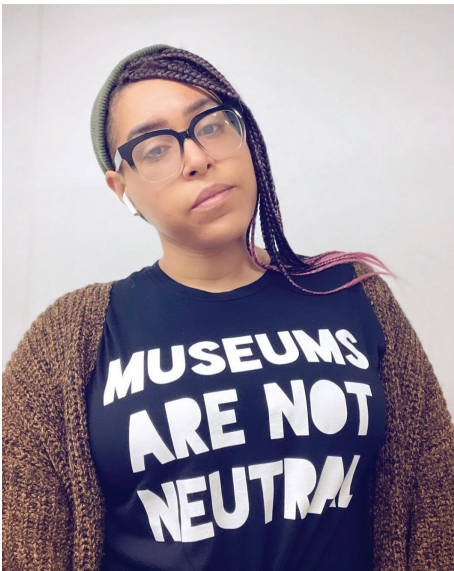


Rootwork

Recent works by
Jillian Marie Browning

East Gallery Guide

August 29, 2024 – January 4, 2025



Jillian Marie Browning.

Jillian Marie Browning, a portrait artist from Ocala, Fla, delves into the unique Black Southern experience. Now based in Birmingham, Alabama, she is an assistant professor of photography and has exhibited her work widely across the Eastern United States. *Rootwork* is her first solo exhibition in Georgia.

THE ART OF ROOTWORK

This exhibition explores the deep connections between Black hair practices, Southern culture, and the natural world. Browning's work highlights how Black hair is not just a style but a powerful symbol of spirituality, identity, and heritage. The term *Rootwork* refers to both the roots of hair and a Southern healing tradition rooted in African customs, often involving the use of plants and herbs.

HAIR AS SPECIAL AND POWERFUL

Hair is more than just a physical feature; it carries deep cultural and personal significance. For many, how they care for their hair expresses identity, heritage, and community. In Jillian Marie Browning's art, hair becomes a powerful symbol of memory, connecting individuals to their cultural roots, family history, and broader narratives.



Jillian Marie Browning, *The Root*, 2022. Cyanotype on cotton.



Jillian Marie Browning,
Matriarchal Line, 2018-2021.
Cyanotype on cotton,
in wooden embroidery hoops.

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Through familiar elements like Blue Magic Hair Grease, Browning's art evokes memories of Black childhood and emphasizes the importance of hair care traditions. These practices connect deeply with the history, culture, and environment of Black Southern communities. Browning's art is a celebration of cultural identity, honoring the beauty and resilience of Black hair, the wisdom found in nature, and the rich tapestry of Southern traditions. Her work invites viewers to reflect on the importance of embracing and preserving one's heritage, and to appreciate the intricate stories that shape who we are and where we come from.

CONNECTIONS TO NATURE AND THE SOUTH

Browning's art reflects a profound relationship with the Southern landscape, where plants and vegetation play a crucial role in healing and cultural practices. The works often feature her family members, creating a personal yet universal portrayal of the contemporary Black experience. Browning's work frequently incorporates Southern flora, reflecting the deep bond between people and the natural world in her community. These are not just ordinary plants; they are native to the South and have been used for generations in hair care and healing practices. Through her art, Browning illustrates how these plants are intertwined with daily life, offering physical nourishment and a sense of strength and well-being.



Jillian Marie Browning seated in front of her installation.

Explore *Rootwork* and discover how Browning intertwines the themes of identity, nature, and cultural heritage in her powerful, thought-provoking work.