

Fabiola Jean-Louis:
REWRITING HISTORY

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Large Print Labels

Fabiola Jean-Louis Rewriting History

Conquistador II, 2017
Archival pigment print

“We cannot change the past, [but] we can act to change the present as we activate the memories, visions, and legacies of our ancestors.”

Fabiola Jean-Louis

Rewriting History, a project by Brooklyn-based artist Fabiola Jean-Louis (b. 1978, Port-au-Prince, Haiti), questions standard narratives about the perceived value of Black women’s lives and bodies throughout history. Its central component is a series of paper sculptures that resemble garments worn by European female nobility from the 1600s to the 1800s, accompanied by lush photographs of women of color wearing these beautiful, yet cage-like, paper dresses.

Jean-Louis spent hours in museums looking

at period gowns and historical paintings showing women dressed in elaborate outfits, and noticed that almost none of the women wearing these gowns were women of color.

Her photographs correct that omission and recast our assumptions about who was noble or powerful throughout history. Jean-Louis intentionally includes images of racial and sexual violence in the dresses' details and settings of the photographs to remind viewers about the brutality underpinning historical wealth and power. Her work both reimagines history and openly addresses its violence.

Along with **Inventing Isabella** in the Hostetter Gallery in the New Wing and Carla Fernández's **Tradition Is Not Static** on the Anne H. Fitzpatrick Façade, **Rewriting History** shows how fashion allows women to communicate their power—even when their gender or race (or both) has historically limited their agency.

Madame Leroy, 2017
Archival pigment print

Marie Antoinette is Dead, 2017
Archival pigment print

Madame Beauvior's Painting, 2017
Archival pigment print



Garden Dress II, 2017
Paper, watercolor, acrylic,
copper

“I love paper’s strength, and I love its fragility”

-Fabiola Jean-Louis

This paper dress demonstrates Jean-Louis’s ability to push the limits of what artists can do with paper. Light-sensitive and easily torn, paper is a particularly fragile artistic medium. Made with a blend of traditional and new, innovative methods, Jean Louis’s works have exceptional structural integrity. However, like all works on paper, they are fundamentally ephemeral. It is particularly poignant that she repurposes the material on which history itself is written—like newspaper and other papers—to create sculptures that allow the artist to reimagine and reinterpret historical narratives.

Violin of the Dead, 2017
Archival pigment print

Passing, 2017
Archival pigment print