



COULTER FUSSELL HOT WATER

September 2nd - December 6th, 2025





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The Bo Bartlett Center

921 Front Ave Columbus, GA 31901





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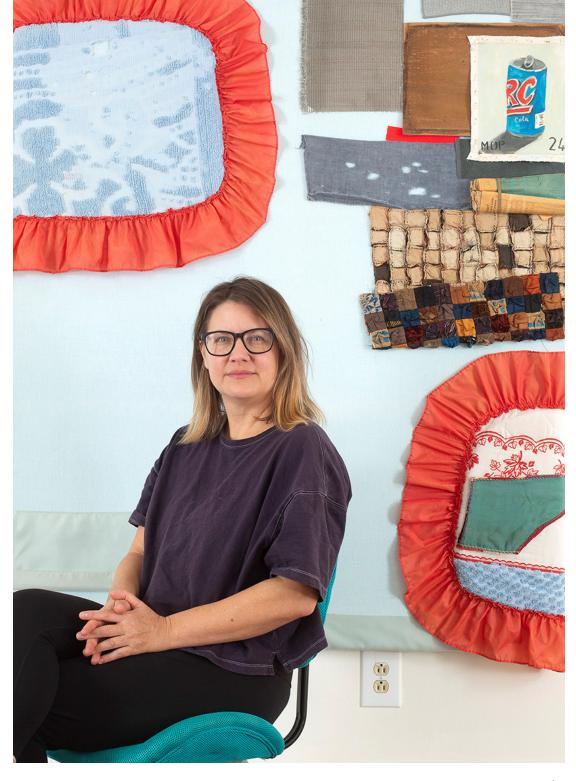
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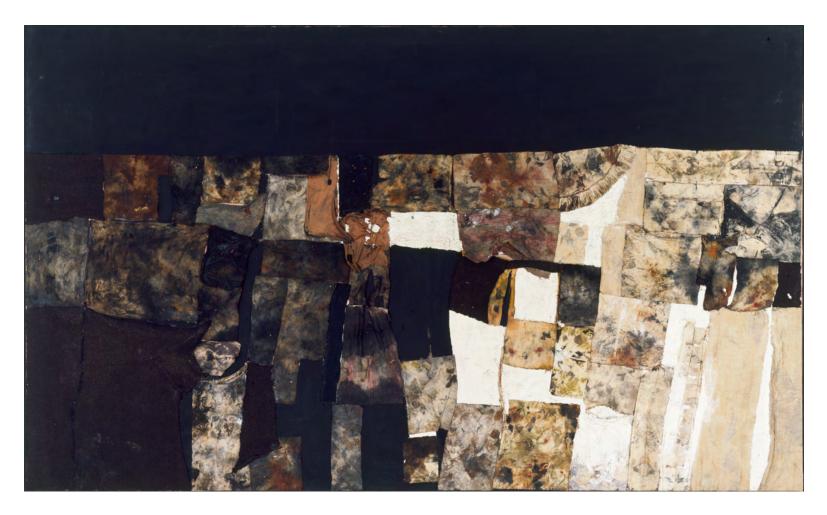
HOT WATER

Essay by Maria Britton

oulter Fussell's first survey exhibition, Hot Water, features her River Raft Quilt series, hand stitched from her hodge-podge collection of donated textiles ranging from quilts, used clothing, potholders, fabric, t-shirts, and just about anything comprised of fabric. Knowing that Coulter accepts fabric donations, folks in Coulter's orbit dump unwanted textiles at her studio in Water Valley, Mississippi. The narrative setting for the works in Hot Water meanders along the banks of the Chattahoochee River and through Columbus, Georgia, where Coulter lived until age 17. The more recent works include borrowed landscape photographs, mostly taken by her dad, printed on chiffon in a format reminiscent of photographic negatives or film stills. Her Frankenstein approach to making art consists of accepting our worn-out and unwanted kitschy textiles, stitching them together to tell a story, and throwing them back to keep us afloat.

