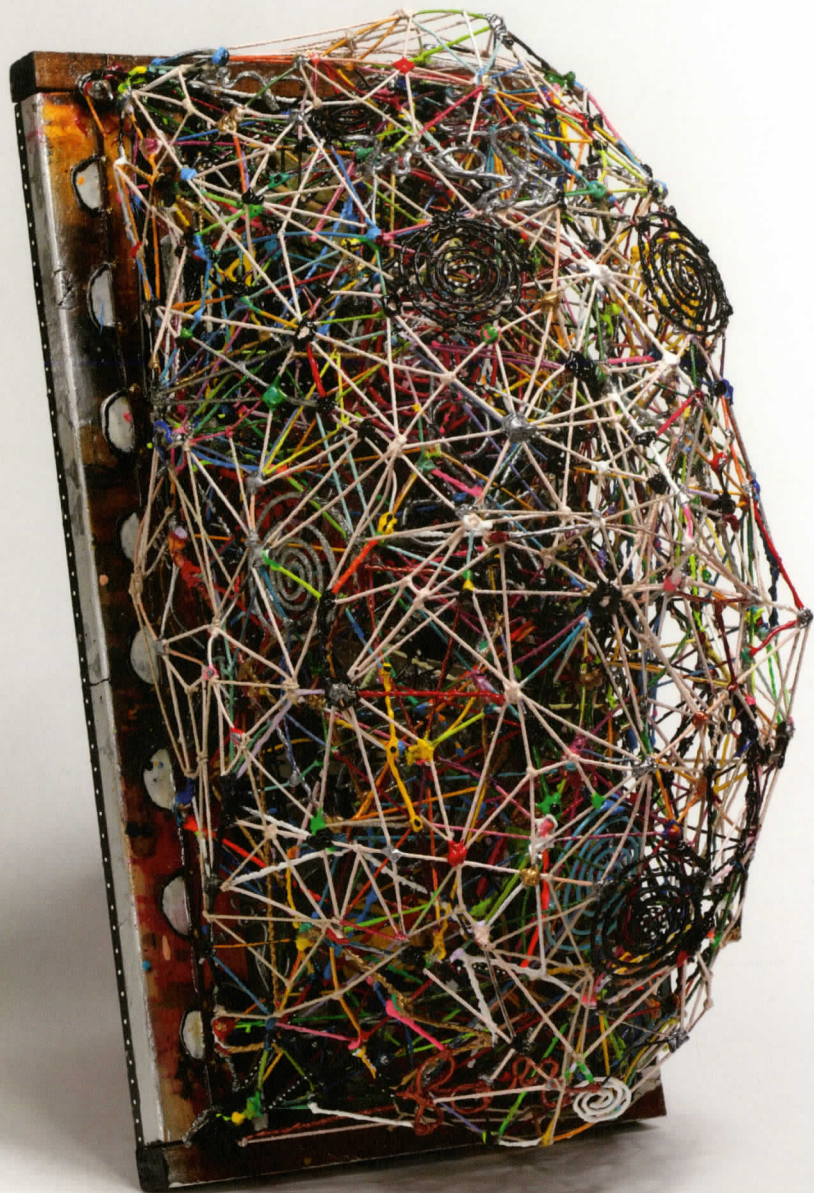
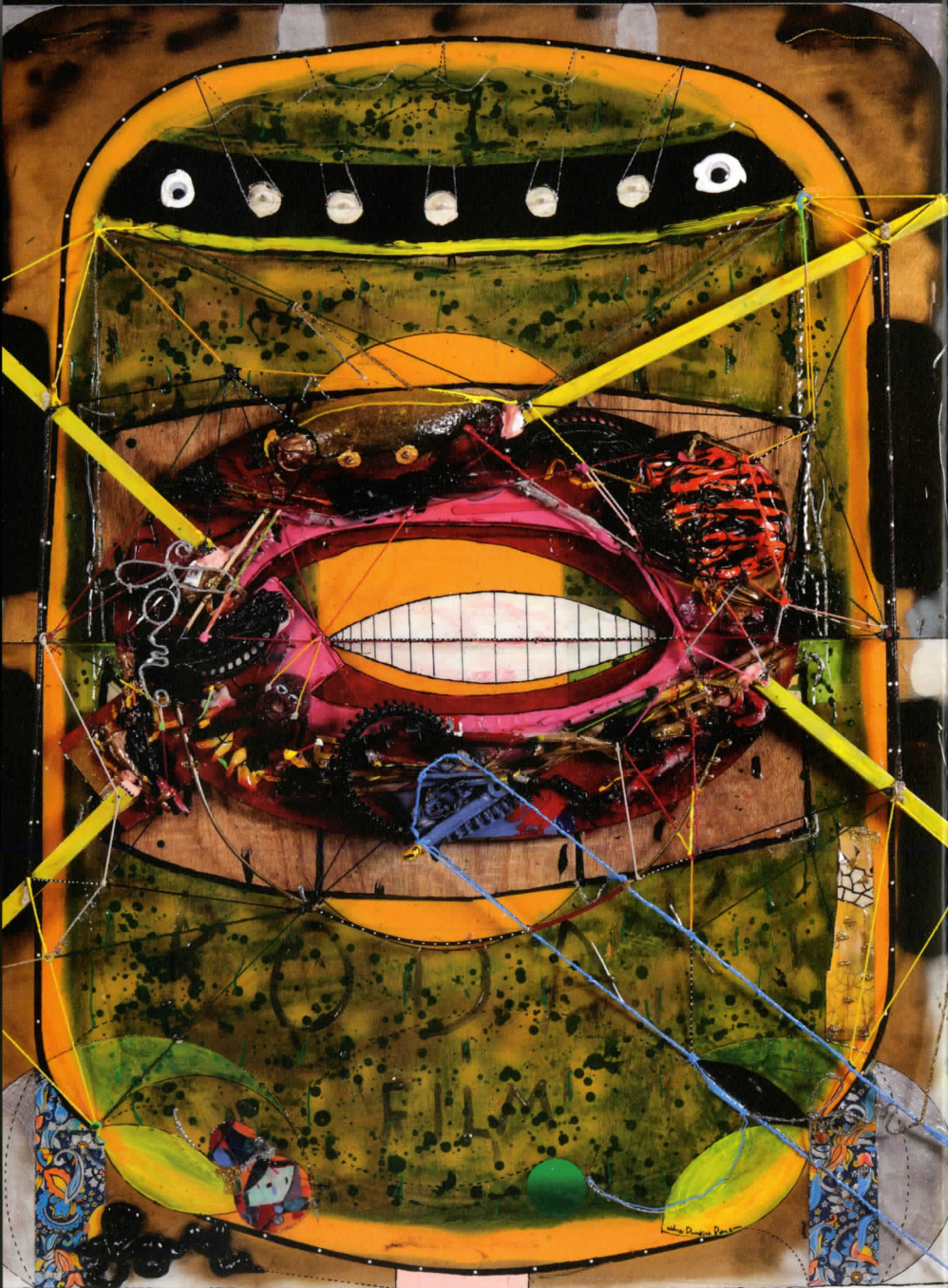


