

VISUAL ARTS

Tina Turner, Chadwick Boseman, Grace Jones alight at the Brooks

By Jada Ojii, Daily Memphian

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“Grace Jones, Studio 54 II” gelatin silver print by Ming Smith. (Credit: Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Courtesy Ming Smith)

An exhibition that originated at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, then traveled to the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art in Atlanta, now has its turn in Memphis.

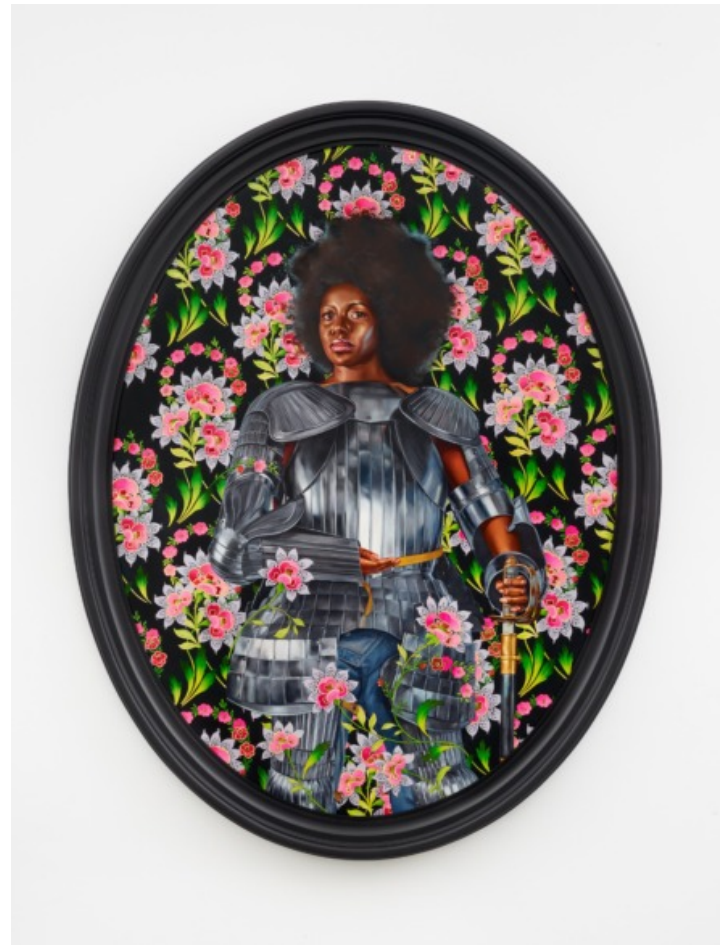
“Black American Portraits” features more than 100 works, with images of figures including Frederick Douglass, Grace Jones, Tina Turner, Al Green and Chadwick Boseman.

Famed Black artists Kehinde Wiley, Bisa Butler, Renee Cox and more, have their work featured in the exhibition.

Brooks Museum director discusses art, food, new building

“We’re just so proud to have the exhibition here in what is now the largest majority Black city in America,” said Zoe Kahr, Brooks Museum’s executive director. “We’re the city of Memphis’ art museum and we think it’s so essential that every Memphian sees themselves reflected here in our museum.”

Images of Black political leaders, artists, historical figures and celebrities are featured with images from the Civil Rights Movement, the Harlem Renaissance, Black Lives Matter movement, and other significant moments in Black history. It also features moments from people living everyday life, with scenes like braiding hair and simply embracing.



“Portrait of Nelly Moudime” by Kehinde Wiley.

(Credit: Stephen Friedman Gallery, London/Courtesy Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

The exhibition will run from Thursday, Aug. 17 through Sunday, Jan. 7, 2024. Visitors can view the exhibition during the museum's business hours.

"We're really thrilled to bring this show here," said Patricia Daigle, the Brooks' curator of modern and contemporary art. "So you'll see a variety of different media from painting to photography, sculpture, even video. You have some textile based works. So, it's a really kind of a broad show in that regard, but it also spans over 200 years of U.S. history."

Daigle and Efe Igor Coleman, the Brooks' assistant curator of African American art and art of the African diaspora, curated the Memphis exhibition.



"Untitled" by unknown artist. (Credit: Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

Artists chalk fun up to 'childhood joy' at Brooks Museum

It aims to "celebrate joy, abundance, and agency" as opposed to the "spectacle of Black pain" depicted in art and media and showcase "the many ways in which Black Americans have used portraiture to envision themselves in their own eyes."

In addition to the pieces used in LACMA's original exhibition, there will also be work from local artists featured.

A number of photos from the Hooks Brothers Photography Studio, a Black-owned studio in Memphis from 1907-1979, can be viewed at the exhibition, with photographs providing what is said to be a “rich visual record of Black, middle-class life in the city during the twentieth century.”

The exhibition includes an interactive gallery with costume items and a variety of backgrounds and mirrors for selfies.

Programming during the exhibition run will include gallery talks with curator Igor Coleman, photographer Ziggy Mack and University of Memphis art history professor Earnestine Jenkins, and film screenings of “Daughters of the Dust” and “Gaze,” in partnership with Indie Memphis.



“Forever” by Bisa Butler. (Credit: Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Courtesy Bisa Butler)

TOPICS

BLACK AMERICAN PORTRAITS BROOKS MUSEUM OF ART



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