

# Pérez Art Museum Miami Exhibition Celebrates African American Art Acquisitions, Presents Rich Array of Artistic Voices

by [VICTORIA L. VALENTINE](#) on May 27, 2020 • 6:58 am



*"Untitled (Parade)" (2016) by Kevin Beasley*

HISTORICALLY, FEW MAINSTREAM American museums have collected art by African American artists in a meaningful or representational manner. To address generational deficits and fill gaps, many museums have established special funds and committees dedicated to acquiring African American art.

A collection exhibition currently on view at Pérez Art Museum Miami showcases acquisitions made possible by the museum's Fund for African American Art. Titled "Polyphonic: Celebrating PAMM's Fund for African American Art," the show features 15 works of art by **Terry Adkins, Romare Bearden, Kevin Beasley, Faith Ringgold, and Tschabalala Self**, among others. (PAMM is temporarily closed due to COVID-19.)

The exhibition takes its title from a musical term that means producing more than one note at a time or many sounds simultaneously, emphasizing the diverse perspectives and aesthetic styles among the works on view. Produced by long-established and up-and-coming figures, most of the works counter once common expectations of what art by African American artists should look like or be about. The museum describes the display as a 'rich syncopation' of 'distinct artistic voices.'

The paintings, sculpture, and photography include "Pink Wave" (2006), an abstract painting by **Ed Clark** defined by wide bands of energetic color the artist moved across the canvas using a push broom; "Evening 9:10, 461 Lenox Avenue" (1964) a black-and-white photostat from Bearden's Projections series that depicts a collage image of two men and a woman playing cards in a Harlem apartment; Beasley's sculptural installation cum cluster of kaftans and house dresses in resin creates the physical presence of floating ghost-like figures with absent bodies; and "Art Is..." (1983/2009) composed of 40 framed images documenting **Lorraine O'Grady's** avant-garde performance during the 1983 African American Day Parade in Harlem.



ROMARE BEARDEN, "Evening 9: 10 461 Lenox Avenue," 1964 (Photostat mounted on fiberboard). I Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, museum purchase with funds provided by Jorge M. Pérez, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and the PAMM Ambassadors for African American ArtArt © Romare Bearden Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

PAMM INAUGURATED ITS FUND for African American Art in 2013 with a \$1 million gift from Jorge M. Pérez, the museum's namesake, and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. In 2017, with additional donations from museum patrons and a new matching grant from the Knight Foundation, PAMM established a \$2 million endowment for the fund.



A relatively young museum founded 35 years ago, PAMM is mission-focused on presenting modern and contemporary works by artists from traditionally underrepresented communities from the United States, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

After years of building its collection through gifts, the museum's first purchase was **Lorna Simpson's** "Still" (1997), a large-scale image of a dense tree landscape printed on 36 felt panels. Part of her Public Sex series, Simpson produced the work for her exhibition at the Miami Art Museum, PAMM's predecessor. The Fund for African American Art provides the resources for the museum to continue and extend its commitment to collecting works by African American artists, as exemplified by this early purchase.

"We have spent the past eight years building on and expanding our collection into one that showcases the variety and impact of African American artists—both globally and in the Miami community," PAMM Director Franklin Sirmans said in a statement about the exhibition.

