

# Parent Guide

## *The Dirty South: Contemporary Art, Material Culture, and the Sonic Impulse*

On view March 12—July 25



Nadine Robinson, *Coronation Theme: Organon*, 2008, speakers, sound system, and mixed media, 175 x 18 1/2 x 174 in. High Museum of Art, Atlanta, given by John F. Wieland, Jr. in memory of Marion Hill, 2008.175



**Crystal Bridges**  
Museum of American Art

## WHAT IS THE DIRTY SOUTH?

*The Dirty South: Contemporary Art, Material Culture, and the Sonic Impulse* is a temporary exhibition featuring more than 80 artists who use a variety of artistic forms to explore the ways in which the immeasurable creativity of African American southern culture has helped shape contemporary culture in the United States.

This exhibition takes its name, the “Dirty South,” from a term of endearment associated with southern hip-hop and uses the genre as a jumping-off point to dive into the centuries-old traditions of African Americans who live and have lived in the region. *The Dirty South* spotlights and celebrates the connections between visual and sonic arts over the course of 100 years (1920–2020).

### Overall, this exhibition asks guests:

To consider the connections between contemporary culture and the past.

To appreciate southern hip-hop as a uniquely American art form with roots in the music of the American South.

To celebrate artistic expression.

### Dirty South: The term “Dirty South” has no exact definition though there are many ways to consider it:

An abbreviation for the history and development of Black culture in the South

A term of endearment for the area of the United States that used to make up the Confederacy

Similar in concept to “dirty rice,” which does not have negative connotations, but can represent “flavor,” “richness,” complexity,” or “a combination/mixture of ingredients.”

## WHAT TO EXPECT

*The Dirty South* is separated into three thematic sections:

### Landscapes: Magic Realism of the South

### Sinners & Saints: Religion

### Black Corporality: The Black Body

Each section features a variety of media including photography, sculpture, painting, video, sound, found objects, repurposed materials, and memorabilia. These three sections of the show work together to fully explore many of the art forms and artistic expressions that have come from the African American South.

**Please note** that none of the artworks in the exhibition can be touched, although we encourage close looking and curiosity.

**Sound will play** an important role in this exhibition and will be featured in many of the works.

The exhibition includes a video work by artist Arthur Jafa (*Love Is The Message, The Message Is Death*, 2016) that has flashing lights; this could affect individuals with light-sensitivity issues. **This video also contains footage that some might find disturbing, such as imagery of police violence.**

This exhibition acknowledges moments where elements of trauma have played a role in the shaping of the artistic culture and identity that arose from the South. While the show is not rooted in trauma, some of the artworks do bring to the forefront the mistreatment of Black peoples from the South to present a fuller telling of how this culture of visual and sonic arts were created. Caretakers and teachers should be prepared to discuss this history when exploring the exhibition with young people. Museum Educators will guide students through these discussions during their school tours.



**“The South feeds into the larger American story. If you did not have the South, you would not have America. You would not have America if you did not have Black people here in this country. You have to recognize that, and that is what this is about.”**

– Valerie Cassel Oliver, exhibition curator

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Strollers are welcome.

Front carriers are allowed in the galleries, as are sling-style child carriers. Backpack-style carriers are not permitted. Those can be stored in the checkroom during your visit.

All-gender, wheelchair-accessible, and family restrooms are located throughout the museum. All public restrooms include baby-changing stations.

Food, drinks, and chewing gum are not allowed in museum galleries.

Crystal Bridges offers a number of on-site accommodations for guests with disabilities in order to assure an enjoyable and engaging experience at the museum. Learn more at [CrystalBridges.org/Access](https://www.crystalbridges.org/Access).