Using an inherited methodology of quilting, Coulter takes materials available to her and puts them into her art. Each donated





Martedi Grasso (Fat Tuesday), 1956 Alberto Burri

Collage, paint, and rags on canvas

Photo Credit: Carnegie Museum of Art,
Pittsburgh, PA / Art Resource, NY

© ARS, NY

item in Coulter's studio has an equal chance of getting into a finished work. It just depends on what a piece calls for. In addition to the patched-together textiles, some of the metaphorical quilts have objects like envelopes, postcards, baskets, biscuit cutters, and other seemingly random yet helpful objects for each raft's occupants. "Mama Upriver" has a few wooden objects, basket, and beaver tail—all similar in color and texture—attached to the scrappiest selection of stained fabrics, otherwise known as rags, arranged in a loose grid format. The atmospheric quality of the stacked rags brings to mind Alberto Burri's "Martedi Grasso (Fat Tuesday)" from 1956, a collaged painting also made from rags. The practice of making art from scraps is not new.

The knowledge of quilting passed between generations emphasizes using whatever is available. "Broom Snakeweed," "Blue Butterfly," and "Sky Zone" share formal qualities with works by Gee's Bend Quilters including Lucy Mooney's "Blocks and Strips Work-Clothes Quilt" circa 1935 and Mary Spencer's "Two-Sided Quilt: Strips" circa 1970.

I first learned about Coulter's work through Instagram in March of 2020 and was struck by her non-hierarchical mash-ups of all kinds of textiles: feed bags, Minnie Mouse and the Care Bears, well-worn household linens, and airbrushed t-shirts. As a fellow artist working with repurposed textiles, I wanted to meet Coulter. So back in 2021 we scheduled a virtual studio visit. Laptop in hand, I peered from



While I have extensive experience with sewing and painting, I should fess up. I have never made a quilt. I truly love looking at quilts and learning how they are made. I have every intention of making a quilt and have accordingly saved materials for my quilt-to-be. Even though the works in Hot Water are not functional quilts (Coulter makes those, too), her artistic approach is based on quilting logistics. Her methodical approach of piecing together disparate scraps of fabric into blocky stacks with occasional skewed segments reads as quilting. She gathers material, establishes an underlying structure, works within a cohesive compositional setup, tells her story, and stitches it all together.

Two-Sided Quilt: Strips, 1970 Mary Spencer

Cotton, flannel, polyester, and synthetic knits

Photo Credit: Stephen Piktin/Piktin Studio © Souls Grown Deep. All Rights Reserved



my apartment in Carrboro, North Carolina into her Mississippi studio through a small window over my cluttered desktop as we talked about the art we were making and how things were going—typical artist shop talk. She told me about her trip to South Carolina to pick up her Art Fields prize and how she was happy not waiting tables. She told me about the River Raft Quilts and how they were makeshift flotation devices for getting the hell out of a bad situation. Fast forward to now, and the River Raft Quilts are on view in her hometown's Bo Bartlett Center, which I'm told is within spitting distance of the river that spawned the series.

The spindly pine forest depicted in "The Four Winds" reminds me of the stabilizing stitches of a quilt. Walking through the bare trunk pines is like walking amongst the stitches through a quilt's fluffy center with the quilt topper above and the backing grounded at your feet. The actual photograph was taken on a pine-lined highway in Marion County, Georgia near Coulter's cousin Caleb's dove field. The pine forest image printed on chiffon, a gauzy sheer fabric, allows the layers underneath to show through. Framed by a floral curtain with a swag, the image has a flashy, showtime quality, like a movie featuring one remembered landscape on repeat. Her choice to repeat the same photographic image relates to Andy Warhol's grids

of repeated images and the way patterned fabrics are designed.

"Jump School" follows the circular shape of a caterer's tablecloth and has a deceptively playful disposition thanks to the freefalling Cut-N-Sew printed doll fabric. Transparent pieces of chiffon echo the graphic radiating lines on the left and add to the parachute's billowy quality. The title comes from a portion of paratrooper training at nearby Fort Benning that Coulter remembers learning about as a kid. The radiating lines and rick rack point to a quilted X located slightly off-center but close enough to the middle to clearly mark the spot.

Coulter frequently uses house-hold linens, curtains, and bedsheets to visually soften or physically pad the edges of her work. Stuffed fitted sheets wrap around to frame and pad the corners of "Gangplank," "Sassandra," "Hot Rize," and "Streambed," making the works look like functional flotation devices. These works in particular make me think of Robert Rauschenberg's "combine" from 1955 called



"Bed." Taking an actual quilt and pillow he created a twin bed-sized canvas and layered expressive paint strokes over the objects. Coulter does not paint on her works. She describes her technique through the term grafting, as in joining two or more plants together to grow as one.

