NY, February 20, 2016
- 2015 *Sitcom Intro Home Perm 5*, 245 Varet St, Brooklyn, NY, June 6, 2015.
- 2014 *Untitled (A Meditation on Blackamoors) Home Perm*, 245 Varet St, Brooklyn, NY, May 31, 2014.

RESIDENCIES & FELLOWSHIPS

- 2020 Artist-in-Residence: Dieu Donné, Brooklyn, NY.
Artist-in-Residence: Mustakis Foundation, Santiago, Chile.
- 2019 Artist-in-Residence: Triangle Arts Association, Brooklyn, NY.
- 2018-19 Artist Studios Residency Program, Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY.
- 2018 Artist-in-Residence: Pilchuck Glass School, Stanwood, WA.
- 2016-17 Artist-in-Residence: Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Workspace Program, New York, NY.
- 2016 Fellow: Art & Law Program, Brooklyn, NY.
- 2012 Artist-in-Residence: Prattsville Art Center, Prattsville, NY.

AWARDS & HONORS

- 2017 Rema Hort Mann Foundation, Community Engagement Grant (Winner)
- 2016 Art Matters, Foundation Grant (Nominee)
Rema Hort Mann Foundation, Emerging Artist Award (Nominee)



