

The Columbus Museum in Columbus, Georgia, is delighted to present *The Patient Eye*, a performance and exhibition by artist Jonathan VanDyke, opening on Thursday, April 5, 2018.

VanDyke will stand and view 16 quilts from the Museum's collection, one at a time for 3 hours each, in a 48-hour durational performance running continuously during the museum's opening hours from 10 a.m. Thursday, April 5 until 4 p.m. Thursday, April 12. The quilts will be installed on the ground floor of the Museum's central galleria. Visitors will be able to view both sides of the quilts on view, providing access to extraordinary and diverse examples, including rarely displayed works dating back to the early 19th century.

The performance also serves as a form of "live research": based on his experience with these works, VanDyke will be creating drawings and notes, also accessible to visitors, over the course of the performance. While VanDyke will remain silent for the duration of his performance, viewers are encouraged to stand or sit with him. In collaboration with the Columbus State University Department of Art, a group of art students will work with museum volunteers and will be present to speak with viewers about the project.

As part of The Columbus Museum's season-long focus on the themes of work/labor/endurance, Curator of American Art Dr. Jonathan Frederick Walz initiated the project with VanDyke, inviting the artist to consider the Museum's collection as the starting point for a new performance. VanDyke has a history of deep engagement with museum collections and objects of art. Following college, he served as curator at The Susquehanna Art Museum in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, a museum that was uniquely public-oriented and focused upon accessibility, located at the time inside a shopping mall. VanDyke established his artistic practice in New York City in 2001, and has since become known for his process-oriented sculptures and paintings, often made in collaboration with dancers, and his durational live performances. For 2011's *The Long Glance*, one of the artist's best-known works, he stood and stared at the Jackson Pollock painting *Convergence* for 40 hours, timed in conjunction with the standard workweek of five 8-hour days, at The Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York. During the period of his performance, VanDyke enacted a position of intense looking and stillness, never taking his eyes off this "action" painting.

In his engagement with the collection of The Columbus Museum, VanDyke decided to return to the gesture of looking, citing the issues of attentiveness and mindfulness as key challenges of contemporary life. He spent several weeks onsite researching the Museum's collection, with a desire to bring attention to the unseen. Given the Museum's unique position as an institution that collects both works of art and historical artifacts, VanDyke sought a subject that bridged these two worlds. He gravitated towards the Museum's extensive collection of 19th and early-20th century quilts, objects that exist on the cusp of art and domesticity, prized for both their aesthetics and functionality. The quilts themselves were chosen to represent a wide swath of diverse makers, including those made by rural families, African-American quilters, and the Amish.

VanDyke's own paintings—which will appear in a concurrent exhibition—are cut and sewn from painted and stained fabrics, often marked through body movement. Many of VanDyke's patterned paintings reference quilt designs, a tradition he grew up around, with roots in rural Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania German communities. He notes of his choice to work with quilts that they reveal “remarkable abstract patterns, appearing ‘modern’ before ‘modernism.’ At the same time, they are marked by the bodies that slept underneath them, products of intensive labor and persistence stitched in spare hours, usually by women, often working collaboratively, and frequently made with an economy of means, utilizing leftover bits and scraps of fabric that itself is rich with history. As they explored relationships of color and shape, their makers demonstrated striking formal innovation, decades ahead of painters who were credited with such innovation. Given Columbus' history as a center for textile production, quilts are uniquely resonant—it is likely that some of the fabric scraps in these quilts came from regional mills. The act of ‘standing at attention’ also resonates with the idea of watchfulness enacted by the soldier, given the presence of Fort Benning near Columbus. I hope visitors will join me in meditating upon these extraordinary objects.”

In addition to the performance, VanDyke has curated an exhibition by the same title, taking place in the Leebern Gallery on the Museum's second floor and running through June 17. The exhibition includes several of VanDyke's paintings installed next to objects from the collection, including an important turn-of-the-century Lone Star quilt made by African-American quilter Angeline Rebecca Pitts, and candid photos from the archive of celebrated abstract painter Alma Thomas. “VanDyke's performance is analogous to watching a play or seeing a concert: there is only a relatively short time in which to experience it,” said curator Jonathan Frederick Walz. “We encourage visitors to drop in several times to see different aspects of the project as it literally ‘unfolds.’”

VanDyke's performance will conclude on April 12 with a public dialogue led by VanDyke, Walz, and Curator of History Rebecca Bush. It will be held in proximity to the performance space, on the ground floor of the Museum's galleria, starting at 6 p.m.