

LEGACY INTERRUPTED

RECENT WORKS BY HOPE MCMATH

In her latest body of work, Hope McMath reveals the tensions between her ancestry, her current life path, and the contemporary debates on how we know, teach, and reckon with our collective history. She juxtaposes the facts of her ancestral ties to the Confederacy and eras of enslavement and Jim Crow south with her existence as a white woman in the South who stands with those engaged in tearing down the very systems the men and women in her lineage helped to build.

Only recently did she begin to excavate her past. "On a trip to Montgomery, Alabama - shared with 20 friends and those I had only just met - I recognized that I consistently hold space for others to share their stories yet, I had not done my own work of remembering, reckoning, and reimagining my own story," Hope shared. "I was bearing witness to the lives of others, but had little knowledge of my own story. It was on this trip, organized by my friends and collaborators at 904WARD, sitting on a stopped bus in the middle of the night somewhere in southern Alabama, that I made the commitment to reach back and grab what had been left behind."

Through a process of self scrutiny and research, Hope's journey has taken her from an intellectual pursuit to a process of personal reflection and art making. The resulting prints are large in scale, multilayered in their imagery, and intuitive in the process that brought them into being. Woodcuts, silkscreens, and letterpress give image and voice to themes of remembrance, reckoning, truth telling, and hope. Census records, last wills and testaments, and well-worn symbols combine with the visages of three main figures: Hope's ancestor - Hachaliah McMath, in his Confederate uniform, the Women of the Southland monument, recently removed from Springfield Park, and Harriet Tubman, an image of strength, resistance, and survival whose face holds the memory of the people only known by dehumanizing statistics captured in family inventories. Harriet becomes the representation of the more than 432 men, women and children that Hope's family enslaved.

Along the way Hope committed to do this learning in public. She first shared her still evolving journey on the stage of the Florida Theater as part of Barbara Colaciello's *Untold Stories* and now through this exhibition. "It feels important to not do the work of reckoning in isolation or in the safety and privilege of my own white-bodied experience."

These works land at a time of censorship and erasure of Black history in our schools, debates over the continued infection of the 'lost cause' narrative, the rise of hate groups, the removal of monuments from public spaces, and the need for reparations for past wrongs. "I have not created these works as a guilt or shame-driven catharsis. I am interested in staring at the truth, stripped of excuses and myth. More importantly I am inspired to grapple with what responsibility for past harm looks like - how my life can become one tiny interruption."

Throughout the exhibition there are additional didactics giving insights into the content. You will also experience a powerful piece of writing by Jordy/n Bowen, who is part of the team here at Yellow House. Their resulting words are evocative, powerful and add much to this space. And, as is typical of the Yellow House experience, let's be in conversation. You are invited to look, read, share, and create and to consider questions of what it means to interrupt harmful legacies, how we rectify a history of honoring the dishonorable, and why it matters to actively engage in the healing of ourselves and our communities. This is learning in public and we know it can be messy, but we are honored and humbled to explore and change with you.

This is Hope's first exhibition at Yellow House, a space that she has held for artists, poets, activists and the community for nearly seven years. The majority of the art works in this exhibition were created during an artist residency at FSCJ South Campus, under the gracious guidance of Patrick Miko. The solo exhibition opens in celebration of the work of *Take 'Em Down Jacksonville* and in recognition of the racial reckoning that continues in Jacksonville, the state of Florida and beyond.

