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ARTnews

Mitchell-Innes & Nash Now Represents Influential Artist Tiona Nekkia McClodden



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Tiona Nekkia McClodden, *Se te subi el santo? (Are you in a trance?)*, 2016.

©TIONA NEKKIA MCCLODDEN/COURTESY THE ARTIST AND MITCHELL-INNES & NASH, NEW YORK

The New York–based gallery **Mitchell-Innes & Nash** now represents **Tiona Nekkia McClodden**, a closely watched artist whose work recently appeared at the Prospect New Orleans triennial. The gallery presented work by the artist in its **booth at Art Basel Miami Beach** last month. Mitchell-Innes & Nash will include McClodden’s work in a group show at a seasonal space in Mexico City next month, with a solo show to follow in New York in 2023.

McClodden, who is based in Philadelphia, is best known for her contribution to the 2019 Whitney Biennial, a video installation titled *I prayed to the wrong god for you*, which won her the exhibition’s \$100,000 Bucksbaum Prize. For that work, McClodden delved into a history of colonialism, with a focus on how Christianity was imposed on her ancestors, some of whom were enslaved Africans and Black Southerners. As part of the piece, she performed a ritual to the Santería/Lucumí deity Shango, whose origins can be traced to the Yoruba people of Nigeria. The ritual involved traveling through the United States, Nigeria, and Cuba.

“There’s a precision and control in her work that comes from a real fervent dedication and deep consistency—and it’s palpable,” **Courtney Willis Blair**, partner and senior director at Mitchell-Innes & Nash, said in an interview. “Her work is deeply referential and crosses literature, music, sex culture. It’s thoroughly research and whip-smart.”

Her work has also been included in major exhibitions, including “Speech Acts,” organized by Meg Onli at the Institute of Contemporary Art Philadelphia in 2017; Owkui Enwezor’s final exhibition, “Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America,” at the New Museum in 2021; and the recently closed Prospect.5 in New Orleans, organized by Diana Nawi and Naima J. Keith. She is slated to have a solo show at New York’s 52 Walker gallery this year.

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McClodden is also an important curator and writer. In 2017, she curated a major retrospective of the composer Julius Eastman, which opened at the Slought Foundation in Philadelphia and later traveled to the Kitchen in New York. In 2021, she organized an acclaimed survey of Barbara Hammer's work at Company Gallery in New York, and she opened an artist-run space in Philadelphia called Conceptual Fade that centers that work of Black artists and conceptual practices. Last month, she was given an Andy Warhol Foundation grant winner for a writing project about Belkis Ayón.

Willis Blair said that McClodden's work is a natural fit into the gallery's program, given the conceptual inclinations of artists it represents like Pat O'Neill, Pope.L, Jacolby Satterwhite, and General Idea. "These are all artists who are singular in their delivery," she said. "They don't shy away from subject matter that is messy or otherwise considered forbidden, but instead take it on with their own particular grace, brilliance, and deliberateness. That is the reason why these artists are influential globally, both within and outside of their generation, and I think that is true of Tiona as well."

She continued, "These histories that institutions—in the ecosystem of gatekeepers that assign value to a story or life's work or practice—would otherwise be forgotten, she's not letting us forget them. She's not afraid to take that on and confront with the specificity that is necessary to do necessary work."