



View of “Beverly Buchanan—Ruins and Rituals,” 2016–17.

“I think that artists in the South must at some point confront the work of folk artists,” the late artist Beverly Buchanan said. But Buchanan, who is known for her colorful shack sculptures emulating Southern vernacular architecture, was anything but an outsider artist. In the early 1970s, she studied with Norman Lewis and Romare Bearden while working as a New Jersey health educator. She also gained the support of such curators as Lucy Lippard and Lowery Stokes Sims. Yet as a black woman artist who spent the height of her artistic career in Georgia, her work has not been given its historical due.

This exhibition, organized by curator Jennifer Burris and artist Park McArthur, surveys Buchanan’s practice, which commemorated the resilience of black communities while interrogating American racism. Separated into three galleries of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art (triangulated around Judy Chicago’s *The Dinner Party*, 1974–79), the layout flips the script on Buchanan’s work. The show opens with her least known pieces—the series “Frustula,” 1978–81, made up of squat, cast-concrete sculptures—artworks in pointed dialogue with post-Minimalism’s industrial-ruin aesthetics. Buchanan pursued site-specificity when she moved to Macon, Georgia, in 1977. From 1979 to 1986, she created a number of humble concrete sculptures, mixed with local materials such as tabby (a cement made with oyster shells, water, lime, ash, and sand, once used for building slave quarters), which memorialized sites of racial violence. Three videos, created by McArthur, Burris, and Jason Hirata, *June 10–19, 2016*, 2016, document four of her Southeastern projects in situ.

This is an artist-curated show, and the second and largest section—containing more than one hundred archival objects—reveals an artist’s eye. Burris and McArthur include pieces such as the plaid shirt Buchanan painted in, adorned with white crosses and blue and red stars (*Untitled, Church on Fire*, 1995–96), and photo reproductions of her Guggenheim grant report for the public artwork *Marsh Ruins*, 1981. The final section, devoted to her miniaturized shacks from 1987 to 2010, is enriched by photos of the 1991 performance *Out of Control*. Buchanan enacts a conceptual score of symbolic brutality, setting a shack sculpture on fire, only allowing a friend to extinguish it.