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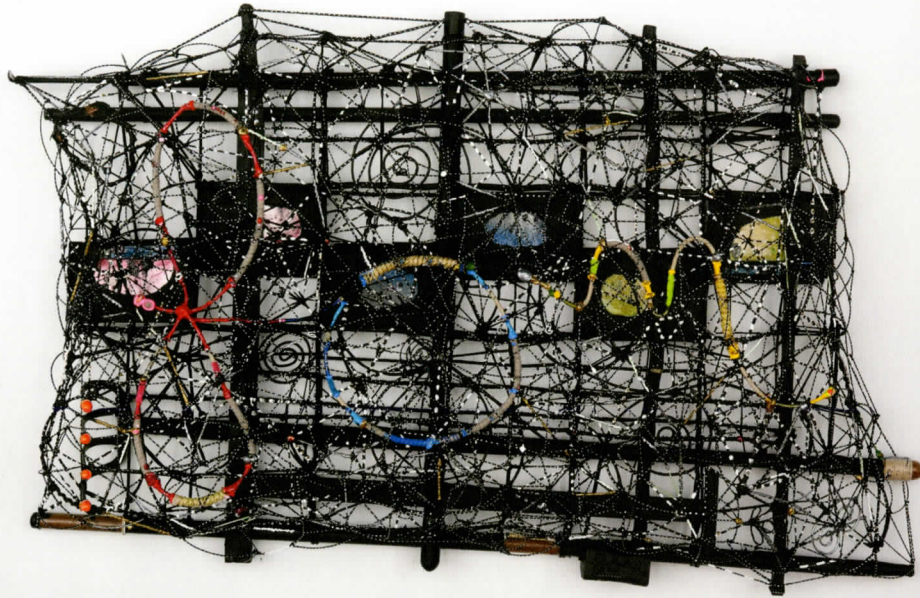
*FOR Instance:
the Art of
Martin Johnson*





NECK

Above: Martin Johnson, *Neck*, 2013, Mixed media, 64 x 49 x 5", Courtesy of the Artist

