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PROJECT: FLAGS OF FREEDOM

A collection of eight mixed-media flags with steel flag supports created for *In Slavery's Wake*.

In Slavery's Wake is an international multilingual exhibition project convened by the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) along with Brown University and with participation from eight museums on four continents to illuminate these issues, grapple with these questions, and re-frame the history and legacies of slavery, colonialism and freedom as both a local and global story central to our past and our lives today. *In Slavery's Wake* is focused on the history of racial slavery and its "wake"—legacies, afterlives, reverberations. That history is linked closely to histories of European colonialism. This is a story of humanity, resistance, and determination.

The exhibition will open in 2024 at NMAAHC in late December 2024 in Washington, D.C. at NMAAHC and after a six-month showing in the U.S., it will embark on a four-year tour to partner museums in travel to Brazil, Senegal, South Africa, Belgium, and the UK-, engaging hundreds of thousands of visitors audiences and fostering conversations around the Atlantic world; disrupting representations of a history that too often misses the wider international perspective; and emphasizing the role of everyday Black freedom making across time to abolish, erase and circumvent the practices of dehumanization and exploitation that slavery and colonialism created and left in its wake.

Flags of Freedom Overview

Most flags from anti-slavery movements have been lost to history. For this exhibition, the Artist, Nyugen E. Smith worked closely with the historical and archival record to reclaim, reimagine and create eight flags from Black led revolutionary movements or rebellions. These banners materialize and give voice to historical demands for freedom made by Black communities across the Atlantic from centuries past but are connected to ongoing struggles for freedom, justice, and equity. They are part of an attempt to fill some of the silences in and help provide material and visual substance to our archive of knowledge about Black freedom making.

The flag supports were co-designed and fabricated by the artist, Nyugen E. Smith and his uncle Anthony Phillips. Anthony was born in Trinidad and migrated to the United States in 1974. As a skilled Blacksmith (fabricator and welder), he rose to rank of night Foreman at the Hoboken (New Jersey) Shipyard until its closure in 1982. He followed a similar career trajectory at the Brooklyn Shipyard while establishing his own business, Anthony Ironworks, in Jersey City, NJ. Anthony continues to own and operate his ironworks business, which he considers an artistic endeavor, crafting each piece as a work of art.



Anthony Phillips

Nyugen worked at Anthony Ironworks during the summer of 1996 while on vacation from his undergraduate studies, and again from 2003 to 2005.

Their creative collaboration on the Flags of Freedom project honors the ancient African tradition of metalworking and pays homage to blacksmith leaders of historical revolts, such as Gabriel's Revolt. It also recognizes the legacy Anthony is establishing through his extensive ironwork installations in Jersey City and adds their family names to the historical record at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture.



The Artist

Nyugen E. Smith is an artist living and working in Jersey City, NJ. His practice revolves around the construction of narrative through the prism of Black cultural identity. The manifold ramifications of European colonialism across the African Diaspora serve as the foundation upon which his practice is constructed. Smith adopts a rhizomatic methodology, characterized by its non-linear and interconnected approach, as a means of conceptualizing and realizing creative expression.

Guided by the metaphorical roots of this colonial legacy, Nyugen is interested in the dynamic interplay between various thematic nodes, including architecture, language, performance, ritual, trauma, DNA memory, climate change, and migration. These thematic nodes are woven into the fabric of his practice. The inherent poetry of their relational dynamics guides the creation of the work.

Nyugen holds a BA, Fine Art from Seton Hall University and an MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His work has been presented at the Museum of Latin American Art, Pérez Art Museum, Museum of Cultural History, Norway, Frist Art Museum, Blanton Museum, Newark Museum, and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, among others. Nyugen is the recipient of the Creative Capital Award, Leonore Annenberg Performing and Visual Arts Fund, Franklin Furnace Fund, Dr. Doris Derby Award, New Jersey State Council on the Arts grant, and Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant.

A FLAG FOR THE APONTE REBELLION (CUBA)



Name	Total Dimensions (With Flag Support)	Flag Dimensions
A Flag For The Aponte Rebellion (Cuba)	62.25"W x 51"H	39.75" W x 46.5" H



Sachet and S-Hooks



Name	Total Dimensions (With Flag Support)	Flag Dimensions
A Flag for the Bahian Conspiracy (Brazil)	61"W x 45"H	47.5"W x 41"H



Sachet and S-Hooks



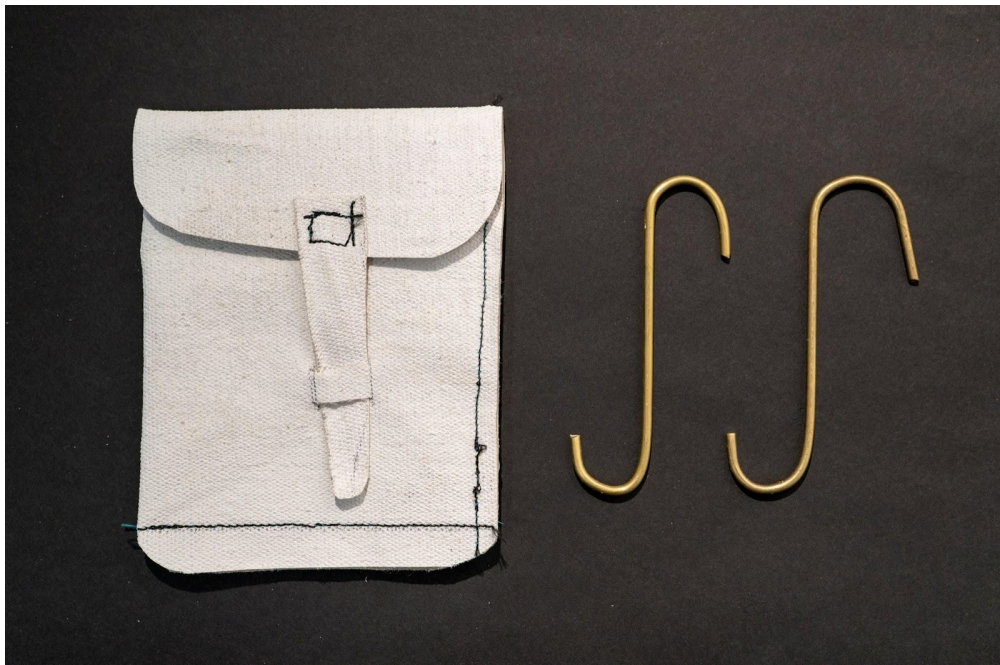
Name	Total Dimensions (With Flag Support)	Flag Dimensions
A Flag for the Boni Maroons (Suriname)	62.5"W x 38"H	47.5"W x 41"H



