

# 2013/14 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships Anonymous Award



**SANDRA PERRY**

Fine Art  
Graduate Student  
Columbia University



My practice is situated in digital media: video, sound and photography. What interests me is investigating desire, materiality, labor and power, dislocation, historiography, the performativity of race and gender, and how these aspects reflect on our relationships with historical narratives: recalling the past, history's inherent slippages and how nostalgic mutations manifest themselves. Some of my recent work situates itself directly within the traditions of black conceptual artists. "Homecoming" (2012) is a series of objects that respond to a work by David Hammons. Flags carry encumbered histories which are sometimes hard to decode. As a metaphor for place and space, I'm interested in how and in which ways a flag's symbology is transformed by the people it represents.

Working with my grandmother, a retired nurse's aide, we are creating seven 72-by-108-inch patchwork quilts of The Confederate States of Americas' (1861-1865) flag from found materials in our homes in the Black Nationalist colors. We will travel to Wise, North Carolina, her birthplace, where we will stake our flags to the small plot my grandmother, her parents and siblings farmed as sharecroppers, occupying the land.



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Other works develop from spaces that are deeply personal yet are available through specific cultural gazes. *God Gave Noah The Rainbow Sign, No More Water The Fire Next Time* (2011) is a verse from a negro spiritual and inspiration for the title of James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*. I made helium-filled balloons by seaming together black and clear trash bags with a clothing iron, creating the 52-letter phrase. The verse refers to how the earth will be destroyed a second time: it first by water (Noah's flood) and the second by fire (no more water, the fire next time). I am interested in the paraphernalia of celebration, and the connection between freedom, destruction of systems and death in the Christian Baptist tradition.



During the summer I interned for performance/video artist Kalup Linzy. I began to understand that the use of his body – a queer black body – was extremely powerful. His work, along with other artists, validate otherness, making it visible. I consider this a form of radical activism. These bodies don't represent victimhood; they queer the space, expanding what we consider normative.



As my search for a graduate program began, my concern was not only finding the facilities and teaching faculty that would help shape my practice but also finding in a program opportunities to TA. I had tremendous support throughout high school from my art teacher (I give her credit for motivating me to graduate high school and go on to higher learning) and from my professors at Alfred University. They inspired me to dig deep and make thoughtful work while encouraging me to finish college, regardless of my financial hardships, which made a four year degree stretch into seven. As a graduate student and subsequently an arts educator, I will extend the support I received when I desperately needed it to my students. It's the only way I know how to adequately thank those who have sacrificed for me.

