

CAROLINE KIPP



SOCIAL DISTANCING

STUDIO VISITS

A NEW SERIES WHERE WE'LL BE GETTING A PEEK INTO THE LIVES OF ARTISTS AS THEY FILL US IN ON HOW THEY'RE NAVIGATING ART MAKING, SOCIAL DISTANCING AND QUARANTINE IN THE WAKE OF THE CURRENT GLOBAL CRISIS.

MY HOPE IS THESE VISITS WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH A BIT OF SOLACE AND CONNECTION, SERVING AS A REMINDER THAT YOU'RE NOT ALONE IN WHATEVER YOU MAY BE FEELING DURING THIS UNPRECEDENTED MOMENT.

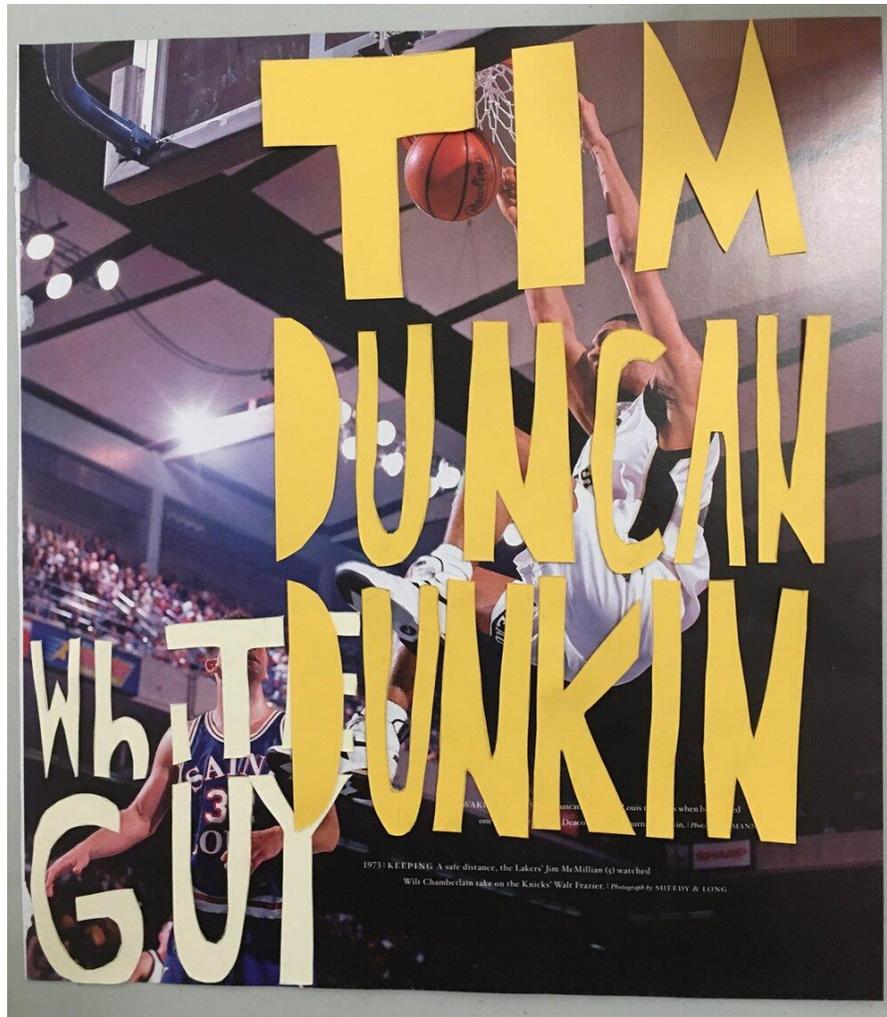
8. MICHAEL C. THORPE. NEWTON, MA.

