

## Home Economics: Precious Lovell's Ex-Domestication

A North Carolina textile artist lifts the veil on uncomfortable truths about the legacy of slavery with her latest exhibition at Anchorlight Studio.

*by Colony Little*



Precious D. Lovell, [the Anchorlight Gallery 2022 Brightwork Artist in Residence](#), spent a year in her studio immersed in deep research, creating a series of works that examine the present through a historical lens. In *Ex-Domestication*, Lovell shifts her focus to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the conditioned behaviors it developed in Western society. The term “domestication” conjures thoughts of servitude, conformity, and control. In this show, Lovell turns this concept on its head, taking a provocative approach to craft traditions that are commonly considered “women’s work”.



Through weaving, needlepoint, quilting, and sewing, Lovell creates beautiful objects that seduce the eye as she asks very pointed, difficult questions about labor, capitalism, and power. A Molotov cocktail made from a vintage Dixie soda bottle whose fabric fuse is a confederate flag attached and a delicately embroidered linen handkerchief is a powerful symbol of resistance against the status quo.

Hard and soft elements like this are found throughout the show. In one piece a banned book is covered in an embroidered blue book sleeve that reads, “It was illegal for enslaved people to read in many states—now it’s illegal to read about enslaved people in many states.” The book is surrounded by a thick lock and chain.

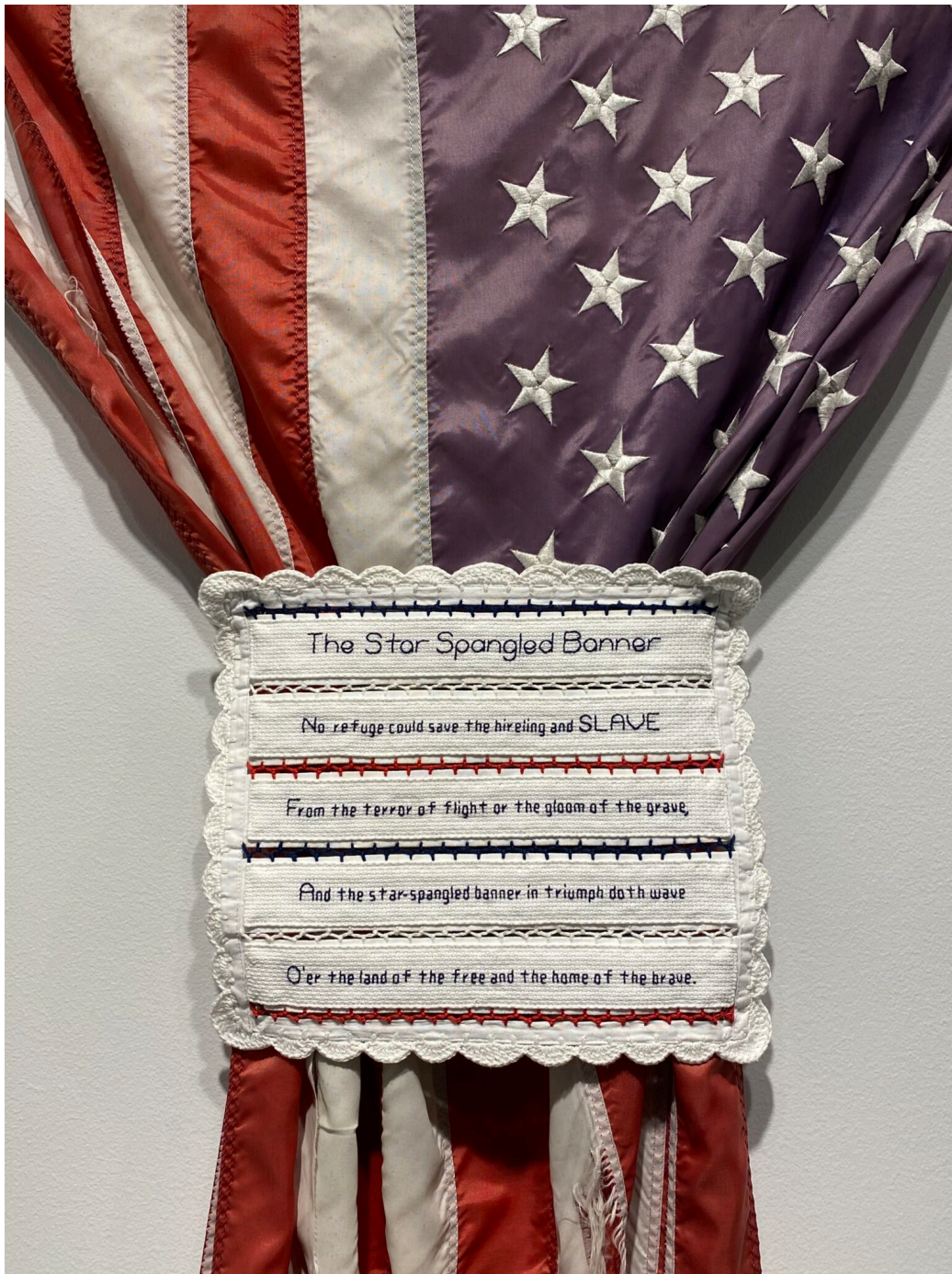
In the February opening of the show Lovell remarked that she put her blood, sweat, and tears into this work; the fruits of this physical and emotional labor are found in the meticulous details she embeds within each piece. On a pillar in the middle of Anchorlight’s gallery, a vintage mechanical piggy bank of a man’s torso is surrounded by fake \$100 dollar bills that bear the haunting image of the scarred back of Whipped Peter.



The piggy bank and play money sit on a white table cloth whose edges are lined with quotes—one from Angela Davis reads: “Racism is intricately linked with capitalism and I think it’s a mistake to assume that we can combat racism by leaving capitalism in its place.”

To wit, Lovell places a source image of the original piggy bank below the quote. The caricature of a man in blackface harkens back to racist iconography found in many common household products in the early 1900s. These objects are memorabilia for some, while for others they are violent, painful relics of Jim Crow.

For viewers who are inclined to believe that the past should remain in the past, Lovell challenges the privilege behind that assertion by drawing direct lines between the past and the present.



Privilege feeds off conformity and compliance—*Ex-Domestication* asks viewers to sit with their privilege, in all its forms, to imagine what might happen when we break free from the expectations and assumptions that surround it.

*Ex-Domestication* is on view by appointment at Anchorlight Gallery through April 15, 2023. Precious Lovell is the Brightwork Fellowship 2022 artist in residence at Anchorlight Gallery.

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This article was original published in April 2023 on [waltermagazine.com](http://waltermagazine.com)

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