

Allana Clarke

I Feel Everything



Allana Clarke, *I Feel Everything*, 2023. Salon Pro 30 Sec. Super Hair Bond Glue, 65 x 72 x 4 in.

Opening Reception April 14, 2023, 7–9pm

Kavi Gupta presents *I Feel Everything*, an exhibition of new sculptural paintings by Trinidadian- American artist Allana Clarke made from Salon Pro 30 Sec. Super Hair Bond Glue, a material that has become signature to her practice.

Clarke's first solo exhibition to focus exclusively on this series of works, *I Feel Everything* is an aesthetic treatise on the poetics of black space—and Black space.

“As I developed the works I was thinking deeply about my relationship to the color black, approaching it as a space for discovery, experimentation, and multiplicity,” Clarke says.

To create the works, Clarke first pours thousands of 8-oz. bottles of the gloopy, black liquid onto mesh screens. She then wrestles with the material over the course of weeks as it slowly dries. Clawing, pulling, twisting, and scraping at the gradually-less-mutable surface with her bare hands and feet, Clarke imposes her physical and emotional will onto the substance. The undertaking transforms her medium's appearance and value—a punk subversion of its usual function, which is linked to systems that aim to negate aesthetics of Blackness.

Though not implicitly negative, hair extensions become self-defeating when they're socially encouraged as a way of attaining closer proximity to ideas of whiteness—for

example, when rules or laws legislate against natural Black hair styles. When you cannot access social mobility unless you participate in a system that denigrates what is inherent to your being, you exchange something of your essence for the hope of simply moving through the world with a bit more ease.

Clarke pioneered her performative sculptural method in order to create a tangible history of someone grappling with and moving through systems meant to denigrate conceptions of Blackness.

“What is important for me in the process of rearticulating this material is that it has become free—a completely new context has been created for it,” Clarke says. “This work is about freedom.”

Two types of works are presented in the exhibition: draped, undulating pieces made with fluid, organic gestures; and flatter pieces created with more restrictive, reiterative patterns of movement.

The more undulating works entice the mind into hidden zones of blackness within blackness lurking beneath petrified folds, covered up, mysterious to all but their maker. The flatter works are more about being present with what can be seen within rhythmic interplays of shine and shadow.

A visceral residue of corporeal feeling is perceptible in all of the work.

“My performance actions are embedded in the material and cured upon its surface,” Clarke says. “The longer you spend time with its blackness, the longer you rest with it, the longer you are in proximity to it, you begin the process of grasping its reality.”

Reliant upon time for their making, and formulated from a distinctly recognizable product of our time, Clarke’s hair bonding glue sculptures nonetheless possess a timeless aspect. As concrete objects, they palpably harken to the primordial beginnings of everything. As abstract markers of freedom, they feel more like images of faith.

“Black space requires patience,” says Clarke. “You have to truly pay attention to it to be able to receive its complexity, for it to reveal itself. This is a type of meditative space.”

Clarke’s first institutional solo exhibition, *A Particular Fantasy*, opened in the fall of 2022 with collaborating installations at Art Omi and Usdan Gallery. Other recent exhibitions include *Realms of Refuge*, a group exhibition at Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St.; the second FRONT International: Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art, *Oh Gods of Dust & Rainbows*, Cleveland, OH; the Bauhaus Centennial, *Bauhaus Now: Is Modernity an Attitude*; as well as exhibitions at Gibney Dance, New York; Invisible-Exports, New York; New School’s Glass Box Theater, New York; FRAC in Nantes, France; and SAVVY Contemporary in Berlin, Germany. In addition to completing a NXTHVN fellowship, Clarke has been an artist in residence at the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, Vermont Studio Center, Lighthouse Works, and Yaddo, and has received several grants, including the Toby Devan Lewis Fellowship, Franklin Furnace Fund, and Puffin Foundation Grant. Clarke is an assistant professor at Wayne State University in Detroit. She earned her BFA in Photography from New Jersey City University in 2011 and an MFA in Interdisciplinary Practice from MICA’s Mount Royal School of Art in 2014.



Allana Clarke, detail of *I Feel Everything*, 2023. Salon Pro 30 Sec. Super Hair Bond Glue, 65 x 72 x 4 in.