Coulter Fussell's River Raft Quilts journey through the landscapes, landmarks, people, and fantastical narratives of her childhood in

Bed, 1955 Robert Rauschenberg

Combine painting: oil and pencil on pillow, quilt and sheet onwood supports

Photo Credit: Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY © VAGA at ARS, NY

the Lower Chattahoochee Valley. As a North Carolinian with scarce knowledge of the Chattahoochee beyond Alan Jackson's chorus and light Googling, I'm obviously no expert on the area. What I see in Coulter's artworks in Hot Water are everyday experiences told through the language of textiles and quilting that shift our focus back to the natural environment and the precarious ways we use it and navigate through it. Coulter and her River Raft Quilts are circling back to the source of her origin story and taking us along for the ride.

COULTER FUSSELL

HOT WATER

Columbus Wall, 2023

Various donated textiles and mixed media

60 x 48 in

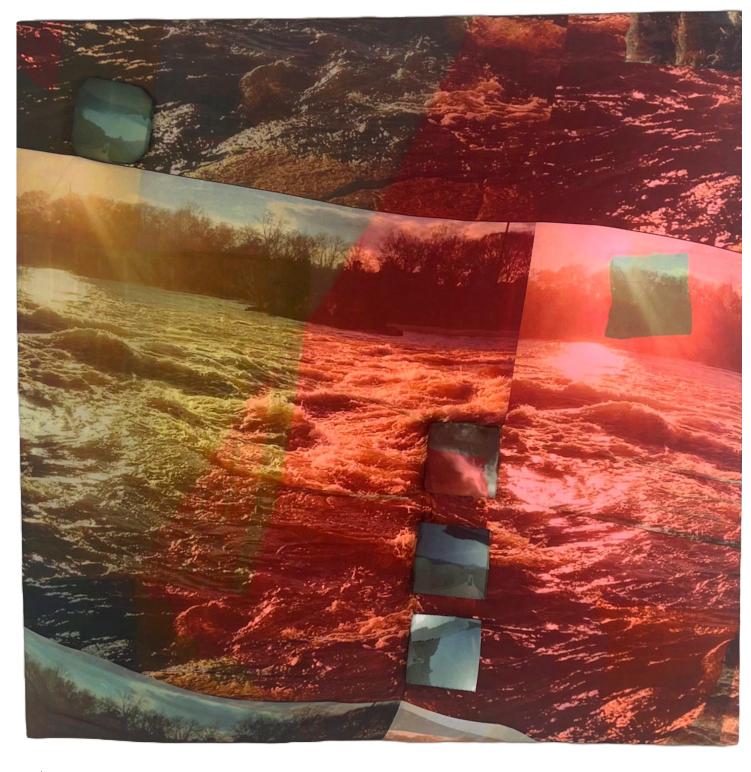






SkyZone, 2021 Various donated textiles and mixed media 66 x 49 in

Water Shed, 2025
Various donated textiles and mixed media
36 x 36 x 12 in



Back Waters, 2025

Various donated textiles and mixed media

49 x 49 x 5 in

Wave Runner, 2025

The Fall Line, 2025

Various donated textiles and mixed media

72 x 78 in

Various donated textiles and mixed media
49 x 49 x 5 in

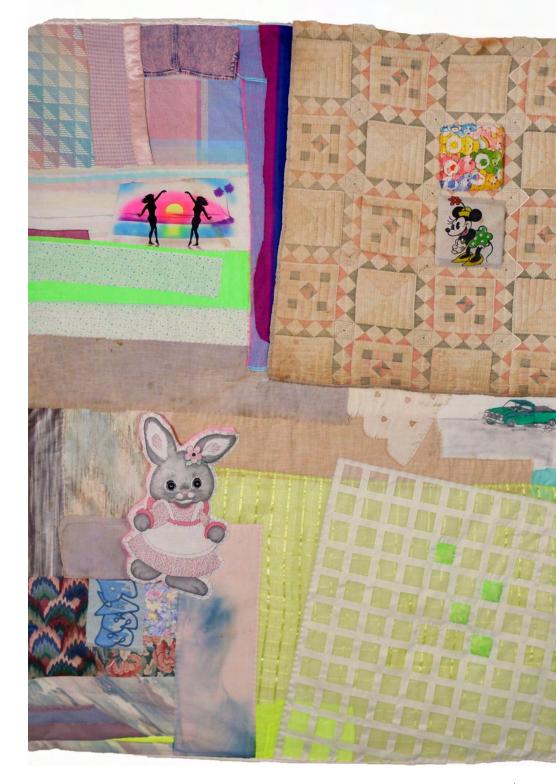




Girls Trip, 2022

Various donated textiles and mixed media

82 x 60 x 2 in





The Four Winds, 2025

Various donated textiles and mixed media

52 x 72 x 5 in

Blackberries, 2023

Various donated textiles and mixed media

38 x 55 x 4 in





Mama Upriver, 2020

Various donated textiles and mixed media

43 x 46 in





Graft and Stealth, 2021

Various donated textiles and mixed media

66 x 72 in

