

### **Sonya Clark: Artist's Statement**

Hairdressing is the primordial fiber art. I connect with the sensuality of hair by making wigs and hair studies. Visceral memories of hairdressing evoke the forms: oily pomade between the palms and on fingertips to be massaged into parted hair, the buzz of the clippers, the smell of the lye in the relaxers, the pungent odor of burning hair, the slice of scissors through thick locks, the rhythm of braiding, the sound of the brush against a scalp, the tug of the tangle being forced to conformity.

Short, cropped, and natural. That was my hairstyle for many years. When I started allowing it to grow, hair, which had long been a subject in my work also became my medium. Hair is power. Note the Samson myth, Rastafarian dreadlocks, and Angela Davis's Afro of the 1960s. Hair grows approximately 5 inches a year and measures our lives like Lachesis of the Three Fates in Greek mythology. As carrier of DNA, hair is the essence of identity. Deep within each strand, the vestiges of our roots and histories resound.

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Lincoln, the revered US President, is given a new hairdo. In a sense he is crowned with the hair of those he helped to Emancipate. Some scholars have argued that Lincoln may have had some African ancestry on his mother's side. If so, Lincoln may be the first African American president represented on American currency. The first in this series was made before Obama's election as a kind of prayer that he would be elected. I hoped that by crowning the 16th president with the power of an Afro this nation might find itself prepared to embrace blackness in all its glory. I have since made a series of 44 of these to honor our 44th president and a framed series in which the Afro progresses in size.

Hair = Power (Samson showed us that)

Afros = Black Power (Angela Davis showed us that)

Lincoln = Black Freedom (thanks to him for that)

Obama in Power thanks to the American voters for that!