June 30, 2020

Michael C. Thorpe is a visual artist with a primary focus in textiles. By combining fabric, imagery and language Thorpe is exploring the limitations of both social constructs and textiles to evoke alternative perspectives on the human experience. Through his newest series composed of quilted basketball jerseys, Thorpe is questioning what it means to be both black and an athlete in this contemporary moment. For more information, please see: <http://michaelcthorpe.com> and on Instagram [@iversonsdurag](#)



Michael Thorpe. *Bulls Number 91*, 2020. Jersey fabric, thread, plastic. Image courtesy of the artist.



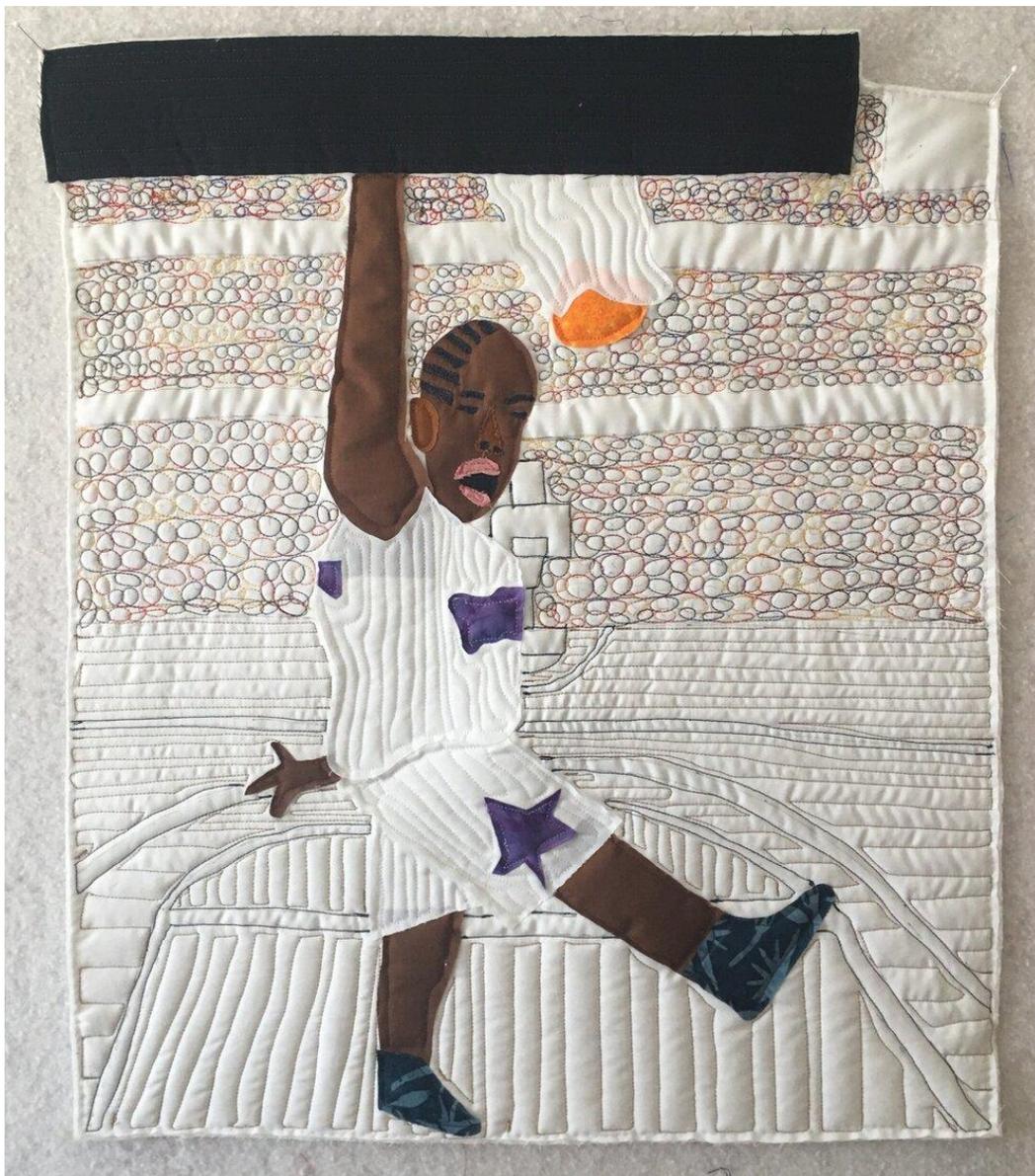
Michael Thorpe. *Tim Duncan Dunkin*, 2020. Magazine paper, card stock. Image courtesy of the artist.

