

August 30, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bethany Collins: Of a piece

September 1 - October 21, 2017

CONTACT: Emily Smith, Executive Director
804.643.1708 or esmith@1708gallery.org



Richmond - **1708 Gallery** is please to present *Of a piece* a solo exhibition of work by Chicago-based artist Bethany Collins. Through translation and transposition, drawing and installation, Collins explores the multiplicities and contradictions in language as a lens for considering racial identity. As Holland Cotter noted writing in *The New York Times*, “language itself, viewed as intrinsically racialized, is Bethany Collins’ primary material.”

Between Green and Violet is a twenty-nine part work of all the definitions of “blue” from a 1950’s dictionary. Blue is often the last color to be named in the development of a language. Perhaps it is because, with the exception of the sky, vibrant blue appears rarely in the natural world. Once you tease the word out into all of its singular parts, the meaning is lost. The words don’t easily realign into a cohesive definition for “blue.” Also at play is the relationship between blue and black and an early 20th century theory believed that cultures that used the terms “black” and “blue” interchangeably were more “primitive” because they had not developed the ability to physically see the difference.

The second work is *America: The Hymnal*. Written by the Rev. Samuel F. Smith in 1831, *My Country 'Tis of Thee* (also known as *America*) debuted on July 4, 1831. Since Smith’s writing, the lyrics of were re-titled and re-written at least one hundred hundred times. Each re-writing in support of a passionately held cause—from temperance and suffrage to abolition and even the Confederacy—articulates a version of what it means to be American.

America: The Hymnal is made up of 100 versions of *My Country 'Tis of Thee* from the 18th-20th c. While the differing lyrics remain legible, the hymnal’s unifying tune has been all but burned away. In its many lyrical variations, *America: The Hymnal* is a chronological retelling of American history, politics and culture through one song.

Collins' works have been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions nationwide, including the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Drawing Center, the Wexner Center for the Arts, and the Birmingham Museum of Art. Collins has been recognized as an Artist-in-Residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem, the MacDowell Colony, the Bemis Center and the Hyde Park Art Center among others. In 2015, she was awarded the Hudgens Prize.

Opening reception and artist talk will be on September 2, 2017 from 11am - 1pm.

For more details, visit 1708gallery.org.

Image: Bethany Collins, *America: The Hymnal*, 2017, Book with 100 laser cut leaves, 9 x 10 x 2 inches, Edition of 25, Image courtesy of the artist.

1708 Gallery's 2017-2018 exhibition season is generously supported in part by Elissa Armstrong, Marland Buckner & Melody Barnes, Deborah Boschen, Mike Schewel & Priscilla Burbank, John Ryan & Wesley Chenault, Molly Dodge, Sarah & Josh Eckhardt, Susan Ferrell & John Freeman, Sasha Waters-Freyer & John Freyer, Richard Douglas & Suzanna Fields, Wendy Goodman, Steve Humble, Kiyomi Iwata, Susan & John Jamieson, Pam Lawton, Michael Lease, Katie & Danny MacNelly, Sara Wilson McKay, Lucy Meade, Cheairs & Sarah Porter, Pam & Bill Royall, Nick Royall, Tracy Kemp Stallings & Tom Stallings, Leigh Suggs, Marcia & Harry Thalheimer, Julie & Paul Weissend, and Courtnie Wolfgang.

####