

ARTFORUM

ATLANTA

"Material Girls: Contemporary Black Women Artists"

SPELMAN COLLEGE MUSEUM OF FINE ART

350 Spelman Lane SW

September 6 - December 1

Maren Hassinger's *Love*, 2005-12, in the far corner of the gallery, displays inflated hot pink plastic shopping bags gathered in the shape of an obtuse triangle rising up to the ceiling. It is impossible to see *Love* and not think of the collective progress made by the gay rights movement that has used this symbol of a pink triangle since the 1970s, as well the individual acts that went into shaping the movement. The allegorical use of materials continues in Sonya Clark's *Plain Weave*, 2008—a simple, elegant grid of gold-colored thread and black plastic combs held together in the royal kente cloth pattern—elevating throwaway objects by using them to represent this coveted textile.



Such are two instances of the ways in which Chakaia Booker, Maya Freelon Asante, Martha Jackson Jarvis, Joyce J. Scott, and Renée Stout, in addition to Hassinger and Clark—challenge the social and cultural identities of objects, blurring the boundary between natural and industrial materials. Take, for instance, Booker's contribution: masses of recycled rubber tires—some sliced into strandlike lengths, others cut to sharp, pointed, staccato shapes—elegantly manipulated into long sculptural tableaux or smaller, compact works that allude to organic material and figuration. Whereas irrefutable power, speed, and performance dominate the commercially driven affect of automobile tires, Booker's use of these discarded, visibly worn wheels—in tandem with her subsequent manipulation in composing her sculptures—speaks to a range of experience by showing the tangible effects of the environment on the objects. It is in this way that "Material Girls" spurs a consideration of the desire for newness in commodity objects and stakes a claim for finding value in the materiality that marks our experience, in spite of its monetary equivalent.

Image: Sonya Clark, *Seven Layer Tangle*, 2005, plastic combs, glue, 7 x 30 x 30".