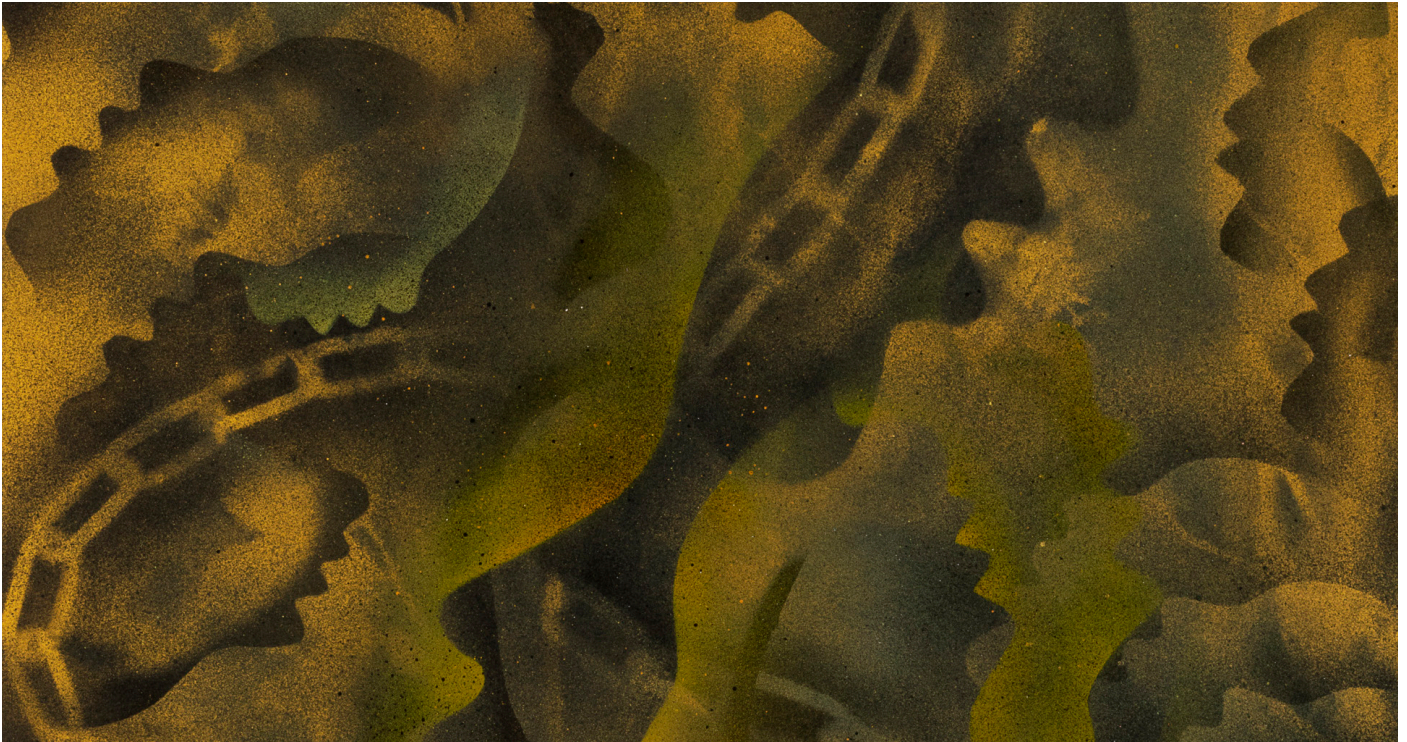


Lonnie Holley: Thoughts in Captivity

16 March - 13 May 2023

Opening reception | Thursday 16 March 6-8pm



Edel Assanti is pleased to present *Thoughts in Captivity*, a presentation of recent works by Lonnie Holley in conjunction with his inclusion in the Royal Academy's exhibition, *Souls Grown Deep Like the Rivers* (17 March - 18 June 2023).

Bringing together assemblage sculptures composed from found materials, alongside paintings on quilt and paper, the group of works make reference to Holley's adolescence and incarceration from the age of eleven in the mid 1960s at the Alabama Industrial School for Negro Children (now known as Mt. Meigs). *Thoughts in Captivity* follows the recent release of acclaimed podcast series 'Unreformed: the Story of the Alabama Industrial School for Negro Children', in which Holley is interviewed extensively as a survivor and witness to the realities of the segregated institution, which although founded on the idea of rehabilitation, became a site of horrific abuse, often referred to as a slave camp.

