

# COLLOSSAL

## Art

### **Akea Brionne's Uncanny Rhinestone Tapestries Unsettle Memory and the Familiar**

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GRACE EB



“Yakemein.” All images © Akea Brionne, shared with permission

Woven into Akea Brionne’s glimmery Afro-surrealist tapestries is an impulse toward sustainability. With a degree in the subject and a practice rooted in research, the Detroit-based artist began considering how to minimize waste while developing photographs. Curbing consumption became a grounding principle that goes beyond material excess, extending to “ideas, conceptions, thoughts, and ways of being,” she tells Colossal.

Working on digital jacquard weavings, Brionne stitches rhinestones to garments, tiled floors, and other details, adding an element of decadence to each tapestry. Many of the portraits shown here were on view recently at Lyles & King in New York for Brionne’s solo show, *Roses Grow in Southern Soil*, and investigate “her grandfather’s journey between Mississippi and New Mexico in the 1970s at the tail end of The Great Migration.” She is interested in the lingering effects of colonialism and the African Diaspora, particularly as it relates to memory and how stories are passed from one generation to the next.

Whether focused on a single anonymous subject or a small group in front of expansive bodies of water, the works are infused with an eerie sense of the uncanny, subtly unsettling the familiar. “I also think about excess in terms of seeing a large amount of representation of Blackness that felt restrictive, so I strive to combat that and provide some diversity,” the artist adds.

Brionne’s work will be on view with Lyles & King at EXPO CHICAGO this April and in a group exhibition MassArt Art Museum opening in June. Stay updated with her work on Instagram.



"Garden Portrait #1" (2023). Photo by Charles Benton



"Wade in the Water" (2023). Photo by Charles Benton



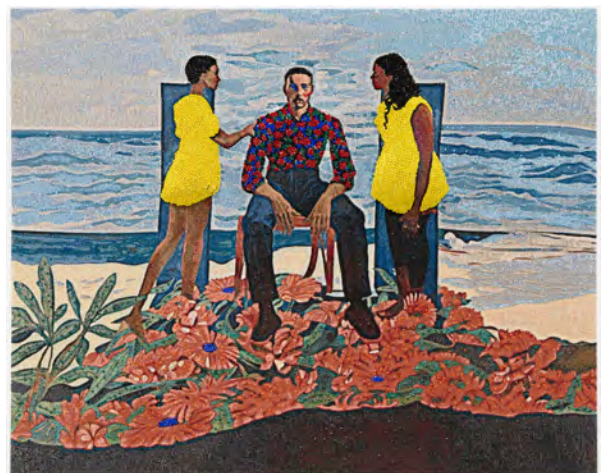
Detail of "Yakemein"



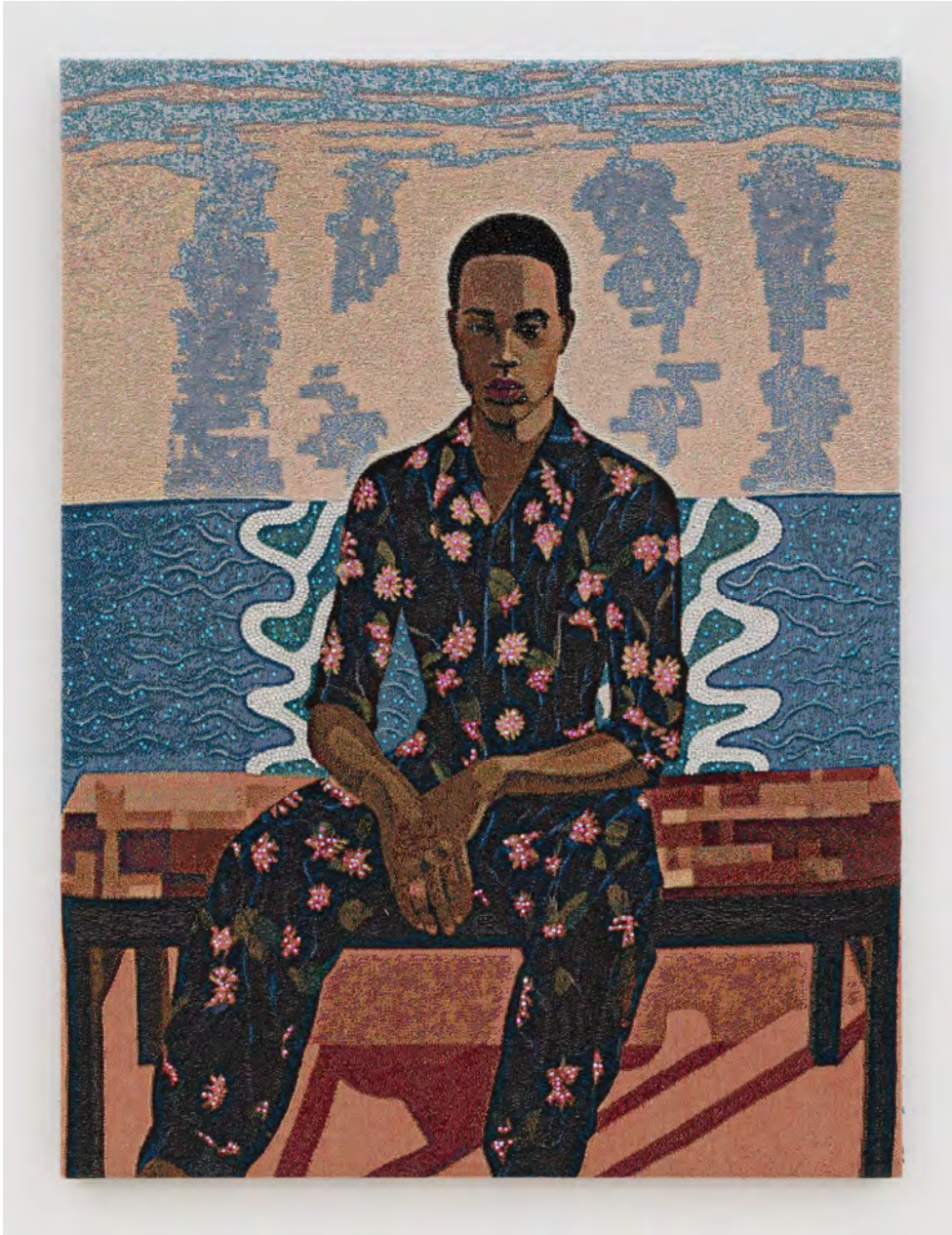
Left: "Look Away From It." Right: "Look Towards It"



Detail of "Always With You" (2023). Photo by Charles Benton



"Always With You" (2023). Photo by Charles Benton



“Open Water” (2024). Photo by Charles Benton