Nov. 11, ‘17 - Jan. 12, ‘18
Gallery Aferro Main Gallery
73 Market Street, Newark

OPENING RECEPTION
November 11, 2017
4pm - 8pm

GALLERY HOURS
Wednesday - Saturday
12pm - 6pm
and by appointment

Speaking Her Mind: Then and Now
Gladys Barker Grauer
Curated by Adrienne Wheeler

Spanning over seventy years of artistic practice, and evidencing, in glorious vivid colors, her unwavering commitment to the radically humane, Gladys Barker Grauer, Speaking Her Mind: Then and Now begins with Grauer’s radicalization as a student in the 1940’s at the Art Institute of Chicago and weaves in and out of moments before and after that helped shape her activism and inform her work. Grauer is a prolific artist who works across multiple media including painting, sculpture, weaving, assemblage, collage, and even doll making. Curator Adrienne Wheeler writes: “Gladys decided I should curate the exhibition. Initially, the exhibition was proposed as a retrospective, to which the artist replied, “I don’t want a retrospective, I’m making new work.” I only mention this for purposes of context. Gladys Barker Grauer is ninety-four years old and maintains an active and vibrant art practice.” Third in a 2017-18 quartet of solo shows at Gallery Aferro by women artists of color from different generations, the exhibit and the series derived from Artistic Director Evonne M. Davis’ interest in recognizing artists who were making socially engaged work before this kind of artmaking had a label.
This large-scale exhibition brings together a collection of work, new and old, wherein Grauer tackles issues around the injustices of the criminal justice system, and humanizes those who have been dehumanized and marginalized by racism, poverty and gender bias. Grauer writes: “Artists are recorders of events, society, and the culture in which they live. My art expresses my reaction to and interaction with the struggle of all people for survival. This struggle is motivated by the optimism of beautiful people for their intellectual, financial, social, political, individual, and physical survival.” Grauer’s significant and varied contributions as a culture worker—educator, organizer, curator, originator, agitator, mentor—must be illuminated and honored because they inform our current moment of #blacklivesmatter and the curatorial fight against erasure in regards to both the hyperlocal, and the global. Grauer’s work is unapologetic, without sentimentality or sensationalism, there are no gimmicks, just straight talk.

Gladys, born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1923, grew up on Chicago’s South Side. She attended the Art Institute of Chicago and then moved to New York City where she worked as a freelance artist, became involved in civil rights and political movements, and met and married Solomon Grauer. They moved to Newark, NJ in 1951, raised a family, and continued their community and political involvement. In 1960, she ran as the Socialist Worker’s Party’s US Senate nominee. In 1972 Gladys opened the Aard Studio Gallery in Newark’s South Ward. Through her community-based art gallery Gladys helped launch the careers and critical evaluation of numerous black and brown artists. She was a founding member of Black Woman in Visual Perspective, New Jersey Chapter of the National Conference of Artists and the Newark Arts Council, and served on the Boards of Theater of Universal Images, City Without Walls, and the Newark Arts Council. Gladys taught commercial art in the Essex County Vocational High School system in Newark. Over the past 60 years Gladys’ artwork has been exhibited locally, nationally and internationally. Since 2006 Gladys has completed four murals in Newark. Her work is in many public and private collections including the Newark Museum, Montclair Museum, Zimmerli Art Museum, Newark Public Library, Morris Museum, Noyes Museum, National Art Library of the Victoria and Albert Museum, The Library of the National Museum of American Art, New Jersey State Museum, Morgan State University, and Johnson & Johnson.