



Left: Toshiaki Noda, *TN225*, 2017. Glazed ceramic, 15.5 x 10 x 8.5 in.  
Below: Terry Adkins, installation view of “The Smooth, The Cut, and The Assembled,” with *Native Son (Circus)*, 2006–15. Cymbals, armature, and additional technical components, 50.8 x 243.8 cm.

#### NEW YORK

#### Terry Adkins Lévy Gorvy Gallery

The work of Terry Adkins, who died in 2014, is nothing less than visually embodied philosophy—it conjoins the poetic and the political in objects that fuse the aural with the visible. His astonishing originality escapes the well-established tropes of sound sculpture by rejecting John Cage, electronica, *musique concrete*, and other manifestations of sound art in favor of an improvisatory eclecticism that borrows aspects of Modernism but is deeply rooted in African traditions.

Adkins’s sculptures—an evocative range of found and assembled objects made into immense, carefully wrought musical instruments—create historical connections that res-

onate with the murderous present. Many of his works reference historical figures and act as monuments to the African and African American past. His subjects include Akhenaten; Matthew Henson, who planted the American flag at the North Pole as a member of the Peary expedition; abolitionist John Brown; and Bessie Smith, the near-mythic blues singer. Adkins’s purpose reflects an “ongoing quest to reinsert the legacies of unheralded immortal figures to their rightful place within the panorama of history.” His found objects include tools, spare parts, coat hangers, and pieces of musical instruments, all of which stand in startling contrast to the fleeting nature of music. As he explained, “My quest has been to find a way to make music as physical as sculpture might be and sculpture as ethereal as music is.” His musical influences included Jimi Hendrix, John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, and Bessie Smith.

Though the use of found objects has ties to bricolage and *Arte Povera*, Adkins’s practice has important differences that remove it from those classifications. Most significantly,

together) as is his overall approach, which respects surprise effects of the kiln as reflecting the less willful aspects of life itself.

Though this may sound more like Existentialism than art to the Western mind, Japanese aesthetics involves a long tradition of weaving art together with its philosophical and spiritual underpinnings. *Mono no aware* (the pathos of things), *wabi-sabi* (imperfect beauty), and *iki* (simplicity, sophistication) are but a few Japanese concepts that engage the world around us with a nuanced approach to form and design. Such ideas find their way into Japanese poetry, traditional painting, ceramics, and the choice of materials and lighting in gardens and homes. By observing nature in its constant state of change, in its full flowering as well as decay, one learns to accept the unfolding of form in all things—plants, rocks, humans, everything alive or inanimate. Noda’s sculptures ultimately

incorporate these values, shape-shifting to capture the movement of time, if but temporarily.

—Daneva H. Dansby



TOP: PATRICIA SWEETOW GALLERY. COURTESY PATRICIA SWEETOW GALLERY / BOTTOM: TOM POWEL IMAGING. © THE ESTATE OF TERRY ADKINS. COURTESY LEVY GORVY



his component objects remain tied to their origins, to their jobs in the sphere of labor, and always refer back to their original function in some way. The viewer senses that these objects have philosophically crossed from one situation to another while maintaining their identity. For instance, wall-hung steel and wood ice saws, prime exemplars of this crossover effect, were used on a thick sheet of ice during the performance of *Firmament*, which was written for The Lone Wolf Recital Corps, a multidisciplinary collective founded by Adkins in 1986. (*Firmament* was part of a 2005 performance at the Bronx River Art Center during his exhibition, "Black Beethoven: Recital in Nine Dominions.")

*Native Son (Circus)*, reconstructed for this exhibition, consists of an array of cymbals placed in a semi-spherical pile on the floor. A mechanism, concealed under the bronze heap, strikes each cymbal at irregular intervals. In Adkins's use, the cymbals partake in the crossover effect by concretely maintaining their identity without intention of transcending it. It is this process that takes the viewer somewhere beyond sculpture's physical presence and into the domain that Adkins referred to as "essence."

—Cory Whitney

Above: Terry Adkins, *Shenandoah*, 1998. Concrete, steel, rope, and silicone, 47 x 55.9 x 76.2 cm. Right and detail: Huma Bhabha, *We Come in Peace*, 2018. Bronze, 2 views of installation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

#### NEW YORK

##### Huma Bhabha Metropolitan Museum of Art

In *We Come in Peace*, Huma Bhabha's Cantor Roof commission for the Met (on view through October 28, 2018), a monumental figure stands 12 feet tall, its five-sided head staring in all directions. The giant's hands and feet, long hair, and big ears seem gender-neutral, but pointed breasts signal female and a big bulge below the waist could indicate male. The all-seeing one's body is black from the hips down, turquoise up to the neck, and pinkish-gray on top. Its various markings include star-like scarification on the breasts, pink dots on the buttocks, scars up and down its back and arms, a five-sided blue star tattoo on its left hip, and colorful scratches on the legs and arms. The figure faces north as humans of all ages wander freely across the roof taking selfies.

A second figure, *Benaam* (Urdu for *no name*), cowers or bows before the giant. This prostrate creature has large human hands and a tail

of lumpy protuberances that, according to the exhibition catalogue, may be excrement. Almost completely covered by a black body bag, this abject being most closely resembles a human-like rat.

Cast in bronze from Styrofoam, wood, plastic, and cork, *We Come in Peace* alludes to numerous refer-

ences from art history, science fiction, and contemporary culture—so many, in fact, that a selective background reading list includes Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Arundhati Roy's *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy*, and Philip K. Dick's *VALIS*. Bhabha's title comes from the 1951 movie *The Day the*