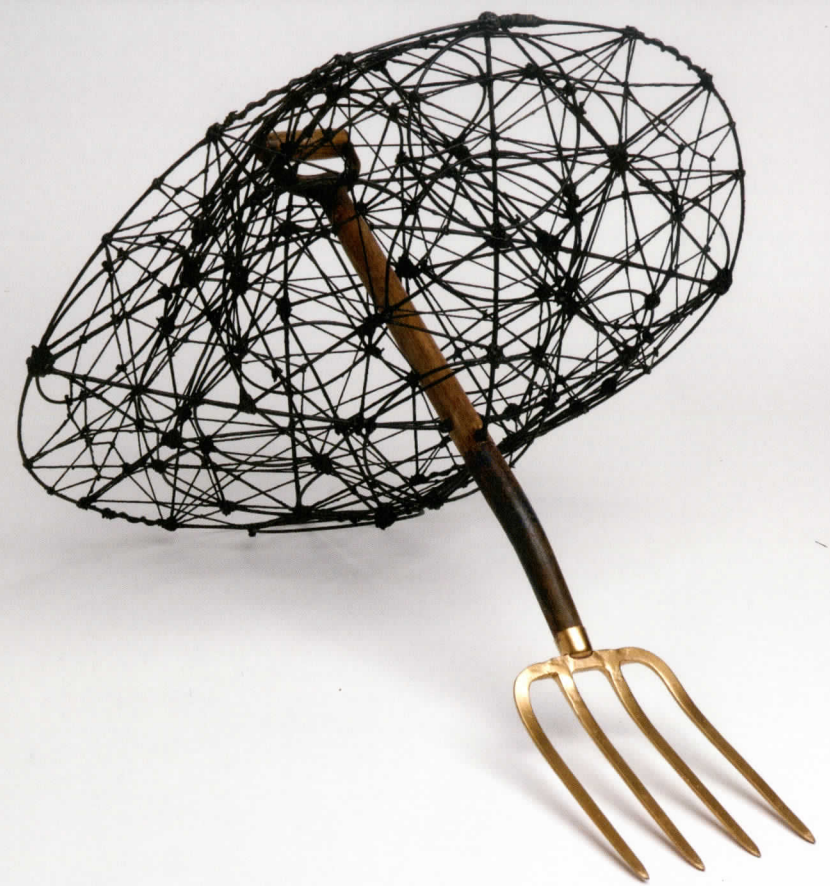


Above: Martin Johnson, *For UNIS*, 2013, Mixed media, 40 x 65 x 12",
Courtesy of the Artist.

Saturday, March 1 to
Saturday, August 23, 2014

On the cover: Martin Johnson,
UNIS Mask, 2013, Mixed media,
33 x 29 x 20", Courtesy of the Artist.

Featuring more than thirty works dating from 1972 to the present, *FOR Instance: the Art of Martin Johnson* presents a generous cross-section of the artist's work. His intense and energetically charged pieces, created in both two and three dimensions, combine recycled found objects and shapes, densely woven patterns, text,



Above: Martin Johnson, *Pitch For-K*, 2013, Mixed media, 28 x 36 x 36",
Courtesy of the Artist.

and language games that improvise visual puns. They tempt the eye and the ear of the viewer to enter Johnson's universe of pure free association. Johnson weaves words and patterns together in a compulsive manner that expresses a genuine kinship with outsider artists, yet his sophisticated approach to materials provides an

often ironic and deliberate strategy that comments on the nuances of our consumer-driven culture, injected with a dash of sly humor.

Representing dynamic glimpses into his stream-of-consciousness approach to art making, Johnson's multi-layered objects and installations are created with such divergent



Above: Martin Johnson, *Pile of FORs*, 2013, Wire, Dimensions variable, Courtesy of the Artist.

materials as wire, mixed media, rhoplex, cardboard, found objects, and acrylic. They highlight his unique linguistic play featuring his mysterious and ironic words that are interwoven with images. His personal talismans that are pervasively evident throughout include the cryptograms *UNIS*, meaning "Unison" that envelops

his process of creation, and *FOR*, representing "everything is created for something." Calling himself an "educated, self-trained artist," Johnson blurs the barriers between the art categories of kitsch, art brut, graffiti art, and surrealism, yet his work is uniquely and indelibly his own.

Martin Johnson was born in New Jersey in 1951 and raised in Richmond, Virginia. He earned a BA in Architecture from Virginia Tech and State University in 1974, and an MFA in Studio Art in 1977 from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Upon graduating from UNC, Johnson moved to New York City, where he was granted one of the first studios at PS1, a landmark institute of contemporary art at the time that is now a permanent exhibition site for MoMA.

Johnson's early career garnered critical attention, including support from renowned curator Marcia Tucker, gallery owner Phyllis Kind, and art critic Donald Kuspit, who declared Johnson "a true original." He was represented by Phyllis Kind Gallery in Chicago and New York from 1979 to 1987, during which time his work entered numerous private

collections, including those of famed contemporary collectors Donald and Mera Rubell, and Herbert and Dorothy Vogel. More recently, Richmond collectors Bill and Pam Royall have acquired several works by the artist. As part of Dorothy and Herbert Vogel's "50 x 50" gift to museums and art institutions across America, Johnson's work entered the collections of thirty-six museums throughout the United States, including the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Johnson's work is showcased in the new film *Herb and Dorothy 50x50* that premiered at the Whitney Museum in March 2013.

**To learn more about
Martin Johnson's work, please visit:
www.martinbjohnson.com**



FOR Instance: the Art of Martin Johnson is organized by Ray Kass, Adjunct Curator of Southeastern American Art, Taubman Museum of Art. This exhibition is sponsored in part by the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.