

National Association of Women Artists South Carolina Chapter



Presents: *Threads of Labor - Women's Work*

Online Exhibit October 15 - November 15, 2025

Eligibility:

This NAWA SC exhibit is only for current NAWA SC members. You **MUST** be a member in good standing during the entire date range of the exhibit. If you are a National NAWA member and would like to participate, you can join the SC Chapter today. Contact Membership Chair Susan Irish at: art.nawasc@gmail.com.

Artists Submissions:

Submissions are handled through <https://client.smarterentry.com/nawasc>. This is a juried exhibit. Please read the prospectus thoroughly. You may submit up to two artworks. Submission does not guarantee acceptance. Entry fee: \$35 for two works of art.

Submission Dates: September 1 - September 30, 2025

Exhibit Reception: An online reception, through Zoom, will take place October 15, 2025. Artists statements are not required to be submitted on Smarter Entry, as artists will have a the opportunity to speak about their work during the Zoom reception.

Theme: *Threads of Labor - Women's Work* in America's thirteen Colonies during the Continental Congress, 1774 - 1781.

Exhibit Overview:

Threads of Labor - Women's Work is an art exhibit that explores the overlooked contributions of women during a pivotal period in American history: 1774 - 1781 and the lead up to the American Revolution. Through a diverse range of mediums—textiles, painting, sculpture, photography, and multimedia works—contemporary women artists will reflect on the concept of “women’s work,” connecting historical narratives with modern artistic interpretations. This exhibit reclaims and reimagines the labor, creativity, and resilience of women who shaped the cultural and economic landscape of colonial America.

Historical Context:

During the period of the Continental Congress, New England specialized in lumber, fishing, and shipping; the Middle Colonies in furs, grains, and other foodstuffs; the Chesapeake areas, of Virginia and Maryland, specialized in tobacco; and the South, primarily reliant on enslaved labor, had an agrarian economy of indigo, rice and cotton. Women’s work, both within the home and in the broader economy, was essential yet often invisible. Whether White, Black, or Indigenous, women’s labor spanned domestic chores, midwifery, weaving, managing homes and plantations, and producing goods vital to the local economy. For enslaved African women, their contributions were not only in the fields but also in crafting, cooking, and maintaining the cultural heritage of their communities through oral traditions, music, and arts like basket-weaving.

At the same time, 1775 marked the rise of revolutionary sentiments. Colonial women contributed to the Patriot cause by participating in boycotts of British goods, and sewing homespun clothing, and maintaining households while men went to war. Their work was crucial, yet it often remains a footnote in historical records.

Artistic Exploration:

This exhibit draws connections between the literal and metaphorical threads women wove throughout history. It challenges traditional gender roles by highlighting how labor once deemed “domestic” was, in fact, an integral part of early America’s political and economic fabric. Each artwork tells a story—of persistence, creativity, and survival—by revisiting the forms of work that defined women’s roles in 18th-century America.

- **Textile Arts:** Quilts, embroideries, and woven fabrics inspired by 18th-century techniques are welcomed. These pieces will reflect the painstaking craftsmanship that sustained families and revolutions alike.
- **Sculpture:** Artists will reimagine tools of women’s labor—spinning wheels, looms, and cooking utensils—into modern works of art that critique the gendered division of work.
- **Works on Paper:** Painting, photography, collage, and mixed media art will present a visual dialogue to focus on women’s roles in production, resistance, and social cohesion.

Themes and Goals:

1. **Reclaiming History:** The exhibit seeks to highlight how “women’s work” from 1774 - 1781 was much more than simple domesticity—it was an essential part of the economy and social fabric.
2. **Intersectionality:** Through its focus on women of different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, the exhibit emphasizes how race, class, and gender intersected in defining women’s experiences of labor during this time.
3. **Continuity and Change:** By bringing the past into conversation with contemporary art, the exhibit aims to show how the legacy of women’s labor persists, evolving through time but retaining deep cultural significance.

4. Empowerment and Resistance: Whether participating in boycotts, creating homespun goods for the revolution, or sustaining the community through arts and crafts, women were agents of change. Their stories are honored as part of the larger revolutionary narrative.

Conclusion:

Threads of Labor - Women's Work will offer visitors a profound exploration of women's contributions in Colonial America, blending history and contemporary art to create a dialogue about the value of women's work, both seen and unseen. This exhibit invites artists and viewers to reflect on the enduring impact of these women and consider how their labor continues to resonate in modern discussions of work, gender, and art.

Awards:

First Place: \$200

Second Place \$100

Third Place \$75

2 Honorable Mentions

Sponsored Award: \$100

Sponsored Award: Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) \$100 Award, presented by the Henry Middleton Chapter, Aiken, SC, to the artist whose work depicts a woman patriot who furthered the cause of America's independence during the period of the Continental Congress.

Established nine years earlier than NAWA, the National Society DAR was founded in 1890, after the Sons of the American Revolution refused to allow women to join its ranks. Any woman 18 years or older, regardless of race, religion or ethnicity, who can prove lineal descent from a patriot of the American Revolution, is eligible to join. A patriot includes any person of noble action during the revolution, of which there are many Black, Native Americans, and other ethnic backgrounds. DAR members are passionate about community service, preserving history, education and honoring those who serve our nation. For more information, contact: <https://www.dar.org/>

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