



Photos by Marie D. De Jesús / Staff photographer

Textile artist Rachel Hayes surveys one of her art pieces before installing it at the Compound in Round Top. Her art installation, “Slant of Light,” will be exhibited publicly as part of the 2021 Spring Antiques Show.

Art as the fabric of life



“Slant of Light,” a multipart, site-specific installation, is part of Round Top’s public art program.

Rachel Hayes’ colorful ‘Slant of Light’ installation finds a home in Round Top

By Amber Elliott
STAFF WRITER

Artist Rachel Hayes drove into Round Top late on a Monday night in mid-March. By the time she woke up, the sleepy town – population 90 – was abuzz, herself included. She finally got what all the fuss was about.

“I read about it and did my own research, but it’s different to see in person,” she said. “Everyone’s working really hard on this weekend.”

There was a palpable excitement in the air, Hayes explained, as vendors set up for the 2021 Spring Antiques Show. She compared the energy to satellite art fairs in New York, when creatives and collectors descend upon a city all at once – which is exactly what happens in Washington and Fayette counties twice a year during Round Top Antiques Week.

This year, Hayes’ “Slant of Light,” a multipart, site-specific installation, marks the debut of Round Top’s public art program. Her work will be on display across three venues: the Compound, the Halles and the Farm at Wellville. And because of the scale and movement of her pieces, “Slant of Light” will be visible for miles.

So when the thousands of shoppers arrive, they’re in for a colorful surprise – if she can com-



Light showing through a portion of the fabric artwork creates colorful designs on the ground at the Farm at Wellville.

plete the series in five days time. That’s how long she has to paint – er, drape – the town in her signature fabrics.

“They’re abstraction, but they definitely harp into patterns,” she said, describing the two pieces that were installed at the Compound by noon on Tuesday. Hayes uses fabric to create large-scale work and inject form into both constructed and natural environments.

“I made all these panels that are basically lace linens with boarders all around in really bright colors,” she continued. “They’re kind of humorous, but turned out really beautifully – like a picture frame around this old lace.”

Like playing ‘Tetris’

Some of her panels will spill out of barns, bil-
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ART

CLASSICAL MUSIC

That’s Dame Jane Glover to you, thank you very much

By Chris Gray
CORRESPONDENT

“I’m now a Dame,” says, well, Dame Jane Glover. “I got a very nice upgrade there.”

The British conductor and scholar has been a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire since 2003 – an honor in the same ballpark as our Presidential Medal of Freedom. But when the royal family announced its latest New Year’s Honors, Glover was elevated to the order’s second-highest rank, Dame Commander.

Sadly, the official ceremony, known as an investiture, is on hold for now.

“We’re sort of hoping there will be, by which time Her Majesty and her family will have

Houston Symphony: A Bach Easter

When: 8 p.m. April 2-3 (livestream April 2)

Details: \$38-\$84 (livestream \$20); 713-224-7575; houstonsymphony.org

quite a backlog of people to honor,” says Glover, who returns to the Houston Symphony this weekend to conduct an all-Bach program.

“But there will be a nice ceremony at the palace at some point, and then I think we might open some bottles of champagne,” she adds. “In the middle of a very difficult time, it did give me a real lift, I must say, to be recognized and honored like that.”

Her latest recognition may be the most prestigious, but Glover is also a fellow of the Royal College of Music and visiting professor at the Royal Academy of Music, where she previously spent several years as director of opera. (She has also taught at Oxford, her alma mater.) Other positions she’s held include music director of Glyndebourne opera’s touring company; artistic director of the London Mozart Players; and, since 2002, music director of Chicago’s Music of the Baroque.

Last fall, the Royal Philharmonic Society gave Glover its Gamechanger award, noting how conducting was “wholly a man’s game” upon her 1975 professional debut. She seems to regard this one with the slightest grain of

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Courtesy Houston Symphony

Conductor Jane Glover

STAR

H-E-B expands its Quest for Texas Best competition

By Greg Morago
STAFF WRITER

H-E-B's annual program to find the best Texas food products is expanding its outreach of purveyors who will compete for \$70,000 in cash prizes and the opportunity to be featured on the shelves of the state's beloved grocery store.

This year's H-E-B Quest for Texas Best competition will include nonfood items, including beauty, toys, home goods, coolers, gardening supplies and household necessities.

Now in its eighth year, the program originally was conceived to identify and promote Texas food businesses ready to make the step as a high-visibility purveyor at H-E-B supermarkets. The program has propelled hundreds of small Texas vendors to greater exposure and boosted their businesses with cash prizes. Since it began in 2014, Quest for Texas Best has reviewed more than 4,500 Texas-made foods and beverages, which resulted in 750 products receiving shelf placement; nearly \$1 million has been

awarded.

Interested businesses have until April 7 to submit entries. Information on how to submit for consideration can be found at heb.com/quest. The top 20 applicants will present their products before a panel of judges on Aug. 24 in San Antonio. Judges will select a grand prize winner (\$25,000), first place (\$20,000) second place (\$15,000) and third place (\$10,000) winners.

greg.morago@chron.com
[instagram.com/gregmorago](https://www.instagram.com/gregmorago)



Courtesy photo by H-E-B

Luke Johannson celebrates 3 Sons Foods LLC's grand prize victory at the H-E-B Quest for Texas Best competition in 2019.

ROUND TOP

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A triangle of fabric casts a shadow at the Farm at Wellville in Burton.

lowing in the wind like the train of a dress. Others will hang between buildings and trees, laundry-line style.

"At another site, where I imagine people will be hanging out on benches and having a beer, I'm going to make these canopies that may or may not create shade," Hayes said with a laugh. "It'll be a romantic moment among all the hoopla. A lot of this is spontaneous, because it's one thing to make a place, but then I get here and it's almost like playing 'Tetris.'"

