

“Never Done” Object Tour

Co-curator Rachel Seligman reflects on artist Joyce J. Scott’s *Untitled Fairy Tale from the Graphic Novel Series*, 2019-2020.

Transcript

Rachel Seligman: This work is called *Untitled Fairy Tale* – and it is part of Joyce J. Scott’s *Graphic Novel* series. So those clues suggest that the artist is storytelling with this piece. Scott considers herself a storyteller in all her work, whether she’s performing, lecturing, or making visual art; and storytelling through art is a tradition in her family: her mother and her mother’s father were both quilt-makers whose quilts were like diaries – recording the stories of her family and its history.

This work is not particularly large – it’s about 3 ½ feet high by less than 2 feet wide – but it is monumental nonetheless. I say this, first because of how it’s made: it’s composed of thousands of tiny glass seed beads which she has handstitched to form the composition, and when you see it up close and recognize the labor that went into making it, you feel its monumentality. Secondly, I say it because I believe its imagery tells an epic, mysterious tale. The title indicates that it is a fairy tale, and an earlier iteration of this work alluded to a green demon, which I think we can see on the right side of the composition, its features outlined in red. Facing the demon is a woman, who I believe is the heroine of the tale. Perhaps she is someone who has been a victim of violence or injustice, as women with stories like this often figure in Scott’s work. But I also see this figure as the agent of her own salvation, someone with agency and power, who will prevail against the forces that try to silence her. And there are lots of ways we could interpret the action of the story – what she is doing? What are the objects that she holds? What are the other figures in red, orange, blue, and yellow doing? And that openness is one of the great joys of looking at artwork – there’s room for each of us to understand the image in our own way. Imagine how you would unfold this story!