

A RICH RAINBOW

Black, Blue, Green, Yellow, Orange, Red, Pink | Shinique Smith



Shinique Smith (American, born 1971). *Black, Blue, Green, Yellow, Orange, Red, Pink*. 2015. Clothing, fabric, and ribbon on wood panel. 72 × 252 × 6 in. (182.9 × 640.1 × 15.2 cm). The Joyner / Giuffrida Collection. © Shinique Smith, Courtesy David Castillo Gallery. Photography by John Schweikert

Anchored on the left by a vertical rectangle of dense black, this wall piece unfurls in a rainbow-like sequence of colors—blue, green, yellow, orange, red, and pink. The textures of each color rectangle—along with loosely hanging pieces of fabric—identify this as a work of fiber art. The viewer will notice that while each of the ridged rectangles forms a coherent color profile, the longer one examines them, the more evident it becomes that there is significant variation in color. Looking even more closely, zippers, buttons, collars, and other features emerge, revealing that each rectangle is a meticulously bundled set of clothing items and fabrics.

The artist is Shinique Smith, a Baltimore native and graduate of the Maryland Institute College of Art. She is currently based in New York and Los Angeles. Smith's work encompasses a wide range of approaches and mediums to create monumental paintings and sculptures. In addition to the kind of work illustrated here, Smith is perhaps best known for her large-scale paintings that incorporate bright colors and swirling calligraphic elements.

Black, Blue, Green, Yellow, Orange, Red, Pink is not simply an exercise in the contemplation of color, texture, and scale. As the artist has described, the garments in this work are imbued with meaning from their geographic origins, or the friends and family members from whom she has collected them.

"The clothing and objects that I use in my work are collected over time. They come from my home, from my friends and family, and from places I've travelled ... The history of each object is inherited and absorbed into whole clusters of color and relative meaning."

CLASSROOM CONNECTION

Ask students to look closely at *Black, Blue, Green, Yellow, Orange, Red, Pink*. Discuss with them the materials and process of this object. Why might she have collected these garments rather than dyeing fabric? Which of the colors do they think was the hardest to find? (Once students propose ideas, you can share that the artist said green was the hardest to find and match.) What changes for them about the object if they know that these garments came from particular places and people? What garments do the students have that have emotional significance to them? Why?

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