Sachet and S-Hooks



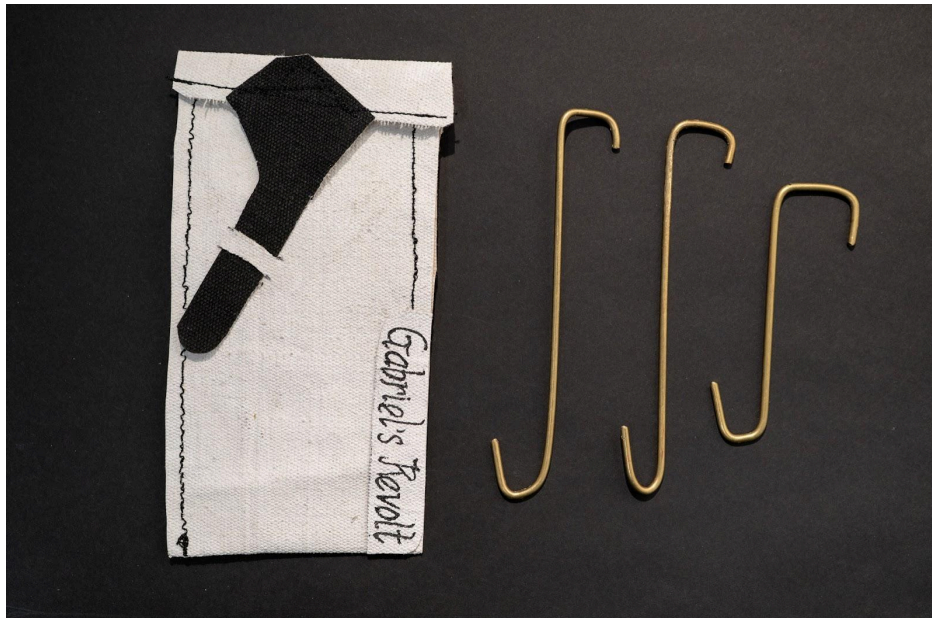
Name	Total Dimensions (With Flag Support)	Flag Dimensions
A Flag for the Bussa Rebellion (Barbados)	62"W x 48.25H	47.5"W x 39.5"H



Sachet and S-Hooks



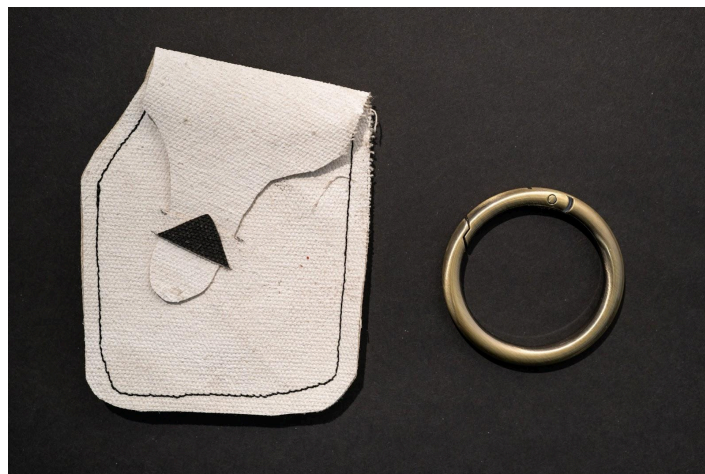
Name	Total Dimensions (With Flag Support)	Flag Dimensions
A Flag for Gabriel's Rebellion (Virginia)	63"W x 42" H	45"W x 34.25" H



Sachet and S-Hooks



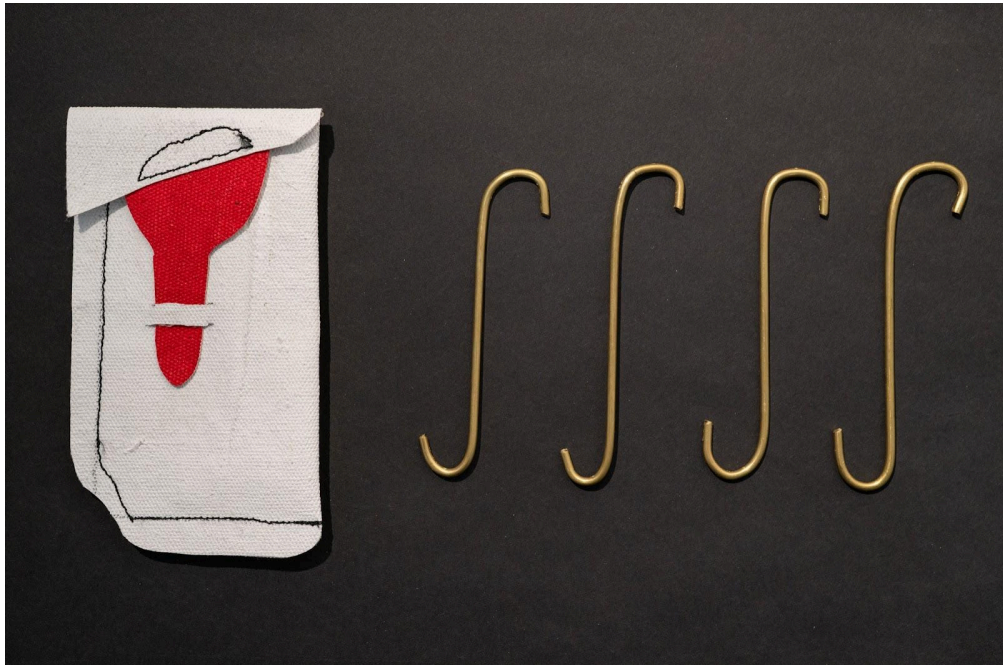
Name	Total Dimensions (With Flag Support)	Flag Dimensions
A Flag for the Haitian Revolution (Haiti)	34 $\frac{3}{8}$ " W x 61" H	20" W x 46.5" H



Sachet and S-Hooks



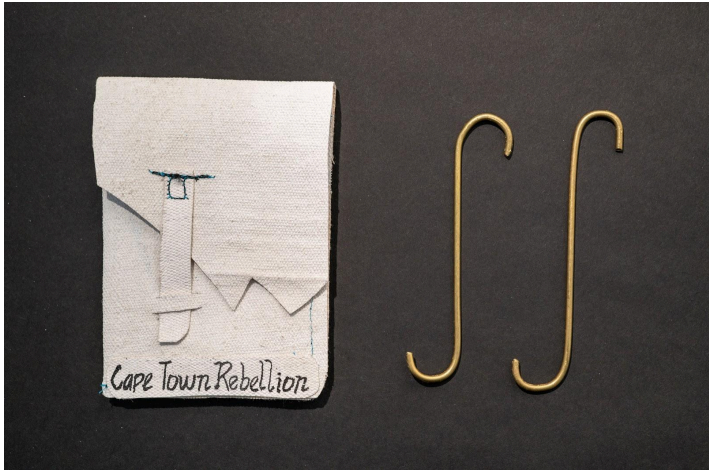
Name	Total Dimensions (With Flag Support)	Flag Dimensions
A Flag for the Stono Rebellion (South Africa)	64"W x 46.5"H	48.25"W x 42.5" H