Coverage Area, 2023

Various donated textiles and mixed media

80 x 47 x 5 in

Sassandra, 2020

Various donated textiles and mixed media

41 x 65 x 7 in



Various donated textiles and mixed media

52 x 35 in









Various donated textiles and mixed media







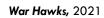
War Map, 2022

Various donated textiles and mixed media

57 x 56 in

Behold! Look What Nature Has Done!, 2025

Various donated textiles and mixed media 48 x 96 in



Various donated textiles and mixed media 92 x 124 in

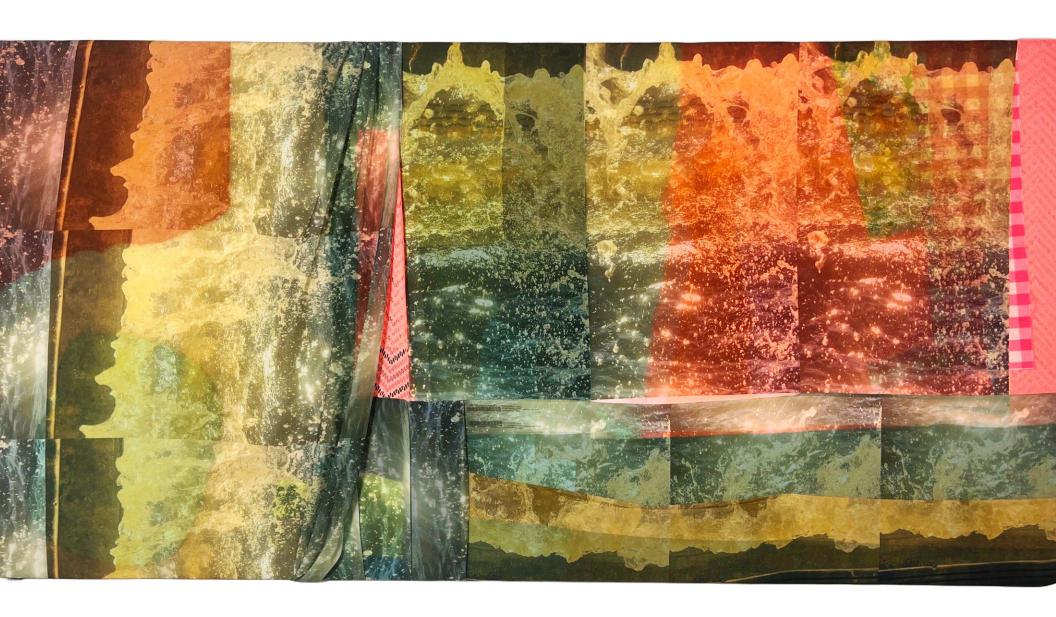


Go It Like Lightning!,

2025

Various donated textiles and mixed media

48 x 96 in



ABOUT THE

BO BARTLETT CENTER

he Bo Bartlett Center is an 18,425-square-foot interactive gallery space housed on the River Park campus of Columbus State University in downtown Columbus, GA. The red brick, former textile warehouse turned gallery space, designed by AIA award-winning architect, Tom Kundig, sits on the banks of the Chattahoochee River. Complementing exhibitions in the CSU De-

partment of Art's acclaimed Norman Shannon and Emmy Lou P. Illges Gallery, the Bartlett Center serves as an experiential learning center and cultural hub for the visual arts while affording visitors a broad range of arts experiences offered within the College's arts district. As part of the College of the Arts' Corn Center for Visual Arts, the Bo Bartlett Center is a pivotal element in the continued emergence of a national and international presence.

The Bo Bartlett Center aims to enhance the cultural and educational environment of the university and the community. We strive to provide access to art through exhibitions and cross-disciplinary programming that promote the appreciation and understanding of the arts.



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