

AROUND THE GALLERIES

BY SHARON MIZOTA

Its tapestry has been rewoven

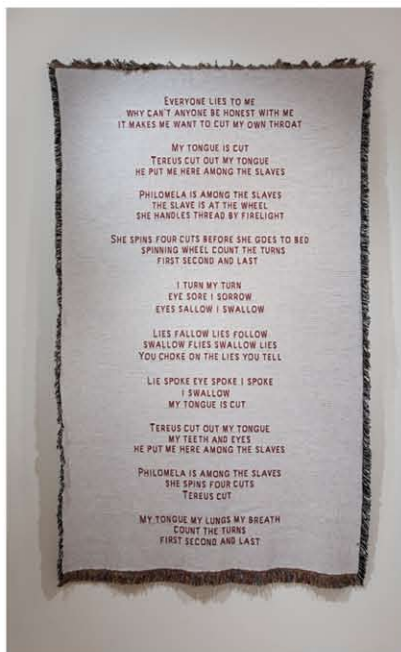
To enter the upstairs gallery at Steve Turner is to be startled by the staring, globular eyes of "Philomela," Jacob Yanes' life-size sculpture of the much-wronged figure from Ovid's "Metamorphoses." Her gaze is unsettlingly intense, perhaps a little cross-eyed, and heightened by the contrast between the stark whites of her eyes and her pitch-black skin and dress. She means to hold you accountable, and as the tapestry on the wall behind her reveals, she has much to lament.

Raped by her brother-in-law, Philomela threatened to tell. He cut out her tongue, and yet she spoke, weaving her tale into a cloth she sent to her sister. Yanes' tapestry mixes quotes from Ovid's account with his own Gertrude Stein-esque phrases and snippets from American slave narratives. It's an odd combination, but it puts a fine point on the artist's inversion of classical sculptural conventions. Philomela's skin is black instead of white and its smooth surfaces are achieved — amazingly — with cardboard and wood putty instead of marble. She represents the underside of the classical ideal, grouped, as the tapestry says, with the slaves, abused and silenced.

Yet as much as the weaving laments Philomela's predicament, it's also a sign of hope and resilience. On the front, red letters adorn a white ground edged on either side with black. But the back is woven in a rainbow of colored threads—a secret abundance beyond black and white.



Jacob Yanes. *Philomela*, 2012. Cardboard, wood putty, asphalt primer, acrylic eyes and pleated wool (68 x 27 x 16 inches) and cotton jacquard-woven tapestry (80 x 54 inches)



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