



A MONTHLY  
**CULTURE MATRIX**  
FOR THE COSMOPOLITAN TRAVELER

# Rosie Lee Tompkins: A Retrospective

UNTIL FEBRUARY 19 CLOSING SOON

BERKELEY MUSEUM OF ART AND PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVE  
/ BERKELEY / ART

For years, critics doubted the existence of the fiber artist Rosie Lee Tompkins. Her quilts appeared in shows to acclaim, but Tompkins, a Black woman who was trained by her mother rather than art school, never appeared beside them. When the curator Lawrence Rinder first saw works by Tompkins, he was so struck by the balance between order and chaos, expansiveness and containment, that he thought of the Milky Way. He asked the collector of the piece, Eli Leon, who many suspected to be the real Tompkins, to show him more, and eventually he asked to meet the artist. “Inside it was neat and light,” he said of the visit. “Her quilts covered the walls, tables, couches, and chairs.” Tompkins real name, he learned, was Effie Mae Howard, an identity only revealed after her death in 2007. In her lifetime, she shied from the spotlight, but her work has, posthumously, been praised by an

ever-wider audience. The most extensive exhibition of her work to date will show at the Berkeley Museum of Art and Pacific Film Archive once lockdown lifts, but in the meantime, the venue offers a virtual tour of this major retrospective. —*C.J.F.*

VISIT

Berkeley Museum of Art and Pacific Film Archive  
2155 Center St, Berkeley, CA 94720  
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