

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

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ICA Miami Mounts First Posthumous Terry Adkins Show



As part of the ICA's inaugural spring programming, the young museum is mounting the first posthumous survey of Terry Adkins' long career. The artist, who passed away of heart failure in 2014 at the age of 60, amassed a highly varied body of work, from installation to sculpture and drawing to performance. "Infinity Is Always Less Than One" brings together more than 50 pieces spanning decades and mediums. Despite their eclecticism, each reflects Adkins' trademark musical inspirations, dedicated to unpacking the myths of black identity through performance.

"The exhibition focuses on four bodies of work, each dedicated to a different historical figure," says Gean Moreno, curator of programs at the ICA. "There is Zora Neale Hurston, Bessie Smith, the abolitionist John Brown, and a young Jimi Hendrix. Viewers can expect to engage a series of objects that together create a complex portrait of each of these figures."

Born in Washington, D.C., Adkins was initially attracted to music before gravitating toward the visual arts in college, where he studied printmaking and sculpture. He then rose to become one of the most distinguished conceptual artists in America, exhibiting work at major museums such as the Whitney, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, MoMA PS1, and London's Institute of Contemporary Arts. Before his death, Adkins was also a professor of fine arts in the School of Design at the University of Pennsylvania.

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The current exhibit spans the breadth of his career, from his early readymades assembled from unconventional materials and found objects to elaborative and immersive installations. Organized in five segments, the show reflects central themes of Adkins' work, including cultural protest movements, the legacy of slavery, and references to black cultural figures who have been overlooked throughout history.

Take, for instance, Buffet Flat, Adkins' take on an altar dedicated to blues singer Bessie Smith. The piece marries religious imagery with a seminal musician whose work and importance to the development of the blues is relatively unknown. Through juxtaposition, Adkins dares viewers to rethink cultural iconography, elevating those he believes are worthy of veneration.

"It seems like a propitious moment to think again about some of the figures that Adkins memorializes and how their experiences of struggle and self-determination resonate in the present," Moreno says. "This is, after all, what characterizes the experience of the black diaspora — a set of common threads that intersect with very particular experiences."

"Terry Adkins: Infinity Is Always Less Than One." Thursday, May 17, through September 2 at the Institute of Contemporary Art, 61 NE 41st St., Miami; 305-901-5272; icamiami.org; Admission is free.

<http://www.miaminewtimes.com/arts/terry-adkins-posthumous-exhibit-at-ica-miami-may-17-10339185>

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