

PAULA COOPER GALLERY

Johanna Fateman, "Terry Adkins", *The New Yorker*, May 6, 2022

THE NEW YORKER

ART

Terry Adkins

The sculpture "Matinee," from 2007-13, is an affecting anchor in a succinct, decades-spanning show of works by this influential artist and musician, who died in 2014, at the age of sixty. A tribute to Bessie Smith, the piece doubles as a performance prop—many of Adkins's hybrid constructions were worn, played, or otherwise used in collaborative events that he called "recitals." A big drum, its head printed with an enlarged image of Smith's eye, rests at the base of a clothing rack poignantly outfitted with empty wooden hangers, each one etched with a song title associated with the blues singer. Found objects and materials with an evocative, worn character and mysterious provenances—parachute silk, microphone stands, milk crates, and a taxidermied peacock feature here—were key to Adkins's deep and imaginative engagement with Black history. The implication of usefulness—be it ritual, theatrical, or more quotidian—in these objects lends them an anarchic spark, which balances their innate melancholy.

—*Johanna Fateman*

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