Sachet and S-Hooks



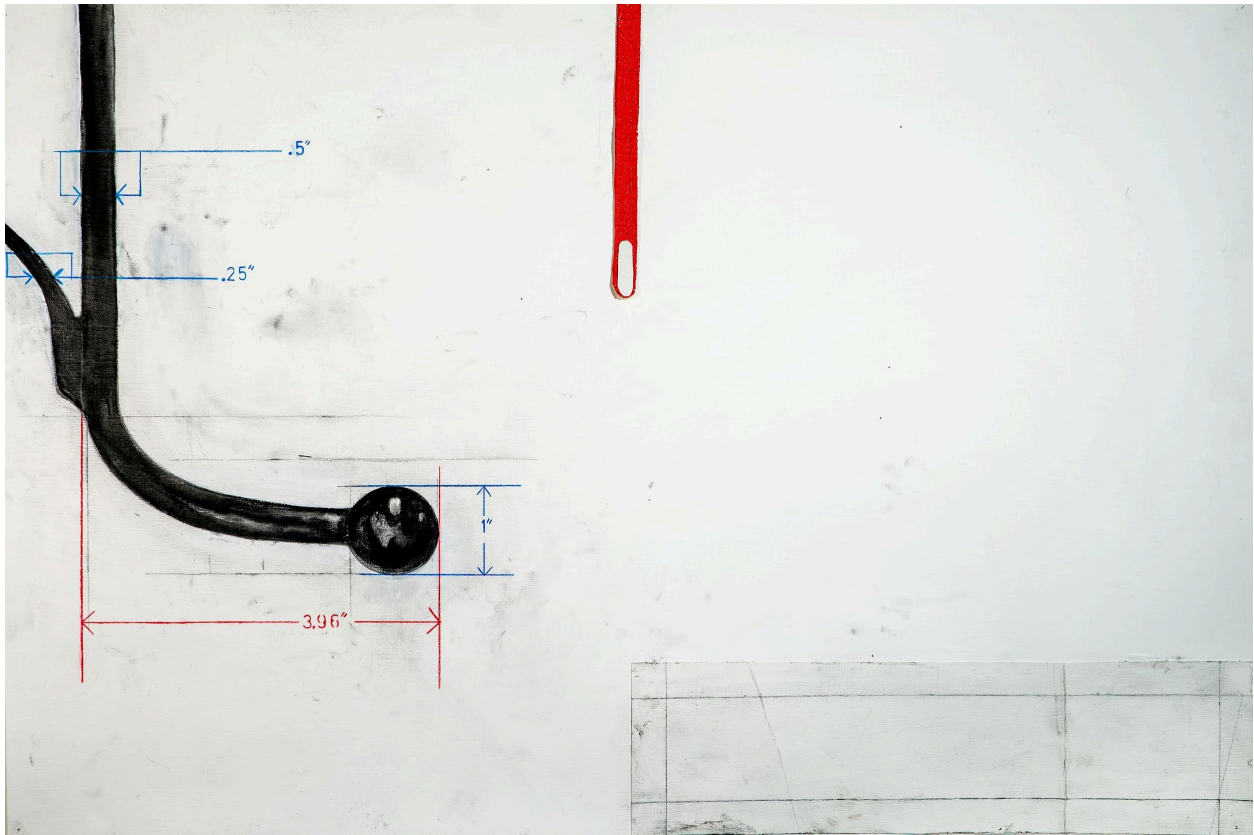
Name	Total Dimensions (With Flag Support)	Flag Dimensions
A Flag for the Cape Town Revolt (South Africa)	60"W x 49"H	22.1/2"W x 40.1/4"H



