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VISUAL ARTS & ARCHITECTURE

## Summer reprieve

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### **Sculpture: Chakaia Booker (through Sept. 1)**

Chakaia Booker creates extraordinary objects. Imposing, complex, at times industrial, her sculptures crafted from recycled tires are both startling and beautiful. Using thick, worn rubber as her primary medium, Booker's task is a challenging one. It's hard to imagine the sheer physical strength required in order to cut, twist, layer and bolt the heavy material, much less transform it into spiky, curling and jutting compositions that are animistic and energized. Some of her wall-hanging constructions seem wearable like masks or a headdress, while others writhe in rippling overlays with scaly skins. Two large sculptures installed on Sandler Hudson Gallery's roof seem bristling with life and demonstrate the sculptor's ease with grand scale, in works that are not only visually arresting, but rich in metaphors of power, strength, adaptability and sensuality. "Phobic Digressions," rising to over 9 feet, resembles a sci-fi portal or an odd, gargantuan wishbone. Covered in curling tiles of rubber tire over an arching steel frame, this piece has a deliciously ominous quality that is both reptilian and human; walking around it, under it or through it is irresistible. "Wrench (Wench) II" is equally charismatic — sexual, serpentine and decidedly female, bearing a wrenchlike head and similar base. Invoking woman as siren, tool and object, it is covered with draping and flirtatious fringe. Like Booker's other works, it invites admiration and touch.



Sandler Hudson Gallery  
([ENLARGE](#))

Chakaia Booker transforms salvaged tires into abstract sculptures such as 'Phobic Digressions' (foreground) and 'Wrench (Wench) II.'

*Sandler Hudson Gallery, 1009-A Marietta St. N.W., Atlanta. 404-817-3300.*

### **Clark Atlanta University Art Galleries (permanent collection)**

There are 1,200 paintings, textiles, sculptures, carvings and other objects in this Clark Atlanta's permanent collection. Within view of hand-loomed Nigerian cloth and quilts from South Georgia hangs a distinctly urban composition, Larry Walker's 1996 mixed-media work, "Other Voices, Other Spaces: Spirit of Wild Things." The Harlem-raised artist layers newspaper, ads and graffiti on a dark background of brick wall. He pairs images of [Eddie Murphy](#) (one unfettered, one obscured), Native Americans, sexual imagery of two women and various other contrasting elements including a ghostly, outlined cross. Shades of black surround a center touched with red, white and streaks of blue, while converging angles, lines and text lead the eye into the painting's scattered heart. There, a solid, black X conjures a host of historical allusions, while off to the side sits its alter-ego in shadow. The words "cross," "wild man" and "blackness" (twice) heighten the complexity of this sophisticated exploration of identity.



Larry Walker

(ENLARGE)

'Other Voices, Other Spaces'  
blends newsprint, ads and graffiti

As Walker offers up questions of public and private selves, perception and reality, interlocking pieces of past and present, — it seems fitting that his subtle grids and colors harmonize with squares and strips of fabric in nearby quilts and a large assemblage by Radcliffe Bailey. Visually and thematically, Walker's voice forms a clear, connective bridge to rural roots, the Harlem Renaissance and the next generation of African-American artists.

*Trevor Arnett Hall, 223 James P. Brawley Drive, S.W., Atlanta. 404-880-6644.*

### Malick Sidibé: Photographs

(through Nov. 18)

Small black and white photographs by Malick Sidibé provide an intimate glimpse of everyday life in the West African nation of Mali. Many of these works date to the 1960s and '70s, a time of enormous cultural change as Mali transitioned from French colonial rule to political independence. Sidibé is lauded for his painterly photographic compositions, contrasting figures and faces against boldly patterned textiles — lines, zigzags squares and spots.

An untitled portrait from 1968 exemplifies Sidibé's use of simple stance and rich patterning. A young woman wears a dress covered in large, repeating diamond shapes. She stands between two young men in simple attire. Each is posed with a transistor radio, looking placidly ahead. A backdrop of wide vertical stripes and carpet with overall, circular designs make both faces and clothing seem to pop. Sidibé borders some of his photographs in floral designs, hand-painted on the glass in which they're simply framed. Red, green and yellow (colors of the Mali flag) add a bright, delicate touch to the black and white images with their strong geometric elements.

Also exhibited are works from Sidibé's "Vues de Dos" (Views of Backs) series, in which the photographer captures his subjects from behind, creating intriguing images of bared necks and shoulders in a compelling juxtaposition of individuality and anonymity.

*High Museum of Art, 1280 Peachtree St., Atlanta. 404-733-4400.*



Sandler Hudson Gallery  
(ENLARGE)

"In Between the Lines II" transforms a suit into a sardonic symbol of American themes.

### **S'reggin: Lisa Beane**

Lisa Beane pulls no punches. Taking cues from long-standing cultural caricatures, her searing presentation of epithets and stereotypes hits racism head-on. Beane uses text, collaged images, markings and painting along with a large dose of comic-book cartooning.

"The Kiss" riffs on Lichtenstein's work by the same name, replacing the subjects with Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemmings, while "The Return of the Bandito" takes aim at White America's stereotyping of Mexican immigrants. Beane takes on the suits, literally and figuratively, with works like "In Between the Lines II." Ornamenting a jacket and pants with lettering and red-painted dollar bills, her acerbic annotations of the Bill of Rights include scratch-outs and additions, complete with "yeah yeah" and "blah blah." In an intricate composition, "Ten Little Porch Monkeys" features monkey heads, anatomical drawings, a childlike how-to for crafting white pointed hoods, paint-scrawled amens and derisive running commentary.

Despite her cheerful palette and lighthearted style, there's no hiding the phrases and imagery that provoke, disturb and offend. Beane's choice to title the show "s'reggin," an inversion of the n-word, is used to prove her point. We may camouflage, brush over or make light of language, but ultimately, words and pictures with racially biased undertones both deform and damage.

*Sandler Hudson Gallery, 1009-A Marietta St., NW, Atlanta. 404-817-3300*