



at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2015; his expansive Joshua Tree Outdoor Museum, with more than 100 sculptures made from junk materials, draws pilgrims to the Mojave Desert. Yet there has never been a Purifoy exhibition on the East Coast before this very welcome outing at Tilton, which includes a baker's dozen of his later, mostly wall-mounted constructions.

Purifoy was born in Alabama and went to Los Angeles in his late 30s, becoming the first African-American to enroll at the Chouinard Arts Institute (now the California Institute of the Arts). He turned decisively to assemblage after the Watts rebellion of 1965, making use of debris from the riots; later he stepped back from art for a decade and worked for a California state agency and continued working with found materials in Joshua Tree, where he moved in 1989 and made nearly all the works in this show.

Some of the wall-mounted works here consist almost wholly of found objects. Two assemblages from 1989 called "Rags and Old Iron (After Nina Simone)," bristling yet carefully balanced, graft together a tennis racket, frayed scraps of fabric, dangling beads and a pitchfork. Their part-by-part construction takes inspiration as freely from central African sculpture traditions as from Dada, as much from the history of jazz as the Nouveau Réalisme of Jean Tinguely and Arman. Other assemblages here have more finely worked wooden pieces. In "Black, Brown and Beige (After Duke Ellington)" (1989), combs and spindles and scraps of wicker nestle in round-edge wood cartouches that recall a disassembled piano.

Spend some time looking closely at "Access" (1993). It's loaded, nearly overloaded, with a pair of faucets, busted hubcaps, worn sandals and the business end of a spade, that last being one of several elements with a racial overtone. It is so jam-packed it seems it could topple. Keeping it together, making it endure, was the effort of a lifetime's work in which art and advocacy were one and history was a junkyard ripe for gleaning.

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/24/arts/design/what-to-see-in-new-york-art-galleries-this-week.html>