



ANN HAMILTON

American, b. 1956

Cordova, 1987

C-Print

Gift of Tim J. and Kimberly B. Montgomery, 2015.3

Cordova



Ann Hamilton (b. 1956) Ann Hamilton is a prominent visual artist best known for her large-scale multi-media installations. She did her BFA studies in textile design at the University of Kansas in 1979 before moving on to earn her MFA in sculpture at Yale University in 1985. She was born in Ohio and, after spending time on both coasts, moved back to live and work in Columbus. Her artwork is incredibly varied and includes video, textiles, and photography. Some common threads that move throughout her work reflect her interest in language, time, and accumulation.

A product of its time

In *Cordova*, Hamilton might be referencing Joseph Beuys' *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965), in which the artist, whose face was coated in honey and gold leaf, walked around a gallery interpreting art to a dead hare cradled in his arms. In this photograph, the artist has chosen a different artistic convention. Instead of gold leaf she used marble statuary, and instead of a dead hare she is communicating to a dead deer.

Take a closer look

The human head is not a statue but the head of the artist herself that has been coated with make-up or plaster to look like statuary. The deer's head, too, has been separated from its body and inverted. Both seemingly floating heads carry with them a tradition, be it hunting trophies or statuary. Each is also intended to provide an illusion of what is real, suggesting the passing of time or even death. Note the use of fruit, a common symbol of mortality, or memento mori. The line is a recurring theme for Hamilton, who uses pencil lines and threads to represent human speech as well as the simplest form of something that can accumulate. Like a string telephone, each head is fixed in its position and can only see one fruit and part of the strand, suggesting a communication breakdown. The artwork presents stand-ins for real life objects to create a viewing experience about the artificiality and fragility of communication.

Did you know?

Ann Hamilton was chosen to represent the US. at the Venice Biennale in 1999. Her artwork, entitled *myein*, made language visible by cascading red powder down walls embossed with braille, in order to address the history of slavery in the US.

On your own

www.annhamiltonstudio.com

www.pbs.org/art21/artists/ann-hamilton

<http://hyperallergic.com/61982/a-playground-for-the-soul-lost-in-ann-hamiltons-world>

www.nytimes.com/1999/05/30/arts/art-architecture-representing-america-in-a-language-of-her-own.html