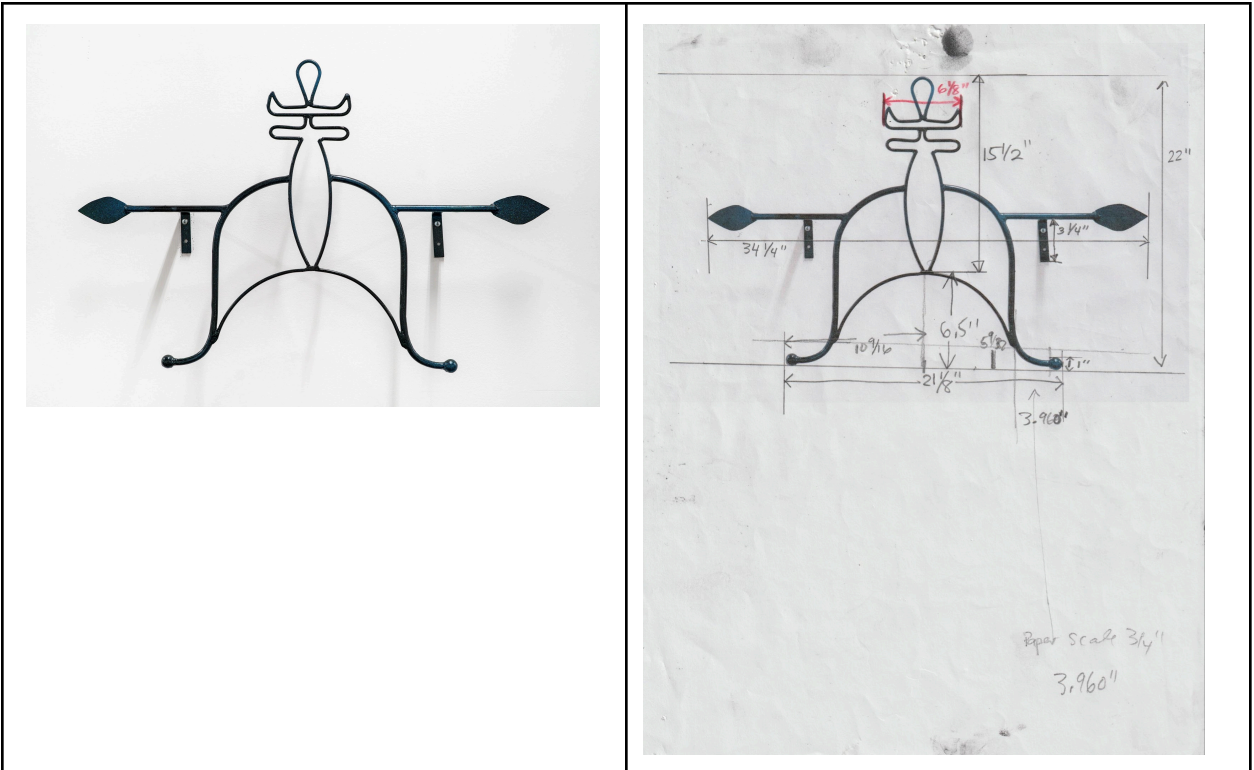
Sachet and S-Hooks

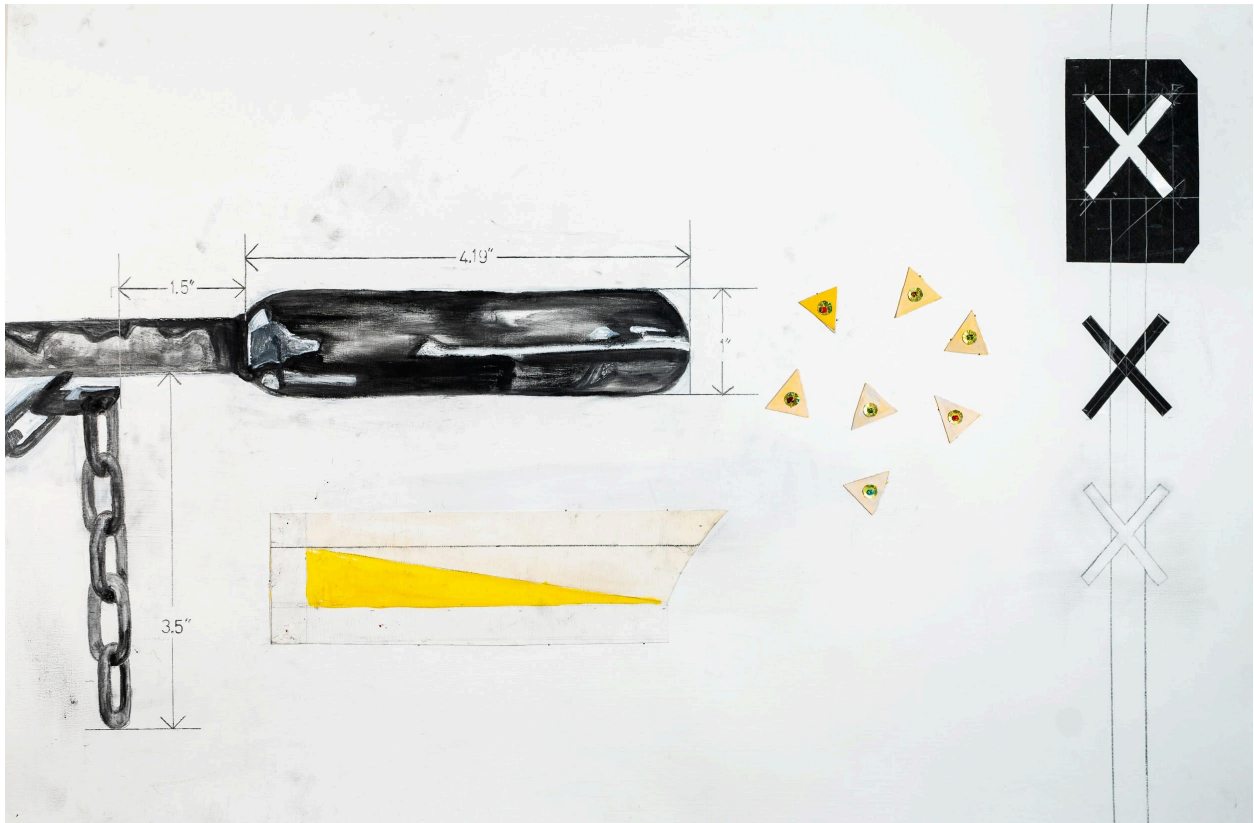
Flag Support Drawings

These drawings are meditations on each flag support, tracing their journey from conceptualization to finished products forged in steel. They start with schematic diagrams of measurements, hand-drawn over low-quality printed photos of each steel object. Each schematic serves as the reference for the respective drawing which focuses on a specific section of the object. Although the measurements represent the actual scale of the physical steel object, the sections are illustrated at 2-3 times their actual size. The drawings are a blend of the energy and intention of the initial sketches, the chalk drawings on steel work tables, welding residue, and key elements from each flag. They can be considered a visual representation of the aesthetics inherent in the fabrication process.



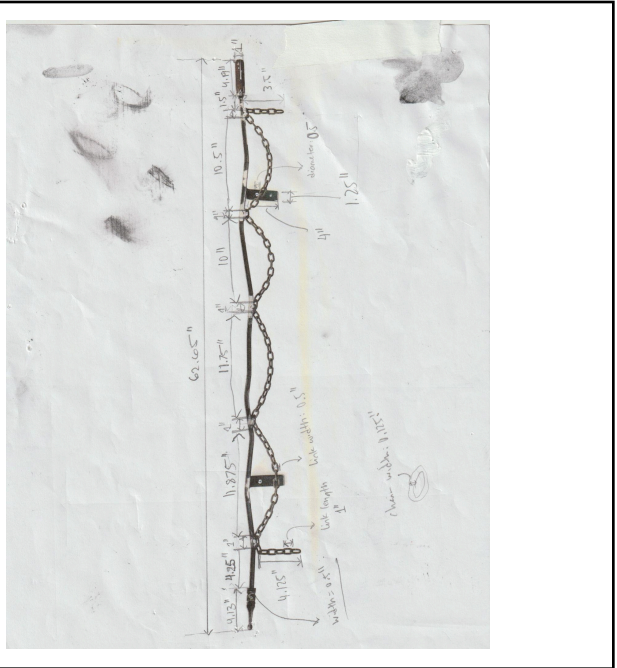
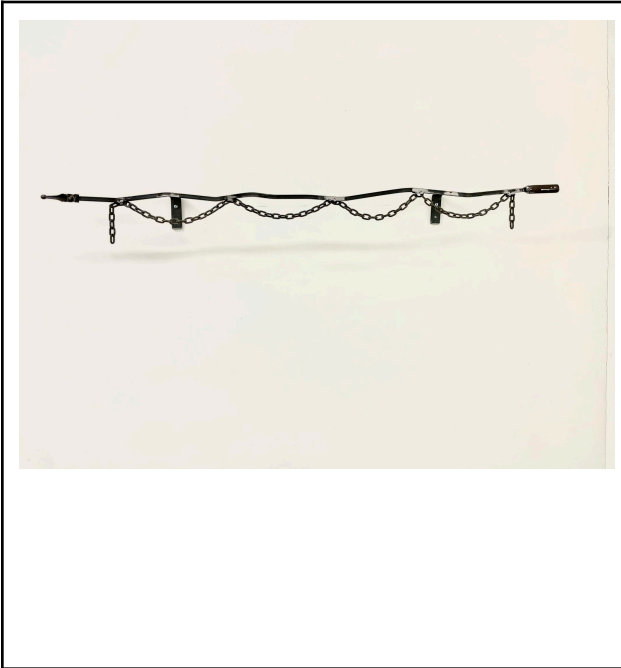
Flag Support for A Flag for the Haitian Revolution (Haiti)
 Graphite, charcoal, gesso, colored pencil, canvas, acrylic, and collage on paper.
 24 x 36 inches
 2024

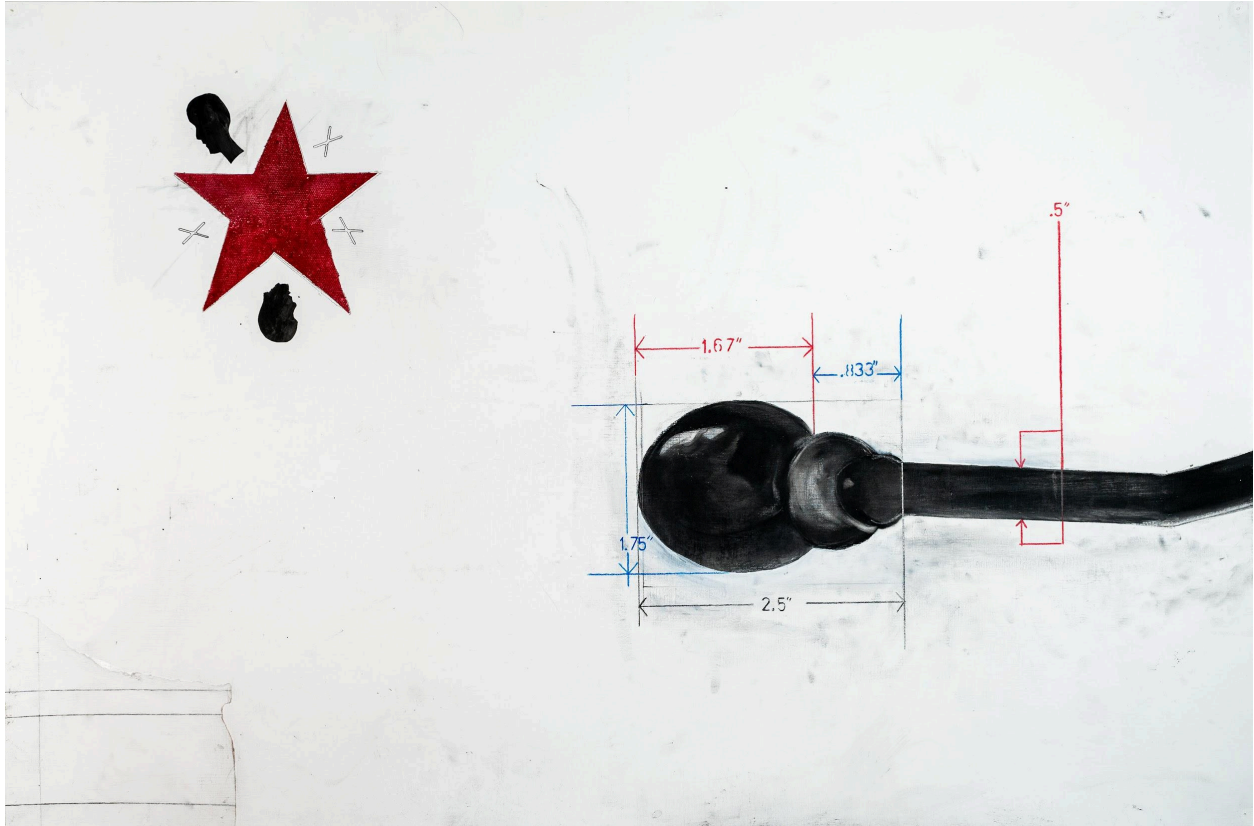




Flag Support for A Flag for the Boni Maroons (Suriname)

