

## LOMBARD FREID GALLERY



Tameka Norris, *12 Times Table*, 60 x 100 in, 2014

### Tameka Norris

*Too Good For You (Introducing Meka Jean)*

March 6 - April 19, 2014

Vernissage with a Performance by the Artist:

Thursday, March 6, 6:00 - 8:00 PM

**Performance: 7:00 PM**

Lombard Freid Gallery is pleased to present New Orleans-based artist Tameka Norris's first solo show in New York. The exhibition features Norris a.k.a. Meka Jean's most recent paintings, video-monologues, and a live musical performance the night of the opening. *Too Good For You* presents a range of work from Norris's multitalented artistic practice, which is rooted in hip-hop and pop culture, art history, and the regional iconography of the American South. Imbued with autobiography, Norris's paintings and video works explore her deep and personal relationship to the post-Katrina landscape of New Orleans and the houses and neighborhoods of her childhood.

Norris's *Post-Katrina* works are physical and painterly, created as patchworks of fabrics and images that grapple at reconstructing memories of the ravaged areas of New Orleans, Biloxi, and Gulfport, regions now in the midst of rapid gentrification. In her own words:

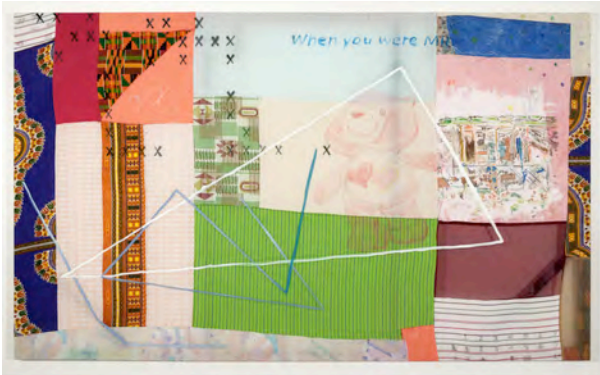
*The work is very much informed by the location because it's about a character—Meka Jean, an alter ego of mine—as she's becoming acquainted again with [her] home after it's been destroyed and is being rebuilt... Through the work I wanted to remember and remap those places so that they do not disappear. In a way, I wanted to place them somehow back into my world.*

Painting on stitched fabrics—combining West African block prints, bed sheets, a Care Bear, the Piggly Wiggly supermarket mascot, the American flag—Norris stretches and drapes these varied textiles over exposed wooden stretchers to form structures that in turn reveal and disguise their construction. The diptych *Open House* (2014) is three-dimensional, comprised of two stretchers resting against each other, forming a freestanding installation in the middle of the main gallery. As New Orleans changes and as buildings are torn down and reconstructed, Norris's references no longer exist, forcing her to draw on her memory, creating a more autobiographical reflection.

518 West 19th Street New York, NY 10011 Tel 212 967 8040 Fax 212 967 0669

[info@lombard-freid.com](mailto:info@lombard-freid.com) [lombard-freid.com](http://lombard-freid.com)

## LOMBARD FREID GALLERY



Recently, Norris has been closely identified with her notorious performance shown at Performa 13 and as part of the *Radical Presence* exhibition at The Studio Museum of Harlem, where she cut her tongue with a knife and dragged her mouth along the wall, creating a paint-like smear. Norris's video and performance work (which has garnered a significant following on YouTube) is represented in the exhibition by her *Yale School of Art* (2010-12) series, which features Norris recounting her own experiences as a black woman studying at Yale's renowned MFA program, resulting in humorous (and often seemingly schizophrenic) personae. Simultaneously hilarious and scathing, Norris's videos address the contradictions of contemporary arts education and the expectations produced by the history of identity politics. Norris riffs on the ostentation and exaggeration of hip-hop artists and reality TV stars, further exposing the increased pressure of superstardom in today's art world.

In conjunction with the opening of *Too Good For You*, Norris will perform covers, mash-ups, and original songs as Meka Jean, the protagonist of a feature film she is currently making in collaboration with artist Garrett Bradley for this fall's Prospect 3 Biennial in New Orleans, curated by Franklin Sirmans. *Meka Jean: How She Got Good* follows Norris's alter ego who is also rediscovering her home after its destruction and reconstruction. The film is in a documentary style with some scripted narrative. Future projects include an EP with original music created by Norris, which will become the soundtrack to the film.

*Tameka Norris (b. 1979, Guam) received her undergraduate degree at the University of California, Los Angeles before graduating with an MFA from Yale University School of Art in 2012. Her work can be seen in Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art at The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, until 9 March 2014. The exhibition chronicles the development of black performance art and was previously shown at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston in 2012. In 2013, her work was the subject of a solo exhibition at Contemporary Art Center, New Orleans: Tameka Norris – Family Values. The artist has participated in numerous important group exhibitions including Radical Presence, Contemporary Art Museum, Houston (2012); Gifted and Talented, Third Streaming Gallery, New York (2012); Prospect.2 Biennial, New Orleans (2011); QueerSexing, Human Resources, Los Angeles (2011); Prospect.1.5 Biennial, Good Children Gallery, New Orleans (2010).*