First, and most importantly, how are you doing? How are you navigating the highs and lows?

I'm doing pretty well, oddly enough. Right before the pandemic struck I decided to dedicate all of my time to my art practice after the success of my first show. Which has been a major learning experience. I have been extremely fortunate to receive a couple of commissions that have been able to keep me afloat. The way I have been navigating everything is through getting lost in my work, almost to a point where I shelter myself from the outside world. Luckily I have a community that doesn't mind listening to me ramble about what I'm doing.

It's my experience that most artists engage with some level of self-isolation in their day to day art practice. Has this been your experience? And if so, have you found these innate rhythms to be helpful during this larger, world-wide experience of isolation?

I think being comfy while being alone and working is the main reason that I haven't been affected too much during this time. I definitely have days where I'm bored about doing the same stuff but for the majority of the time I have been able to sustain a very productive schedule.



Michael Thorpe. *Dunk Man*, 2020. Batik fabric, thread. Image courtesy of the artist.



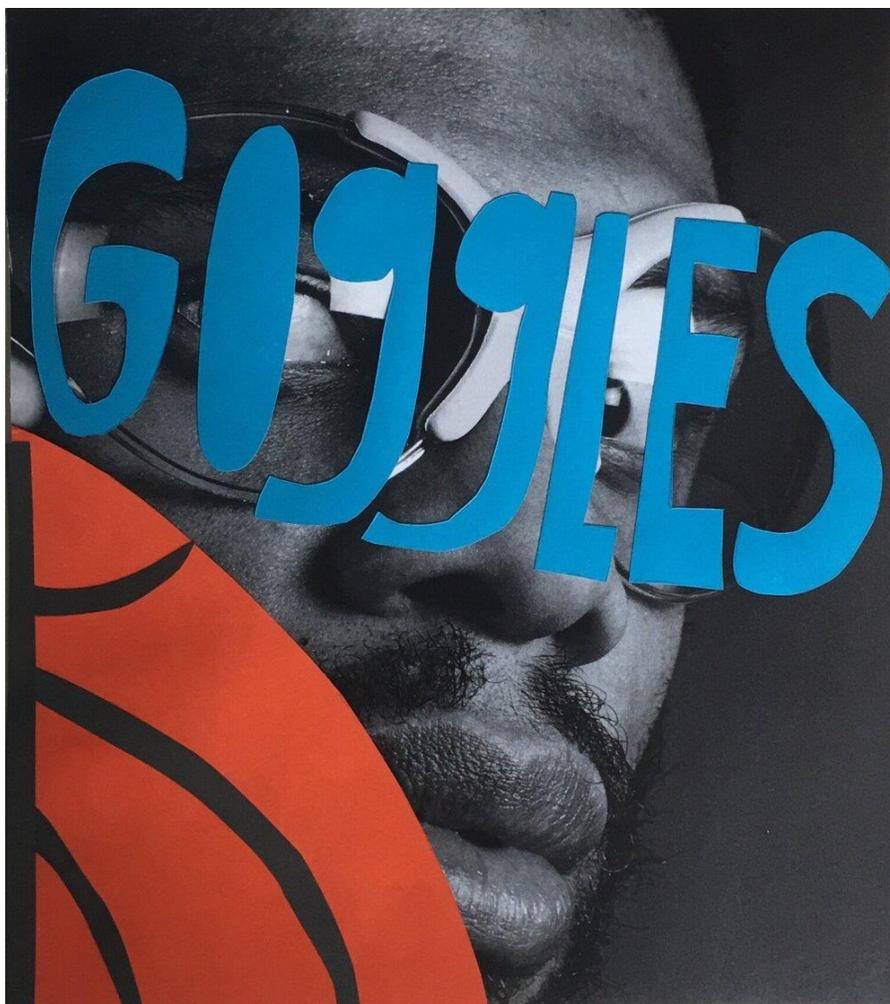
Michael Thorpe. *Hardaway Number 1*, 2020. Jersey fabric, thread, plastic. Image courtesy of the artist.