Graphite, charcoal, gesso, colored pencil, canvas, acrylic, sequins, beads, and collage on paper.
 24 x 36 inches
 2024



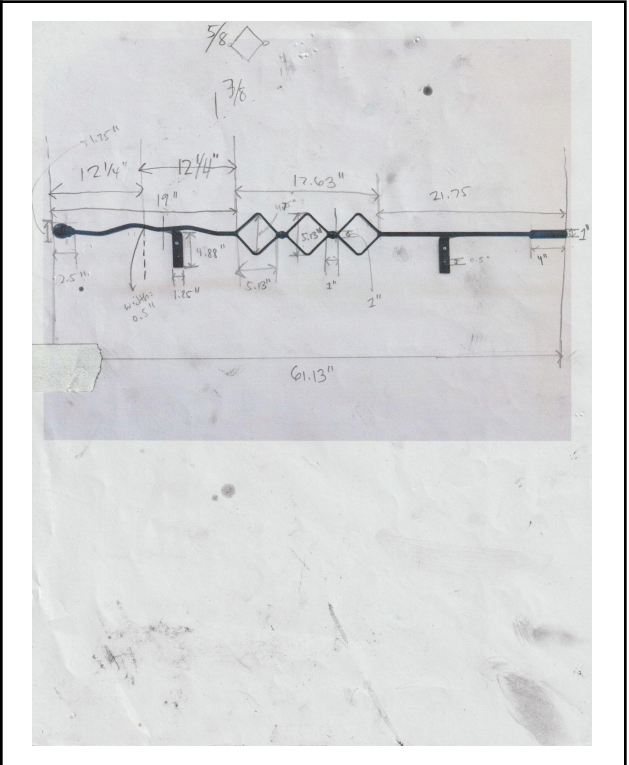
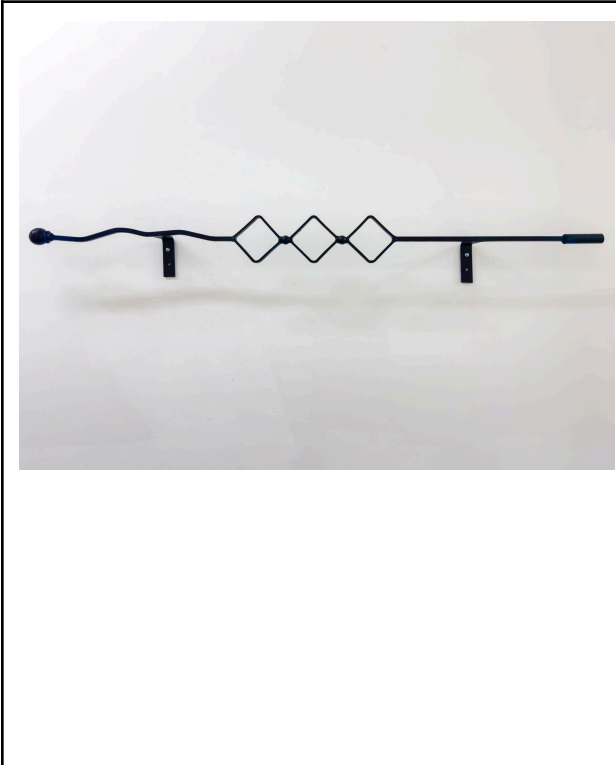


Flag Support for A Flag for the Bahian Conspiracy (Brazil)

Graphite, charcoal, gesso, colored pencil, canvas, diaspora soil, and collage on paper.

24 x 36 inches

2024



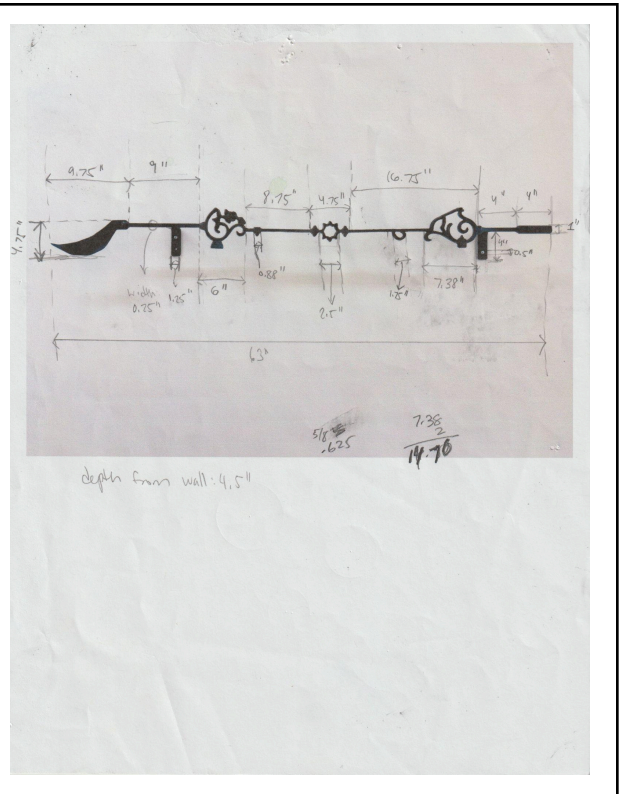
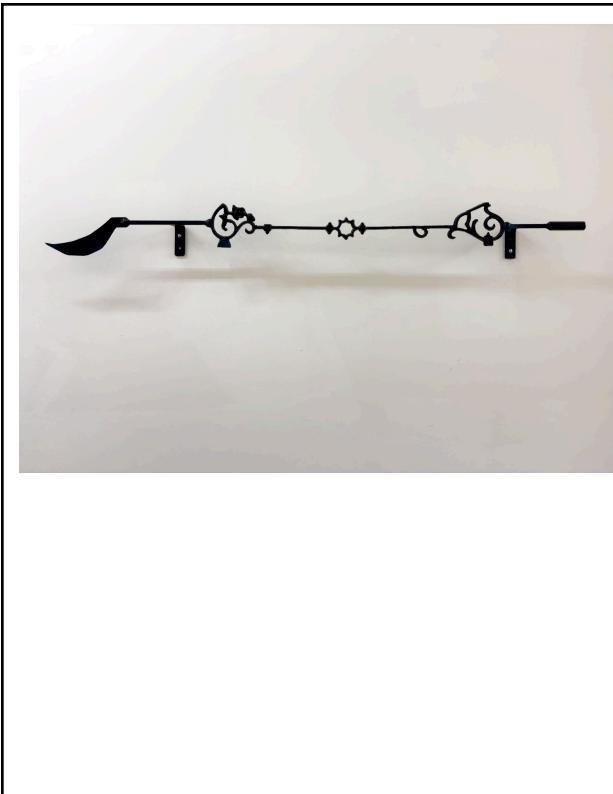


