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## **Collector's Eye: They Built a World-Class Collection of Black Artists' Work. Who Are They Acquiring Now?**

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By Kelly Crow

Denise and Gary Gardner, who built one of the preeminent collections of Black artists, are adding works by Lorna Simpson, Bethany Collins and Candida Alvarez.



Amy Sherald's 2017 work, 'A clear unspoken granted magic.' AMY SHERALD/MONIQUE MELOCHE GALLERY, CHICAGO

## Bethany Collins

"I am for you (You're a Grand Old Flag)," 2018

Known for: Ms. Collins investigates the politics of language by partially erasing or burning phrases in everything from classic poetry like Homer's *Odyssey* to patriotic songs. The artist, who lives and works in Chicago, broke onto the art scene while doing a residency at the Studio Museum in Harlem. Then, two years ago, during Art Basel Miami Beach, she enlisted choral groups to sing 100 different versions of the 1831 song, "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," including politically charged lyrical alterations. She also displayed a hymnal whose pages had been singed so that parts of them crumbled as people flipped through. When the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Mass., reopens July 18, Ms. Collins' hymnal will go on view in an exhibit of "Jacob Lawrence: The American Struggle," up through Aug. 9.



Bethany Collins included lyrics in her 2018 work, 'I am for you (You're A Grand Old Flag).' PHOTO: BETHANY COLLINS/PATRON, CHICAGO

Prices: Ms. Collins' Chicago gallery, Patron, has sold her works for between \$10,000 and \$65,000.

"She layers text in most of her paintings. I have two, and from afar they look like clouds or smudges. But when you get close, you see they are individually painted. I just got 'I am for you (You're a Grand Old Flag),' and she's taken the lyrics from that song, and it looks like she's thrown them onto a dark burgundy background. For at least the past three years, she's been revisiting the lyrics of these classic, Americana songs, and it's her way of asking: 'Who is American and what does that mean?' Just the sheer man hours it takes for her to do her works, it's so rewarding to see. It means more to me than someone who just kind of threw a splat on a canvas and called it done."