It would be great if you could briefly talk us through your practice. Understanding it is integral to appreciating the multivalence of your work.

The center of my work is making the world I see, through images and/or through text. I make works out of quilts that depict the world I see. I have also been exploring this idea of using images and words interchangeably. I love the idea of using words to describe something so it gives the viewer an opportunity to see however they do. This is extremely exciting to me because it gives my work truly endless possibilities. Figuring out this idea alongside developing my style has given me the confidence to expand my into other mediums. I am also currently creating works on paper. I am working with found images from magazines and books that I have been replacing the images and words with my own.

Has any of your imagery shifted in a reflection to what's currently happening? Or are you considering using coronavirus related imagery for future projects? Do you find it necessary to make work about the pandemic? And why, or why not?

My work hasn't been influenced by the pandemic. I don't think I will make anything that is directly related either. I think it is extremely important to make work about the pandemic. I'm just not the artist to do it. Art reflects the times and this is one of the craziest times in history. It's going to be fascinating to step back and look at all the work that was produced during this time.



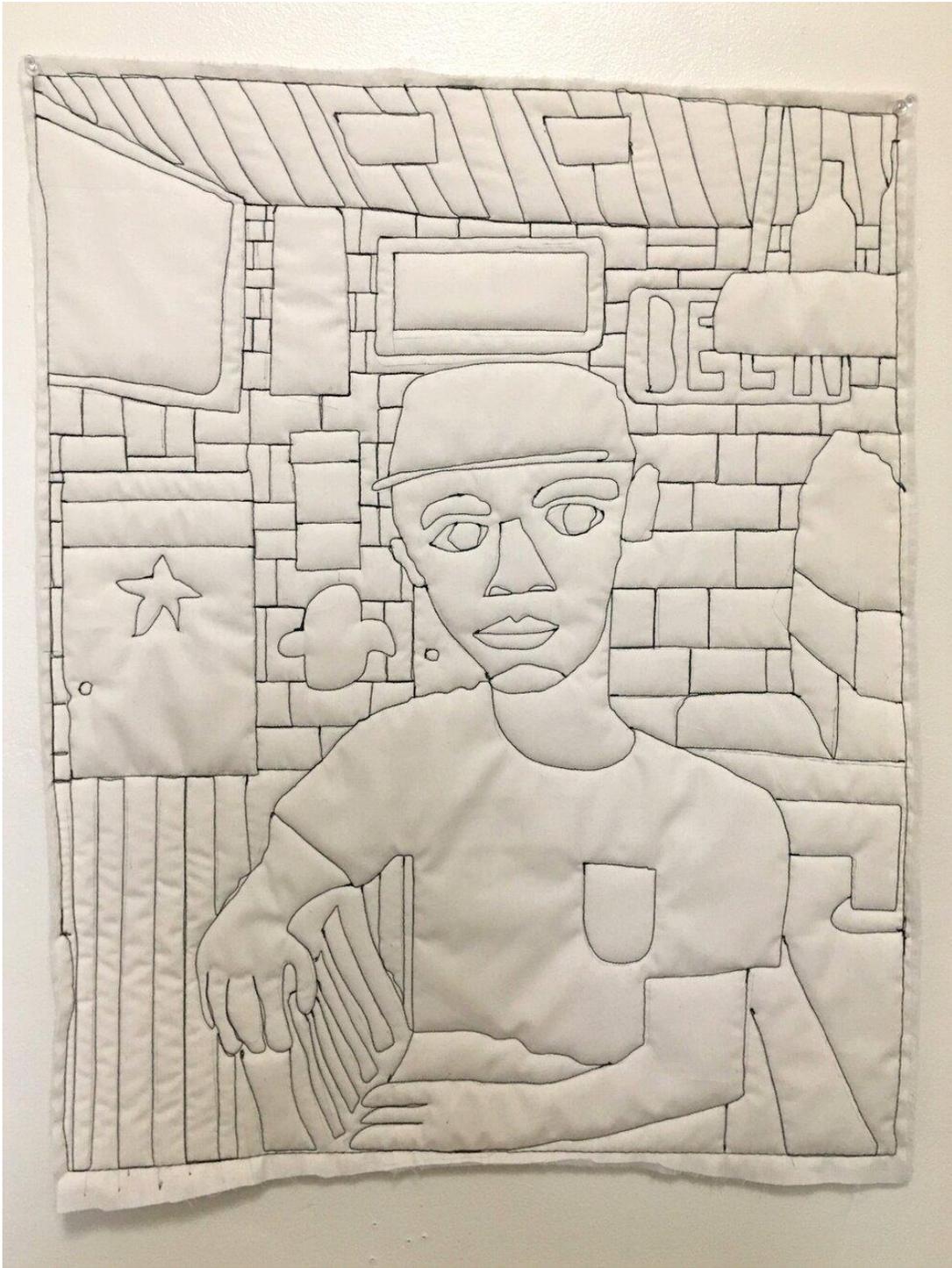
Michael Thorpe. *Goggles*, 2020. Magazine paper, card stock. Image courtesy of the artist.

