

Teacher 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.

This exhibition will be open to the public (March 12–July 25, 2022) and offered for guided school tours as part of the Walker School Tour Program.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Fahamu Pecou, *Dobale to the Spirit*, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 60 1/4 x 48 1/4 x 2 1/4 in. ©Dr. Fahamu Pecou, Courtesy Studio KAWO/Fahamu Pecou Art. John Biggers, *Four Seasons*, colored lithograph on paper, 40 in. x 31 3/4 in. x 1 in. Courtesy of Gibbes Museum of Art / Carolina Art Association



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.** Educators will make sure to follow a pre-arranged path around this video.

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



Deborah Roberts, *Let Them Be Children*, 2018, acrylic, pastel, ink, and gouache on canvas 46 1/2 x 141 3/4 x 2 3/8 in. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Endowment, 2019.1

GUIDED TOURS FOR SCHOOL GROUPS

Each tour will be facilitated by one Museum Educator. Students will be in groups of 10-15 per tour. The educator will guide them through the exhibition stopping at four locations to discuss specific works of art that have been pre-selected. Students will have a chance to voice their own interpretations of the artworks and share their thoughts with the group. The group will stay together at all times so that the educator may be in control of their path through the exhibition to ensure nothing will be viewed that has been deemed inappropriate for students.

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.”

CORPORALITY: the state or quality of being corporeal (having a physical, material body); bodily existence

SONIC ART: artworks denoting, relating to, or of the nature of sound or sound waves.

MATERIAL CULTURE: tools, art, buildings, written records, and any other objects produced or used by humans.

CONTEMPORARY ART: the term used for art of the present day. Usually, the artists are alive and still making work.

CONNECTIONS TO STANDARDS

K - 4: GEOGRAPHY:

G.8.K.1 Describe familiar places using words related to location, direction, and distance D2.Geo.2.K-2

G.8.K.2 Use maps, globes, and photographs to identify and describe the physical characteristics of familiar places D2.Geo.2.K-2

H.13.K.3 Describe ways people learn about the past (e.g., photos, artifacts, diaries, oral history, stories) D2.His.10.K-2

G.9.1.2 Discuss how cultural characteristics create diversity in a community, place, or region D2.Geo.6.K-2

H.13.4.2 Examine why individuals and groups during the same historical period had differing perspectives D2.His.4.3-5

Compare specific regions of the United States in the past with those regions today noting changes over time (e.g., economic growth, urbanization, resources, population density, environmental issues) D2.His.2.3-5

G.10.4.3 Compare push- pull factors that influenced immigration to and migration within the United States D2.Geo.7.3-5

HIGH SCHOOL STANDARDS: AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

JU.7.AAH.1 Analyze the impact of African Americans on the arts (e.g., music, art, dance, theater, new media, movies, literature) R.CCR.1, 2, 3, 10 W.CCR.1, 4, 7, 8, 10 SL.CCR.1, 2, 3 D2.His.2.9-12 D3.3.9-12

Identify unresolved social, economic, and political challenges for African American men and women from 1970 to the present using a variety of sources representing multiple perspectives R.CCR.1, 2, 6, 9, 10 W.CCR.1, 3, 4, 7, 8 SL.CCR.1, 2, 3, 4 D1.4.9-12 D2.Civ.5, 12.9- 12 D2.His.2.9-12