



Jo-Ann Morgan,
Rogelio and Jayce



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JO-ANN MORGAN

A PORTRAIT IS A PRAYER

2.21.26-3.25.26

ARTIST STATEMENT

"I use the techniques of machine quilting with appliqué to construct compositions in layered cotton fabric. The medium of quilt is familiar and approachable, offering an opportunity to reflect on topical events that are troubling and even provocative. The iconography recalls spontaneous memorials that communities erect after untimely deaths, with flowers, toys, and mementos often flanking the portrait subjects.

I began this work during the height of Black Lives Matter protests. Memorials of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd were among my first commemorations for those who died at the hands of police. A series of fabric memorials commemorates 19 children killed in a mass shooting at Robb Elementary School, Uvalde, Texas, on May 24, 2022. Each piece is personalized. Another body of work, "News from the Front" honors women impacted by war and social conflicts.

Artmaking is my form of activism. Many of my artworks address the cruelty and folly of gun violence. There is no greater public health issue affecting children than gun violence. Guns are the leading cause of death for children and teens in the United States."

- Jo-Ann Morgan

Cover: Jo-Ann Morgan, *Sueños de la Madre*
Right: Jo-Ann Morgan, *The Family of Jorge Garcia*



JO-ANN MORGAN is Professor Emerita of African American Studies and Art History, Western Illinois University. She authored *The Black Arts Movement and the Black Panther Party in American Visual Culture* (2019) and *Uncle Tom's Cabin as Visual Culture* (2007) and is the winner of the Seaborg Award for Civil War Scholarship in 2008.

Prior to becoming a scholar of African American art and culture, Morgan received her MFA in 1989 from the University of Wyoming in Studio Art and remained active as a visual artist while a doctoral student at UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles; PhD, 1997). After two decades of university teaching, in 2020 Morgan reestablished a full-time studio practice creating stitched fabric wall hangings (art quilts) on themes related to social justice and gun violence. Her work has been shown in over twenty solo exhibitions at community art centers and at colleges and universities throughout the country.