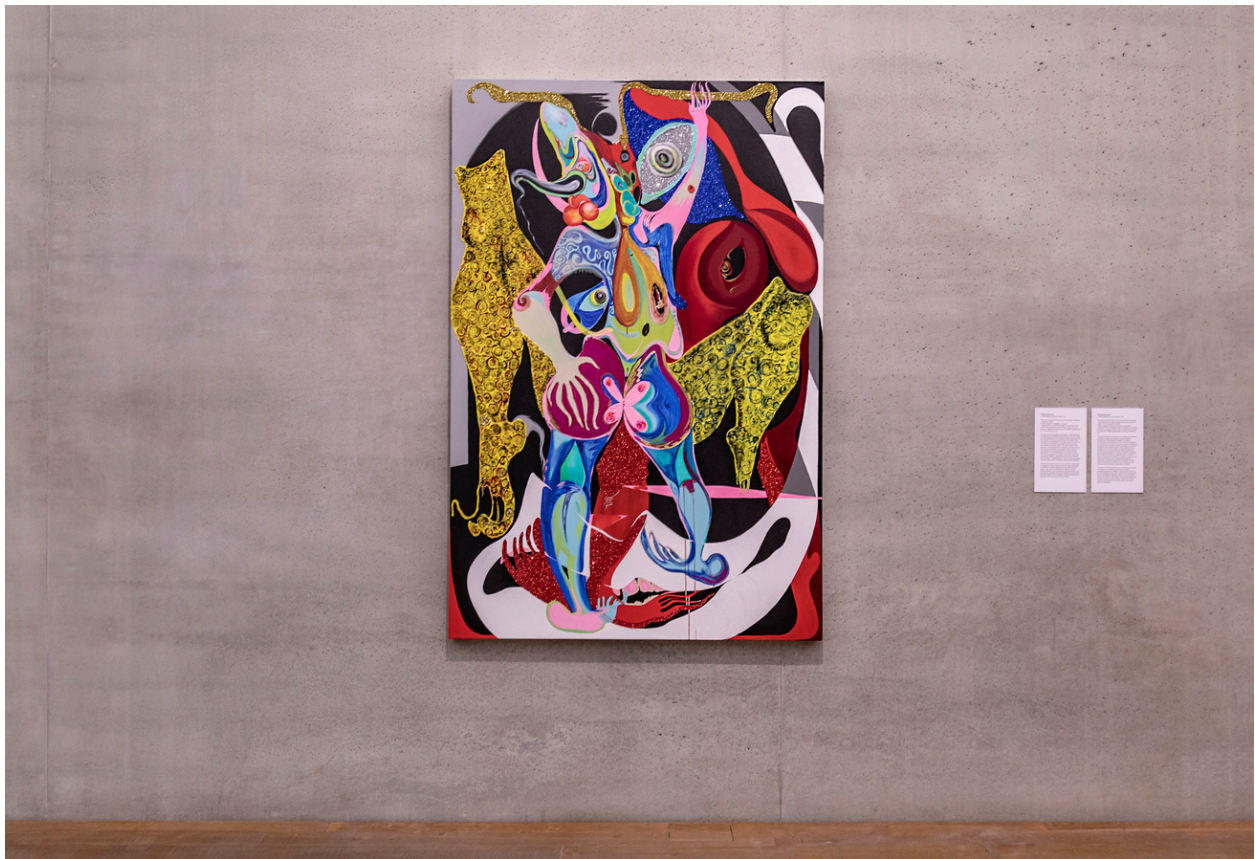
PAMM's Art + Soul event is an annual dinner celebrating the Fund for African American Art. In February, the soirée raised more than \$700,000 and the latest acquisitions were announced—two paintings by up-and-coming artists. The museum added **Theresa Chromati's** "The bull is out and my foot is in my mouth (are we staying or leaving?)" (2019) and "Marked Man (Mitchell)" (2019) by **Vaughn Spann**, to its collection. Both works are featured in "Polyphonic." Maritza Lacayo, curatorial assistant and publications coordinator, and René Morales, director of curatorial affairs and chief curator, co-organized the exhibition. Lacayo wrote an essay about the show.

"At the heart of this exhibition is a rejection of the premise that there is anything like a single, unified African American artistic style or tendency," Lacayo wrote. "In contrast to historical efforts to dictate that African American artists should conform to one mold or another, 'Polyphonic' revels in the rich differences that are clearly and proudly on display." **CT**

*TOP IMAGE: KEVIN BEASLEY, "Untitled (Parade)," 2016 (house dresses, kaftans, and resin, 87 x 72 x 48 inches). / Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, museum purchase with funds provided by Jorge M. Pérez, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and the PAMM Ambassadors for African American Art*

**"Polyphonic: Celebrating PAMM's Fund for African American Art" is on view at Perez Art Museum Miami, Feb. 7-Aug. 9, 2020. PAMM is temporarily closed due to COVID-19. Check directly with the museum for updated scheduling.**