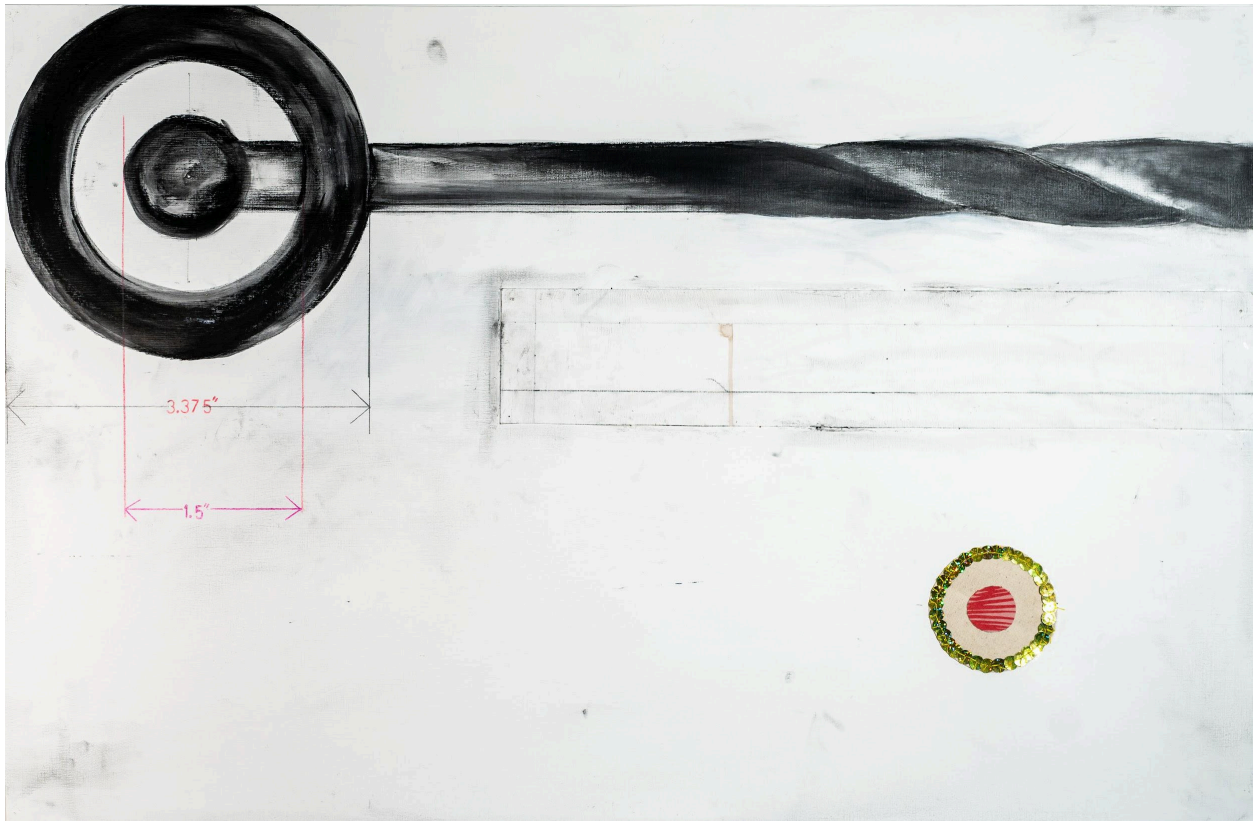
Flag Support for A Flag for Gabriel's Rebellion (Virginia)

Graphite, charcoal, gesso, colored pencil, canvas, oil pastel, diaspora soil, and collage on paper.

24 x 36 inches

2024



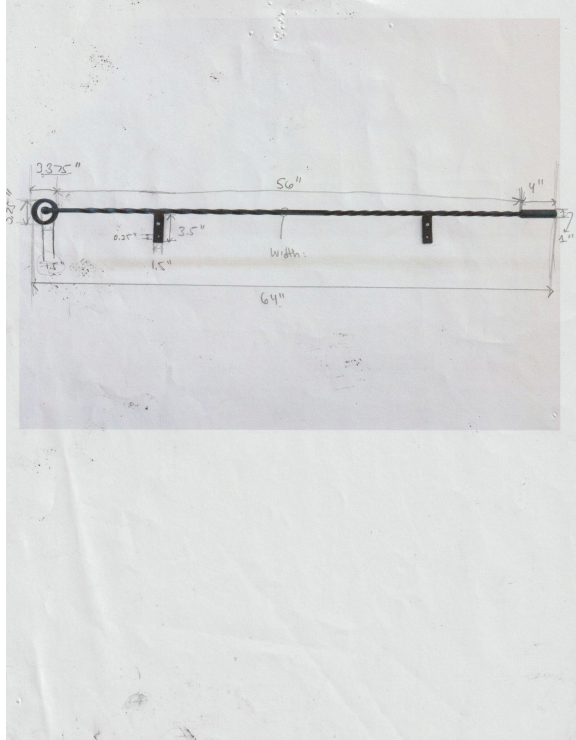
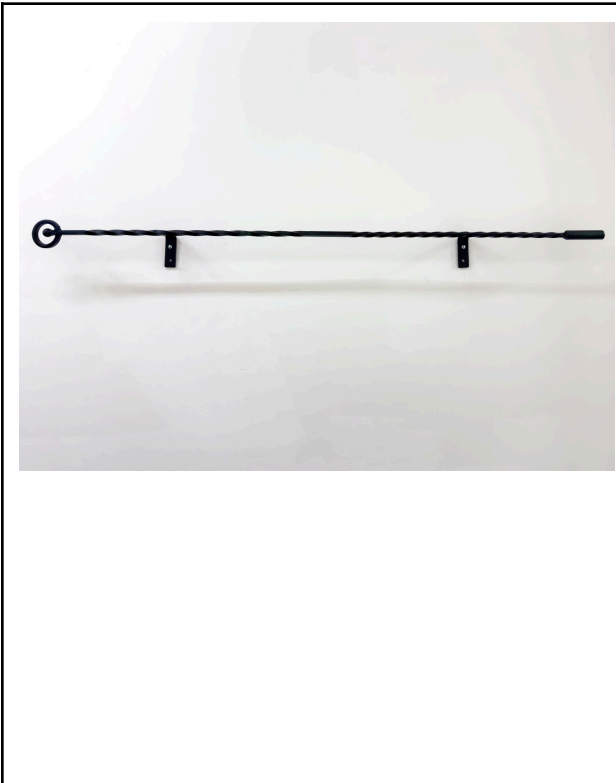


