

Artist Tracey Emin Kicks Off First Ever Exhibition at U.S. Museum

The exhibit, with more than 60 peices, is her first ever at a U.S. museum and it runs until March 9, 2014

By Lisa Orkin Emmanuel | Wednesday, Dec 4, 2013 | Updated 4:33 PM EST



The exhibit, with more than 60 peices, is her first ever at a U.S. museum and it runs until March 9, 2014

Miami is the perfect place for artist Tracey Emin's neon and glass work.

That's what the London-born artist said at the unveiling of her exhibition at the Museum of

Contemporary Art in North Miami titled "Tracey Emin: Angel Without You." The exhibit, with more than 60 peices, is her first ever at a U.S. museum and it runs until March 9, 2014.

"I don't have to explain neon to people from Miami. They get it," Emin said.

She has been making neons for almost 20 years and this show, with its dark blue rug and walls, was very difficult to put together, and it took many months to of planning to organize, Emin said.

She curated the show with Bonnie Clearwater, the former director of the museum, who now is the director of Nova Southeastern University's Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale.

"So it was more or less like an evolution of the work. It was mainly about how its gone up and how we displayed it that's important," Emin said.

She has made about 100 neons over the years.

"It isn't about which ones I liked best. It was about showing a different quality and the different neons and how they work or whatever," she added.

The show opens with her 1995 piece "The Tracey Emin Museum" and her film "Why I Never Became A Dancer," which has scenes from her childhood home in the British town of Margate. Many of the works are epigrams transcribed into neon from her own writing.

Works on display line the dark walls of the exhibition room. One reads in pink neon: "I Felt You and I Know You Loved Me."

"Only God Knows I'm Good," reads another in neon green.

"You Forgot To Kiss My Soul," is another with blue writing surrounded by a pink heart.

"I have never seen so many neons anywhere in my life before, not even in Las Vegas, not Times Square, not the seaside, nowhere, ever. So I actually wanted to do something which I have never seen before and I've never seen this," Emin said.

But the message is deeper than love and sexuality, she said.

"A lot of it is about God as well isn't it? A lot of it is about enlightenment. So, it's not one dimensional. It's about how we think. As human beings we have souls. That is the main message. The soul is as important as any other aspect of our lives, any other aspect of our body," Emin said.

Clearwater said the works become like love letters, but they are also "very cryptic and universal."

By using pronouns like "you" or "I" in the work, she could be addressing God or even herself, Clearwater said.

"The opportunity in an exhibition like this is to put an artist in perspective," Clearwater said.

And Miamians may be seeing more of Emin as she now lives in the Magic City part time.

"I like the people, I like the nature, I like the sea, I like the Intracoastal, I like the architecture and I like the fact that it doesn't feel like the rest of America," she said.