Are you thinking differently? Coping differently? Inspired differently?

I'm definitely thinking differently. Not about my art practice but about everything that comes after the art is produced. I think about how shows will happen, how schools will be taught, how to display my art digitally, what's going to happen to museums and art fairs and so much more. That's constantly on my mind.

What do you think or hope will be different after this crisis has passed?

I hope people treat each other and the planet better after all this. I hope people are down to help one another more. These are all hopes at the moment because even though there is a lot of good happening there is still a lot of bad happening too.



Michael Thorpe. *Jabari*, 2020. Muslin, thread. Image courtesy of the artist.



Michael Thorpe. *Nayomi with pup*, 2020. Batik fabric, thread. Image courtesy of the artist.

What is bringing you solace, or even joy, in this moment?

This time has allowed me to really invest in my wellbeing. I am eating much better and working out. That is giving a lot of solace. The biggest joy is realizing what an unbelievable community of people I have around me. Everyone is looking after one another. I'm truly grateful for that every single day.

What research or writing are you doing that you find compelling?

This time has allowed me to take a step back and think about my work on a deeper level than just aesthetics. I have been studying a lot of my favorite artists like David Hammons, Pope. L, John Baldessari, Richard Prince, and artists involved with the Dada movement

and Beat writers. Now I have a better understanding of why I really enjoy working in textiles and pushing the boundaries of that medium. Working with textiles, instead of other art forms that are deemed in higher regard like painting and sculpting, I am challenging what is considered high art and why that is.

Are you reading anything?

I've been reading a lot of science fiction, poetry, and anything the beat writers have written. I am currently reading *Neuromancer* by William Gibson and poems by Amiri Baraka.



Michael Thorpe. *Studies of Cecilia*, 2020. paper, color pencil. Image courtesy of the artist.



Michael Thorpe. *One on One*, 2020. Printed fabric, muslin, thread. Image courtesy of the artist.