

AFROTECH

Derrick Adams Explains How The Education System Encouraged His Artistry And Led To Working With Google Shopping, Fondation Louis Vuitton, And More

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December 3, 2024



Photo Credit: Matteo Prandoni / BFA.com | Editor Credit: Brendon Cook / BFA.com

Google has convened at one of the yearly hot spots for art and thoughtful conversations.

To celebrate Art Basel/Miami Art Week 2024, Dec. 2 – 8, many are gathering in Miami, FL, to view the works of artists from all over the world.

Kicking it off on Monday, Dec. 2, ELLE Magazine Editor-At-Large Hassan Pierre; Senior Director, Global Consumer Marketing, Commerce at Google, Stephanie Horton; and journalist Lola Ogunnaike hosted an intimate conversation with multidisciplinary artist Derrick Adams, in celebration of the week, and his partnership with Google Shopping at the Matador Room inside The Miami Beach EDITION hotel.

Also in attendance were artist Mickalene Thomas; interior designer Sasha Bikoff; Carmen Busquets (founder of Net a Porter); Jasmine Wahi (founder of Project for Empty Space); and broadcast journalist Cari Champion, among others.



Photo Credit: Matteo Prandoni / BFA.com | Editor Credit: Brendon Cook / BFA.com | L-R: Hassan Pierre, Stephanie Horton, Lola Ogunnaike, Derrick Adams

Adams, who holds an honorary doctorate from the Maryland Institute College of Art, spoke candidly during the conversation about his artistic journey. He shared how early support from an art teacher and winning awards as young as nine years old affirmed that art was never going to be a backup plan.

“I always thought I was going to be an artist,” he said. “I didn’t really think of it as being something of choice. It was really more, this is what I was doing. It was supported by the people around me. They never told me not to do it. And also even the education system that I was brought up in was encouraging me to be an artist.”

He later added, “I had a very particular role as a younger person making art. And I realized then how valuable it was because it was not just about expressing yourself, but it was a whole structure of organizing, drawing, picking people, organizing people, all those different things.”

Adams’ artistry has been prominently showcased in numerous high-profile exhibitions, including the Museum of Arts and Design in New York, NY (2018); the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers, NY (2020); the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, AR (2021); and The Cleveland Museum of Art in Cleveland, OH (2022), according to his website.

Currently, Adams' work is featured alongside 34 other artists in Fondation Louis Vuitton's exhibition "Pop Forever, Tom Wesselmann & ...", running from Oct. 17, 2024, through Feb. 24, 2025, as noted in a press release.

Most recently, his work was seen through an exclusive capsule collection of pieces at The Miami Beach EDITION hotel. The pieces are also available through his partnership with Google Shopping.

"I'm excited for this collaboration with Google Shopping with my godson, Jahmir, who's a designer in my studio," Adams said in an Instagram post. "We're able to present ideas that happen in my studio, creating imagery that's wearable for people to walk around with, to make those things accessible for the everyday person. It really highlights the importance of people and the community to realize the origin of the creation that they consume."



Photo Credit: Matteo Prandoni / BFA.com | Editor Credit: Brendon Cook / BFA.com | L-R: Lola Ogunnaike, Derrick Adams

What's Next

Looking ahead, Adams will be collaborating on an installation with visual artist Mickalene Thomas in Baltimore.

"We just started to demo the building and it will be a living installation... Floor to ceiling, interior exterior, that will live forever as a piece that people can experience, which is really exciting. We just started working on that," he said in a conversation with Ogunnaike.

Paying It Forward

While Adams remains busy within the art space, he is still committed to paying it forward to those from his home city. In 2022, he founded nonprofit organization Charm City Cultural Cultivation, which hosts projects such as a residency program to provide therapy and an online community for women writers. Its purpose is to champion Black creatives.