It's a tall order for any artist, though as her first-ever Texas project, there's added pressure. Her biggest challenge is figuring out how to embrace that spontaneity with a more practical sensibility. It's a guessing game, trying to decide where delicate, man-made fabric can be installed in nature, left for two weeks, and not get destroyed or shred in the elements.

"There's a lot of risk involved," she admitted. "But there's reward, too, because it's going to be a beautiful moment."

Hayes, who is based in Tulsa, Okla., has some experience creating art for the great outdoors. For the past 20 years, she and husband Eric Sall, a fellow artist, have visited his family's farm in South Dakota, which has become somewhat of an al fresco studio.

The property has a similar landscape to Round Top, Hayes says. There's a windmill, big red barn and tall grass. Rather than walking into a white gallery, Hayes' goal is for the viewer to experience an organic space with natural aspects built right in. She doesn't use poles or trusses and goes to great lengths to minimize her footprint, "I don't want to have a huge impact on the space, except with my art."

Thanks to the 'Gram

Public art consultant Piper Faust found Hayes on Instagram. She took a liking to the artist's do-it-yourself process and thought Hayes' preference for hanging work in rural spaces could be a good fit for Round Top's public art program.



Photos by Marie D. De Jesús / Staff photographer

"Slant of Light" is artist Rachel Hayes' first-ever Texas project. One of her biggest challenges was selecting locations out in nature where the fabric is visible, yet protected enough to withstand the elements for two weeks.

"Round Top is booming with activity, it's become quite the destination," Faust said.

"There's now luxury Airbnb's, great restaurants ... what was missing was an art component."

She showed Hayes' pieces to Mark Massey, a local developer turned mayor who also owns the Compound. He proved an easy sell. So did the Farm at Wellville, a destination club between Austin and Houston, and the Halles, an antiques site with event space at its center. "Rachel addressed each site, but she didn't overdo it," Faust said. "She wanted it to be poetic. There's a simplicity in the way the light hit it over various parts of the day. It's contemplative work and exceeded expectation."

Hayes' vision for the Farm at Wellville was to float large, geometric patterns above the grass. And she filled one of the smaller barns with clothes made to look like stained glass.

Over at the Halles, her idea was to install photographs of panels she hung in the New Mexico desert. But that was a last-minute call as the venue was under construction all week.

Fortunately, Hayes is comfortable creating moment to moment. She even packed her sewing machine, just in case.

"It's like sports in a way. You've been practicing and preparing and thinking about all the different plays you can make, but you don't actually know until you're in the game. There's definitely a call and response factor," she explains. "Everyone's put so much faith in me. And trust. I know I can



Hayes draped part of the artwork from the ceiling of a structure at the Farm at Wellville.

figure this out."

Her five day deadline came and went. The consensus was in — she nailed it.

"On Saturday Rachel gave a little talk, and there was one woman, a local, who stood and said, 'There's something about Round Top ... sometimes the magic gets lost in the activity, but your artwork has restored the Round Top magic for me,'" Faust said. "Rachel and I both welled up, it kind of felt like the cherry on top and reinforced what we set out to do."

amber.elliott@chron.com



Public art consultant Piper Faust found Hayes' work on Instagram and thought it would be a good fit for Round Top.

GLOVER

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salt.

"I think what it acknowledged was that I'm the oldest, really, of the many women who are now doing fantastic work in this field," Glover laughs. "And certainly, when I started, I was a bit of a rarity, and it was quite lonely out there."

Recognizing "it's (still) not an even playing field at all," Glover is nevertheless heartened by the growing numbers of her female colleagues, including the recent appointments of Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla with England's City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

and Eun Sun Kim with San Francisco Opera.

"I think it's changed in the last even four or five years — dramatically — and many women now are getting wonderful appointments and engagements as music director of this and artistic director of that," says Glover. "Keep going, girls."

Glover is also an accomplished musicologist and author whose books include "Mozart's Women" and, most recently, 2018's "Handel in London." (That one, she cracks, "nearly killed me.") Lockdown in London gave her a chance to start another one, seeing to "some unfinished Mozart business." She's primarily known as an 18th-century special-

ist, something Glover readily acknowledges — although she loves Benjamin Britten, too.

"I think I'm a very 18th-century person at heart," she laughs. "I think I would quite like to have lived in the 18th century in certain conditions, though I must say to have antibiotics and vaccines does seem incredibly important in the 21st century. But there's so much I love about that music, and it just speaks to me in an extraordinary way."

In Houston, where she conducted a triumphant December 2018 performance of Handel's "Messiah," Glover was originally scheduled to lead the symphony in two of Bach's large-scale choral works, the "Easter Oratorio" and

"Magnificat." Instead, they'll do the orchestral Suite No. 2 in B minor and C minor Concerto for Oboe and Violin, featuring principal oboist Jonathan Fisher and concertmaster Yoonshin Song. Additionally, soprano Yulia van Doren and mezzo-soprano Elizabeth DeShong will sing the cantatas "Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen!" and "Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust."

"It's much smaller scale, and yet, with Bach, nothing is small scale," says Glover. "I often think there are no small parts in Shakespeare; every maid or every shepherd actually has something incredibly important to say. With Bach, OK, we're not doing a big passion or the 'Easter Oratorio,'

but we're still doing music that can make you think and change your life in a way."

In fact, Glover says the slow movement of Bach's sixth Brandenburg concerto is sometimes her choice for "the greatest piece of music ever written." Although it's not among this weekend's fare, she thinks the four that are make a similar point.

"Bach can achieve that greatness with very, very few resources," Glover says. "Just because we're doing smaller resources on this weekend of concerts, it doesn't mean that the music is any less great."

Chris Gray is a Galveston-based writer.