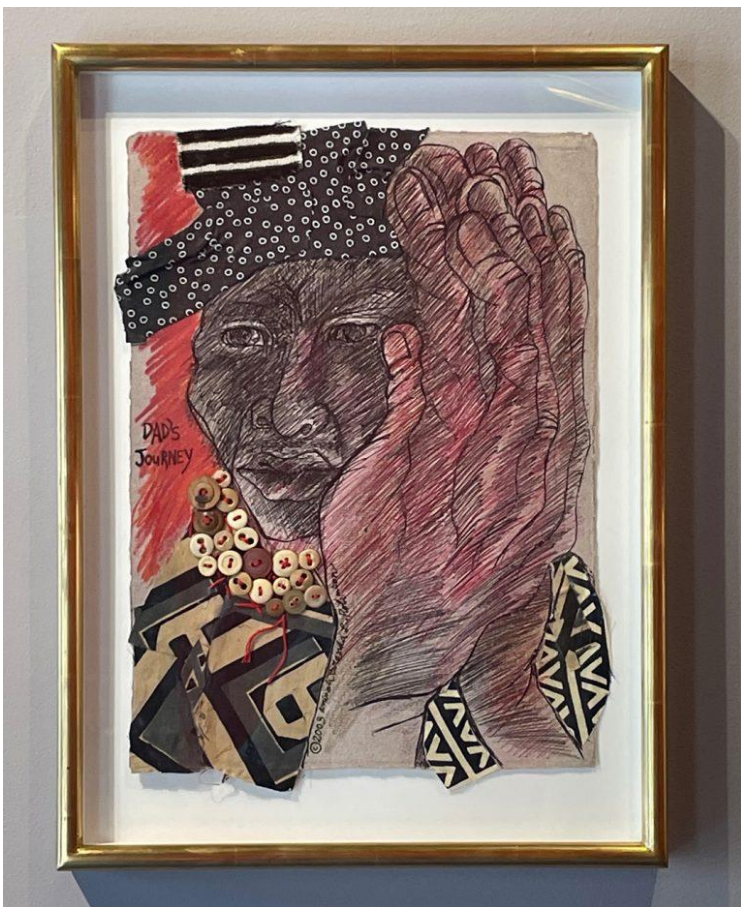


FORT GANSEVOORT

ART SPIEL

Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson: Character Studies, Curator: Character Studies at Fort Gansevoort

January 6, 2025 by Melissa Stern



Dad's Journey. 2003. Pen, ink, colored pencil, fabric, thread, buttons, on paper. 15 x 11

“She was weird,” said the Columbus Museum of Art curator affectionately of artist Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson at the press preview celebrating the late artist’s work. She went on to explain that Robinson made her own art supplies, lived an unconventional and rich life, making art in many mediums and acted as an informal archivist and raconteur of her community. “Weird,” in this context is a high compliment. Fort Gansevoort, an eccentric gallery in New York’s Meatpacking District announced its representation of

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Robinson's estate (1940-2015) in collaboration with the Columbus Museum, to which Robinson bequeathed her work and archives. It's a perfect match between artist and gallery.

A highly recognized artist (she was named a MacArthur fellow in 2004), Robinson was nonetheless lesser known in the mainstream art world. She inhabited an important role in Black community in Ohio. She was a storyteller and story collector, a self-taught archivist of her community's history and a tireless supporter of the Civil Rights movement. She wrote children's books, music and made work in many mediums. She left over 200 notebooks to the museum along with the full contents of her house. Fittingly, the exhibition at Fort Gansevoort will help to fund her legacy project, which will award fellowships to Black writers and artists as well as to aid in the conservation of her home and archives.

Robinson's drawings often incorporate found objects and collage, as in the piece *Grinding Rice* with Mortar and Pestle. An energetic drawing that captures both the gesture of women grinding and their concentration on the task, their eyes cast downwards as they focus on their movements. Petals of fabric fan out around the figure as well as form her hair. You can feel the rhythmic energy of their task in the strong shapes and gestures with which Robinson has sketched them. This is typical of most of her works on paper. They all speak in the same visual language and gesture. And they all have a story to tell.

Robinson's skill as a storyteller is paramount to the power of her work. The walls are speaking, shouting out the stories and histories that Robinson collected throughout her life. Fort Gansevoort has hung several of the walls with a mass of her work. They look wonderful all hung together on the newly painted, brilliant red gallery walls, reportedly Robinson's favorite color.

I am slightly less enamored with the sculptures. They are less skilled in conveying the stories that Robinson tells and appear a little stiff and mannered to me, lacking the grace and lyricism of the wall pieces. Nonetheless, it's always interesting to see an artist not content to be contained by one medium or dimension. They are ambitious and funny and worthy.

The show runs through Jan. 25 and it's worth trekking over to the overly hip and fashionable Meatpacking District to this wonderful little historic building to enter Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson's world. You will be transported.