Atlanta Artist Knox Clayton Recognized with Balentine Prize for 'Rothko's Red' at 2026 Atlanta Art Fair

ATLANTA, CA, UNITED STATES, October 1, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Balentine and the Atlanta Art Fair are pleased to announce that Atlanta-based textile artist and designer Knox Clayton has received the 2026 Balentine Prize for his needlepoint piece, "Rothko's Red."



Atlanta Artist Knox Clayton, winner of the 2026 Balentine Art Prize at the Atlanta Art Fair

Atlanta-based wealth management firm Balentine established the Balentine Prize in 2025 in conjunction with its sponsorship of the Atlanta Art Fair. The Balentine Prize recognizes an emerging artist from the Greater American South who demonstrates exceptional promise in their work and aims to support and elevate the artist's creative practice while also promoting the evolution of contemporary art in the South.

A jury composed of Mark Bell, Ph.D., a partner at Balentine; Atlanta Art Fair Artistic Director Nato Thompson; and independent art curator Melissa Messina selected Clayton. "Rothko's Red" was submitted for consideration by Craig Mark at The Melrose Gallery in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The prize-winning work is a colorful geometric needlepoint that layers bold shapes and intricate stitched patterns into a playful abstract design. Measuring 18" X 5" X 9.5", "Rothko's Red" is influenced by Art Deco aesthetics and textile modernism. The piece is intuitive and process-driven. Clayton works without predetermined outcomes, allowing color and line to unfold organically into compositions that balance density and openness with positive and negative space.

Clayton describes the piece in his artist statement, "The vibrant red demanded the center from the beginning, and the surrounding colors and shapes shifted the depth of the work and started creating patterns inside themselves. Neighboring shapes in the piece brought different balance

and energy and created a breakthrough which led to an entire series that loosened the design and entire approach."

"Shape, line and geometric abstraction have long been a favorite of mine — honestly, closer to an obsession," said Mark Bell, Ph.D., Balentine partner and Balentine Prize juror. "What makes 'Rothko's Red' so rewarding is the way Knox brings that visual language together with the intricacy of handwork. Every stitch is a decision, and the result feels at once rigorous and completely alive. We are thrilled to recognize Knox and his abstract modern needlepoint piece with the Balentine Prize."

Juror Nato Thompson, Artistic Director of the Atlanta Art Fair, said, "In Knox Clayton's work, abstraction becomes something painstakingly made, touched, and tended to, giving color and form an unusual sense of tenderness."

Balentine has acquired "Rothko's Red" for its corporate art collection.



"Rothko's Red" by Knox Clayton, winner of the 2026 Balentine Prize at the Atlanta Art Fair

About Knox Clayton

A native of Costa Rica, Knox Clayton is a multidisciplinary artist and designer whose practice spans textile, needlework, collage, interior design, and fashion. His work is rooted in a lifelong engagement with materials, color, and form, and reflects an intuitive belief in creativity as a way of life. As a teenager, he relocated to the United States to study at the Museum School in Boston, completing programs in interior and fashion design. In the 1970s, Clayton established himself as a sought-after designer in Atlanta, opening a fashion and design studio that operated for two decades. With his studio, he designed clothing and complete interiors, expanding into architecture and interior design with a holistic approach to living environments shaped by elegance. He has been commissioned for residential interior projects in Boston, Atlanta, Los Angeles, and New York, as well as homes in Mexico, Spain, Argentina, and Costa Rica. His commercial and hospitality projects include commissions for hotel interiors in Mexico and Argentina.

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> *Mark Bell, Ph.D., partner at Balentine*

About Balentine

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