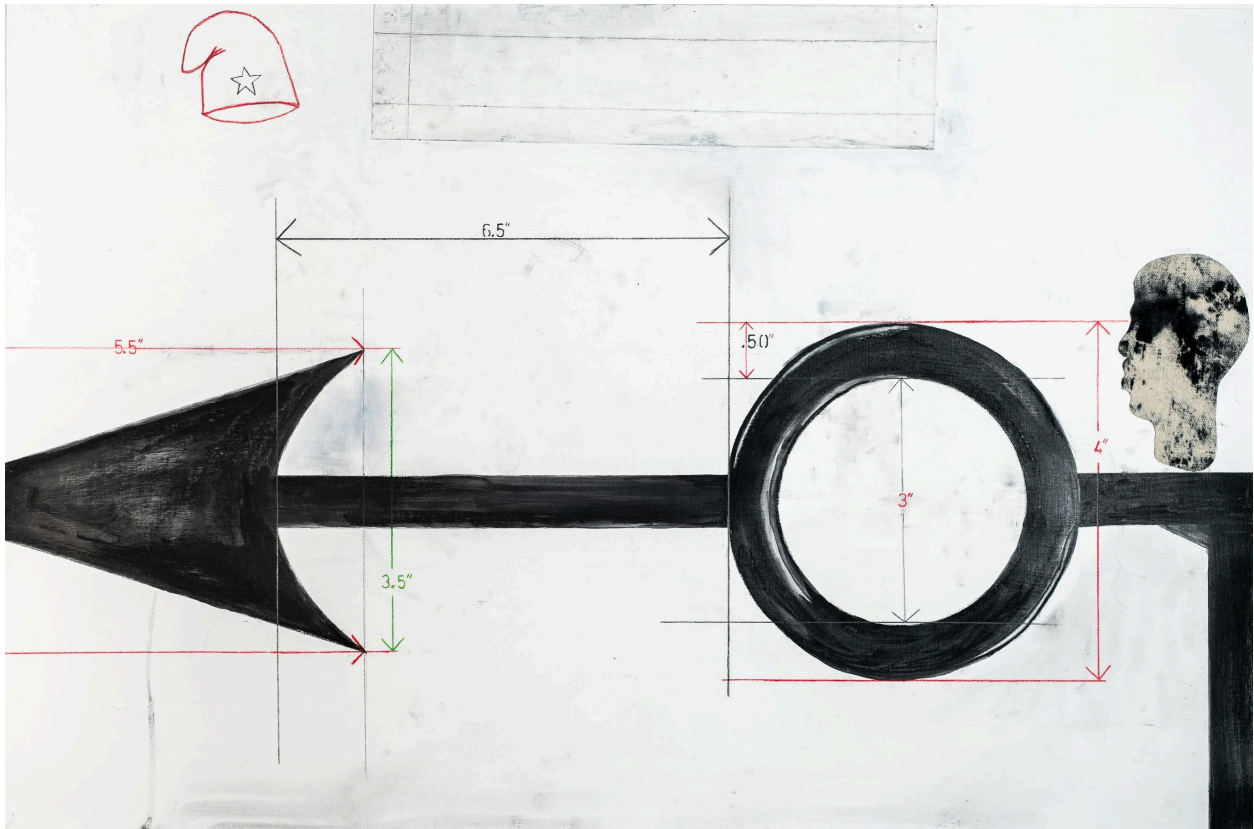
Flag Support for A Flag for Gabriel's Rebellion (Virginia)

Graphite, charcoal, gesso, colored pencil, canvas, acrylic, sequins, fabric, and collage on paper.

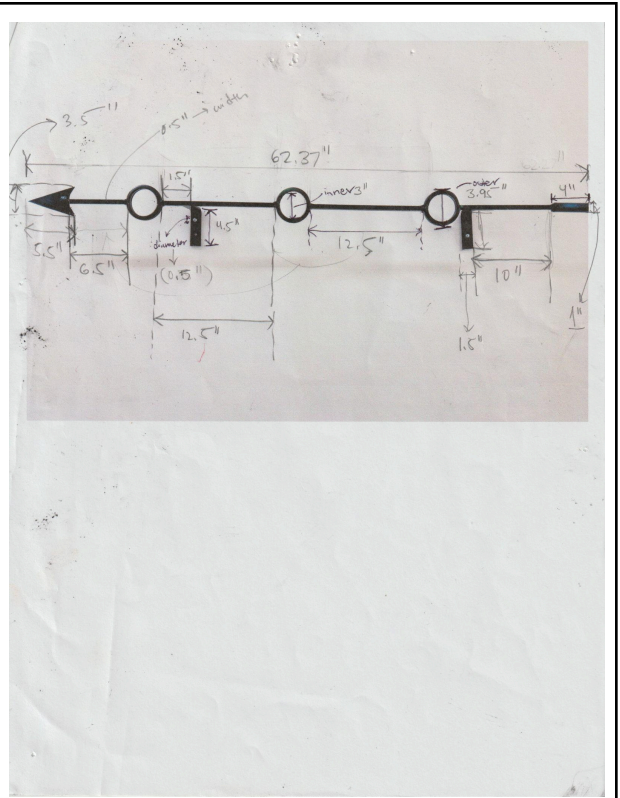
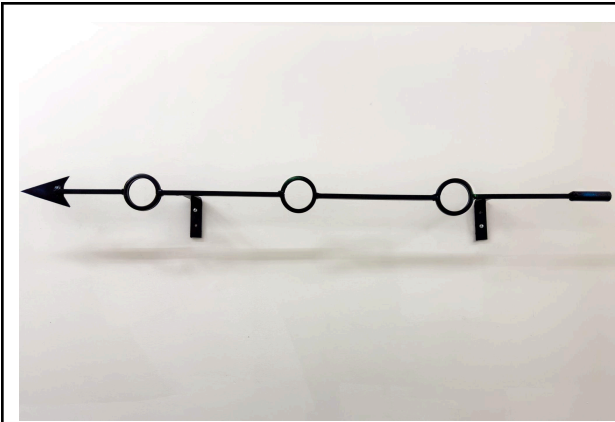
24 x 36 inches

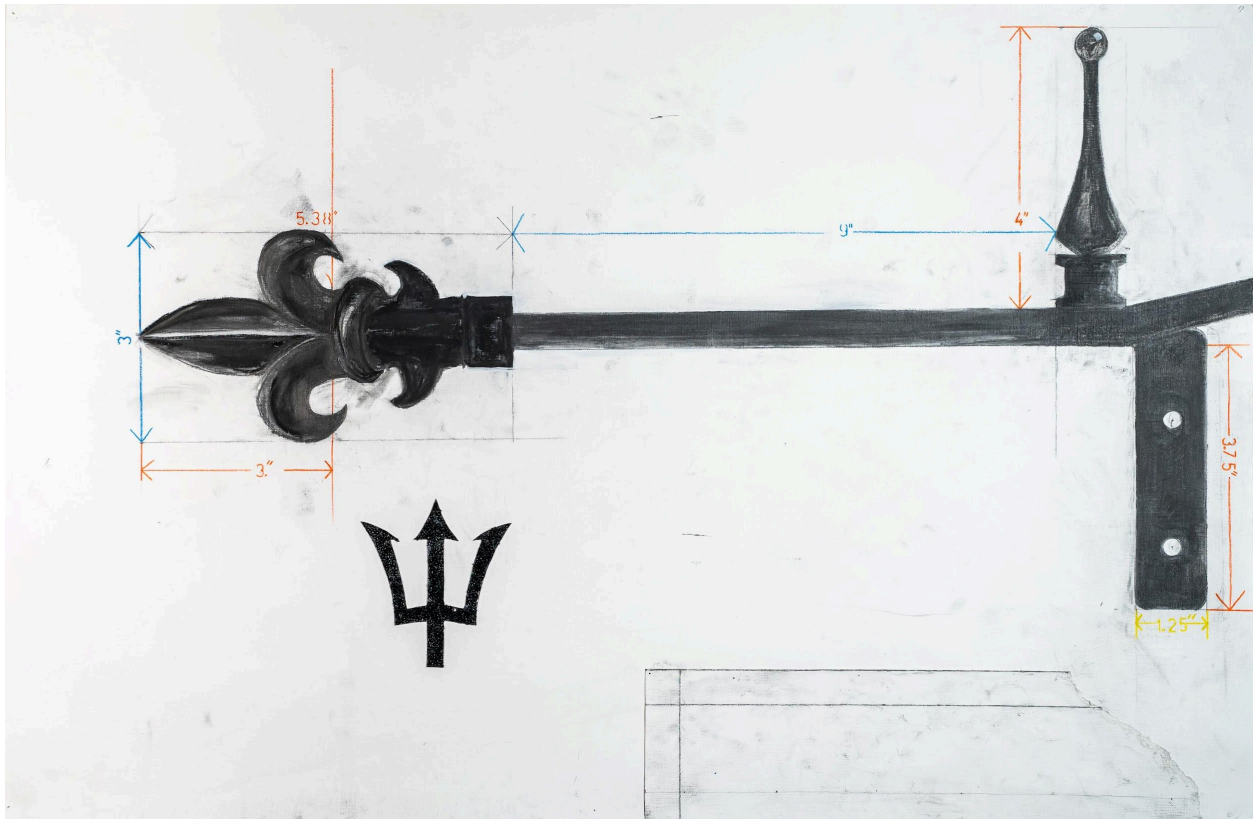
2024





Flag Support for A Flag For The Aponte Rebellion (Cuba)
 Graphite, charcoal, gesso, colored pencil, canvas, and collage on paper.
 24 x 36 inches
 2024



