

VALERIE DEAS

Artist Statement

"My creative process stems from my natural inclination to create from inspiration. I make multimedia pieces using everything from acrylic paint, oil pastels, watercolors, and graphite, to gesso, fabric, and photography. My work draws on diverse artistic traditions and genres to explore depth and movement in two dimensions, often through abstract figures. I began with more traditional quilting techniques, and I continue to use that formal training—but I never wanted to stay in a box. The Gee's Bend quilts showed me that I could improvise, avoid straight lines, and break the rules. I developed a more abstract quilting practice that I began to combine with my painting and drawing, and I realized I could bring cubism to textiles. I also integrate photography in my work to blow up images and create new fabrics. My painting becomes part of my quilting and vice versa. I add texture and dimensionality to my textile art with overlays of organza, layers of gesso, appliqué, and perspectival techniques borrowed from realist painting. I often work with monochrome palettes to focus on textures (inspired by everything from batik fabric to woodcuts) and strong lines (evoking Mexican muralism).

My works explore what we reveal and what we conceal, what we see in the people and the world around us. I rarely portray faces realistically. Instead, abstract figures invite the audience in, asking them who and what they see there. My work similarly reaches out into the world, drawing on international art and craft techniques, dance, music, and global landscapes. The rhythms and lines of everything from Senegalese dance and belly dance to samba and jazz show up in my pieces. I have taught in public schools and led community workshops, always urging people to experiment, be creative, let art be healing and not limiting. I have brought together my quilting background and my abstract painting to arrive at a mixed-media form that is constantly evolving. But this is not an endpoint. There are always new works in progress, new forms to work in, and new inspirations. I am at my best when I work freely."

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