FIND MORE about the acquisitions in the [exhibition guide](#) produced by PAMM



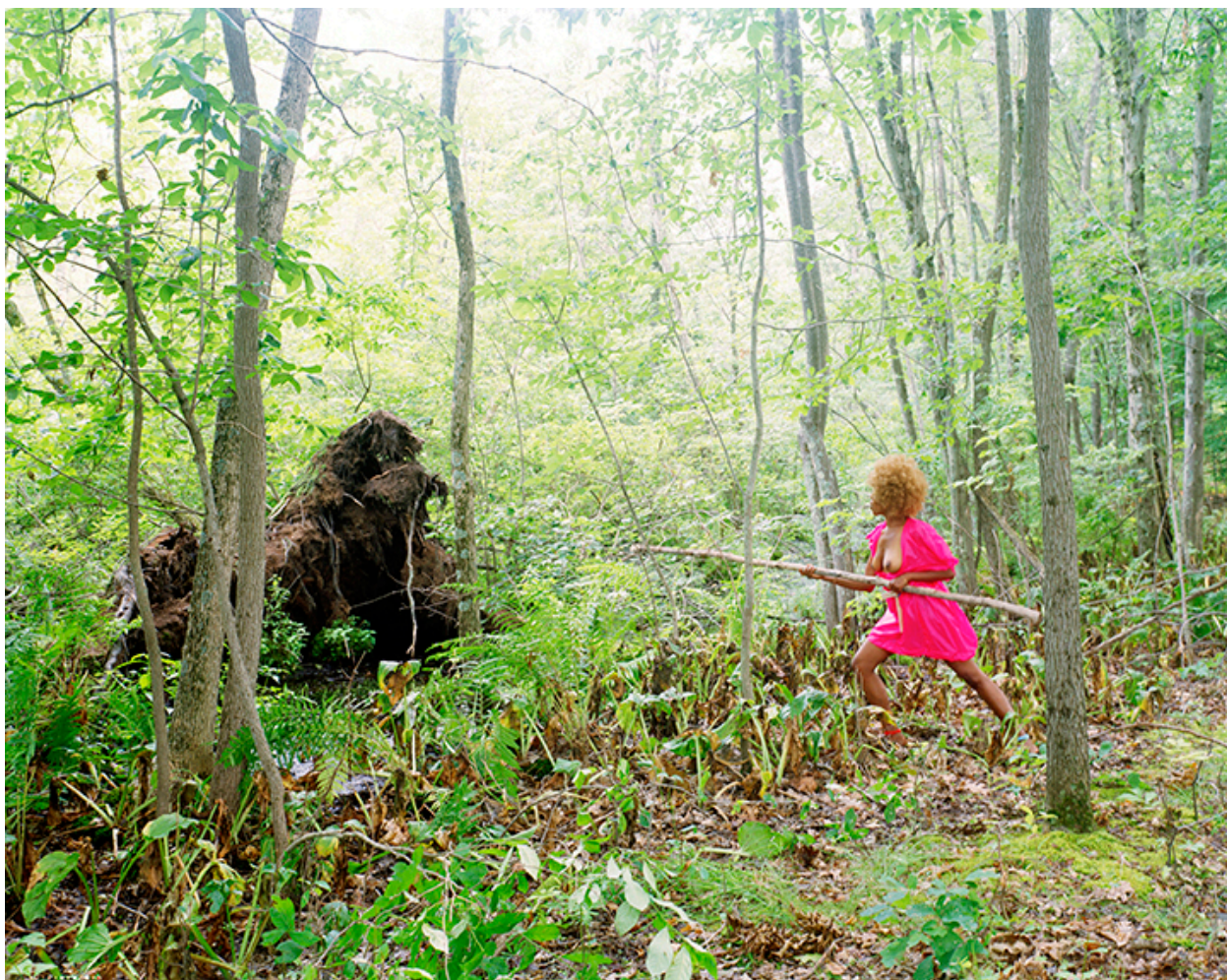
*THERESA CHROMATI, "The bull is out and my foot is in my mouth (are we staying or leaving?)", 2019 (acrylic,*

*gouache, and glitter on canvas, 72 x 48 inches). I Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, museum purchase with funds provided by Jorge M. Pérez, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and the PAMM Ambassadors for African American Art. Photo by Lazaro Llanes, Courtesy of PAMM*



*JUANA VALDES, "A Single Drawn Line," 2014 (digital print, 48 x 36 inches), and "An Inherent View of the World," 2014 (porcelain, brass, wood, glass, and sheetrock, 72 x 192 x 16 inches). I Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, museum purchase with funds provided by Jorge M. Pérez, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and the PAMM Ambassadors for African American Art*





XAVIERA SIMMONS, "Untitled (Pink)," 2009 (Chromogenic print, 40 x 50 inches). | Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, museum purchase with funds provided by Jorge M. Pérez and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation



*TSCHABALALA SELF, "Chopped Cheese," 2017 (acrylic, watercolor, flash, crayon, colored pencil, oil pastel, pencil, hand-colored photocopy, and hand-colored canvas on canvas, 96 x 84 inches). I Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, museum purchase with funds provided by Jorge M. Pérez, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and the PAMM Ambassadors for African American Art*





VAUGHN SPANN, "Marked Man (Mitchell)," 2019 (Mixed media on wood panel, 60 x 48 inches). | Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, Museum purchase with funds provided by Jorge M. Pérez, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and the PAMM Ambassadors for African American Art. Photo by Lazaro Llanes, Courtesy of PAMM