

For Immediate Release

**Jamal Cyrus:**  
*how you sound*

February 7 – March 21, 2026

Opening Saturday, February 7

**Artist in conversation:** 1:00pm  
**Artist reception:** 2:00 – 4:00pm



Jamal Cyrus, *Augmented Trumpet\_00001*, 2026  
conch shell, tufa limestone, modified pocket trumpet  
13 1/2 x 16 x 8 1/2 in (34.3 x 40.6 x 21.6 cm)

Inman Gallery is pleased to present *how you sound*, a solo exhibition of new work by **Jamal Cyrus**, on view February 7 – March 21, 2026.

Jamal Cyrus' expansive practice draws on the creative strategies of collage and assemblage to engage the histories of the Black radical tradition. The sociopolitical applications of sound and music are central to his work, as is the poetic use of found materials such as denim, seashells, and musical instruments. *how you sound* furthers Cyrus' rich engagement with materiality, producing new denim works and sculpture to explore Black sonic tradition, instrumentation, and ritual. Embracing abstraction, his work illuminates historical narratives and figures systemically erased from view, while investigating cultural production, spirituality, and resistance within the African diaspora.

Denim foregrounds the exhibition: five large works, each executed in different formal modes illustrate the artist's sustained interest in the material's conceptual richness and aesthetic pliability. Certain works, such as *Numerologies (class notes from Black Man in the Cosmos)*, attest to concrete histories, in this case to the FBI files on the Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School and their affiliations with jazz musician Sun Ra. Others, such as *JB's Gnawan Sweat Rite*, an imagined North African ritual for American singer James Brown, speak more broadly to the artist's speculative investigations of globalized Black culture and music.

These themes culminate in the mounted sculpture *Quest Module*, which acts as reverent centerpiece and grounding thesis in the main gallery. The triangle motif appears in Cyrus' oeuvre as a reference to triangular trade, prefacing the assertion that the origin of Black American sound came from enslaved Africans crossing the Middle Passage. The seashells

visible in the tabby concrete (*Quest Module*) and found encrusted concrete (*The Inflated Tear*, sourced from Galveston) both reiterate this connection, pointing towards the sea as important sonic terrain.



Jamal Cyrus, *Moorish Static\_0001* [detail], 2025-2026  
denim, cotton thread, cotton batting, burlap, vinyl  
55 x 56 x 1 in (139.7 x 142.2 x 2.5 cm)

The south gallery presents a series of sculptures conceived as musical instruments. These works engage the teachings of artist and mentor Terry Adkins, who, like Cyrus, made use of found materials – a process Adkins referred to as “potential disclosure” – with the aim to “make sculpture as ethereal and transient as music” ([Terry Adkins, 2013](#)). Like Adkins, Cyrus makes physical suggestions of music and sound, even when the sculptures remain silent. Conch shells jut against remnants of saxophones and trumpets, reinforcing a direct connection between Black music traditions and the Middle Passage. Beyond sound-making, these objects operate as instruments of ritual. The playing, or the suggestion of playing, becomes a way of (re)connecting to the ancestral realm. Even the making of the object, the manipulation of the found materials in a new context, exist as a meaning-making action, not unlike a performance.

The slippery title, “how you sound,” points as much towards a description – a sound’s tone or tenor – as it does to a process or instruction: a way of sound-making. In Cyrus’ work music is alchemical: a way (back) to Blackness. Across media, sound guides us to persons, places, times and things, to sites of curiosity, elation, and grief. Offering solace and refuge, sound is a salve, a thumbprint, a spark: a reconnected root crossing generations and oceans.

Jamal Cyrus (born 1973, Houston, TX) received his BFA from the University of Houston in 2004 and his MFA from the University of Pennsylvania in 2008. Cyrus has won several prestigious awards, most recently the Guggenheim Fellowship (2023) and the Driskell Prize, awarded by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA (2020). Cyrus’ mid-career survey, *The End of My Beginning*, initiated at the Blaffer Art Museum, Houston (June – September 2021), traveled to the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, (February – May 2022), and completed its tour at the Mississippi Museum of Art (October 2022 – March 2023). A body of related work was the subject of a solo show at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, titled *FOCUS: Jamal Cyrus*, (April – June 2022). His forthcoming solo exhibition, curated by Ryan N. Dennis, will open at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (Mass MoCA) in June 2027.

#### SPECIAL EVENT

Jamal Cyrus in conversation with Brittany Webb, PhD, Curator at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.  
Saturday, February 7, 1pm



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