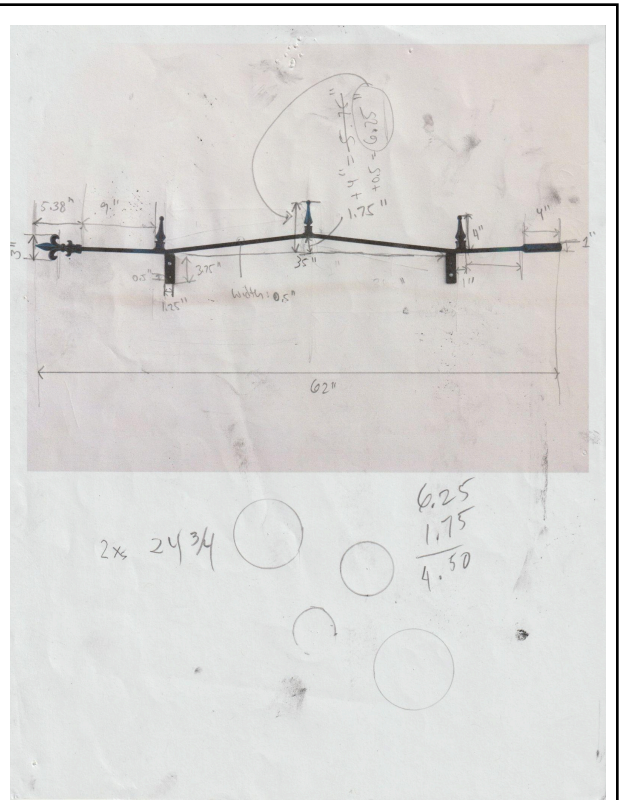
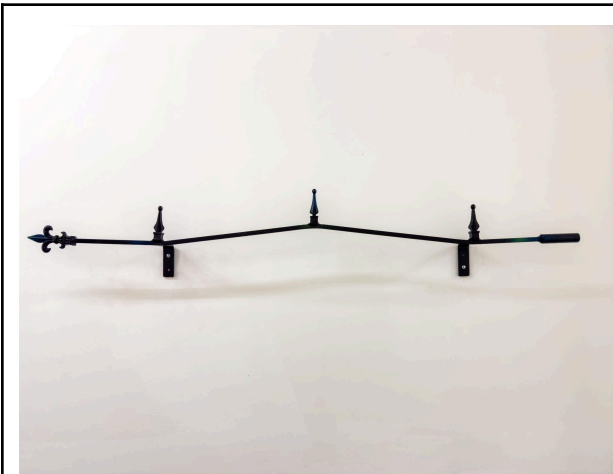


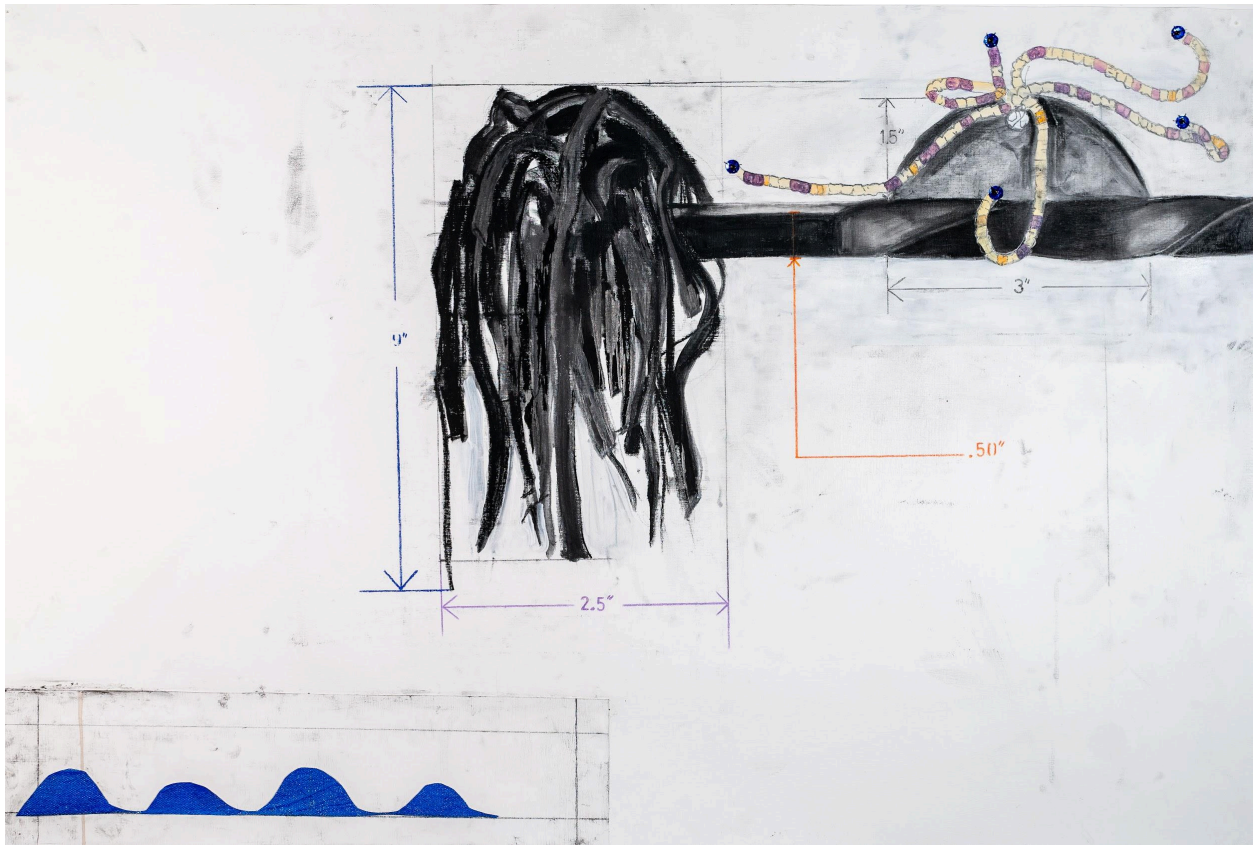
Flag Support for A Flag for the Bussa Rebellion (Barbados)

Graphite, charcoal, gesso, colored pencil, sequin fabric, and collage on paper.

24 x 36 inches

2024





Flag Support for A Flag for the Cape Town Revolt (South Africa)

Graphite, charcoal, gesso, colored pencil, canvas, acrylic, watercolor, sequins, beads, and collage on paper.

24 x 36 inches

2024