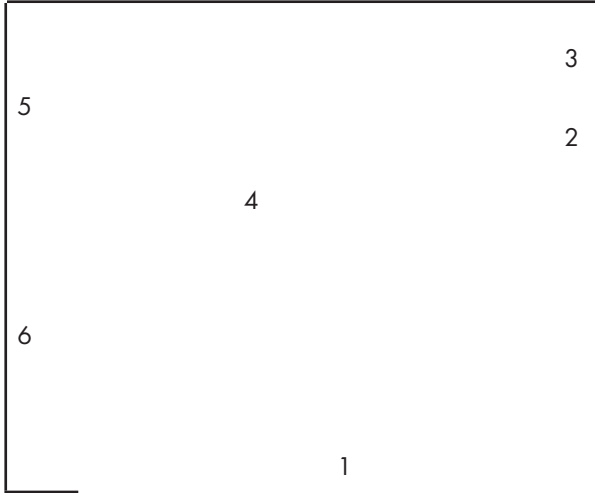
In *Chain Gang: Mt. Meigs*, 2019, a cluster of US military issue forks are held upright by the force of a padlock. Taking on a human form, the locking of these objects and titular reference to chain gangs, commonly associated with slavery, reflects on an unjust system of rules and retribution that shaped Holley's younger years. At Mt. Meigs, children toiled on plantations under the guise of being taught job skills, with physical punishments enforced for poor performance.

Thoughts in Captivity, 2022, presents a composite of silhouettes overlaid and interlaced with sections of chains. The piece evokes the time the artist spent in isolation following an attempted escape, whilst lending insight into the relationship between these traumatic experiences and Holley's creative process. As

Holley has explained, "I was in silence. I had no way of openly expressing. What happened was I was innerly expressing. My emotions and my feelings were being digested and written down in the pattern of my brain."

Alongside the Royal Academy's exhibition, Holley is currently included in *Deep Horizons* at Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art. Later in 2023, North Miami Museum of Contemporary Art opens Holley's solo exhibition *If You Really Knew*. Holley recently appeared in the major exhibitions *We Will Walk: Art and Resistance in the American South* at Turner Contemporary, UK, (2020), as well as *History Refused to Die* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, USA, (2018), and *Outliers and American Vanguard Art* at the National Gallery of Art, USA, (2018), curated by Lynne Cooke, which toured to the High Museum and LACMA. Other recent exhibitions include MASS MoCA, (2017); the de Young Museum (2017) and the Studio Museum curated by Thomas J. Lax, (2014). Holley's first major retrospective, *Do We Think Too Much? I Don't Think We Can Ever Stop: Lonnie Holley, A Twenty-Five Year Survey*, was organised by the Birmingham Museum of Art and travelled in 2003 to the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham, England. His work is included in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the Smithsonian American Art Museum; National Gallery of Art and the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, all USA, among others. Holley's first film, *I Snuck Off the Slave Ship*, (2019), premiered at Sundance Film Festival in 2019. In 2022, Holley won a prestigious fellowship award from United States Artists, a Chicago-based non-profit that focuses on direct-to-artist grants. Holley is signed to Jagjaguwar, and lives and works in Atlanta, GA, USA.

Lonnie Holley: Thoughts in Captivity



1. Lonnie Holley, *The Protector*, 2022, Acrylic, spray paint, oil stick, nails on quilt and quilt parts mounted on wood, 152.5 x 122 x 3.8 cm, 60 x 48 x 1 1/2 in.

2. Lonnie Holley, *Who Locked Up the Rules (America)*, 2019, Padlock and wooden ruler, 7.5 x 20.7 x 4.5 cm, 3 x 8 1/8 x 1 3/4 in.

3. Lonnie Holley, *Chain Gang: Mt. Meigs*, 2019, Padlock and eight steel forks, 20 x 9 x 9 cm, 7 7/8 x 3 1/2 x 3 1/2 in.

4. Lonnie Holley, *The First and Last Score*, 2020, Wooden shoe moulds, wood and sheet music, 200 x 100 x 70 cm, 78 3/4 x 39 3/8 x 27 1/2 in.

5. Lonnie Holley, *Thoughts in Captivity*, 2022, Spray paint on yellow paper, 84.5 x 59.5 cm, 33 1/4 x 23 3/8 in.

6. Lonnie Holley, *Watering Myself the Best I Can (One Quart)*, 2019, Tin watering can and brass tap, 44.5 x 25 x 14 cm, 17 1/2 x 9 7/8 x 5 1/2 in.