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In the galleries: Acronyms as content encode a powerful commentary

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Arrayed neatly in Von Ammon Co.'s expansive space, David-Jeremiah's recent sculptural paintings appear to be cool, formalist exercises. They're not. The shaped, two-toned pieces are in fact cryptic testaments to the Dallas artist's rage.

The message is hidden in the show's title, "I.A.H.Y.F.F.A.W.D. / N.F.D.B.J.W.B.D." According to a gallery statement, the initials stand for two versions of a phrase the Black artist will never specify but represent "the most toxic, hateful and racist sentence [he] could get off [his] chest at the time toward White people." The inscriptions feature in half of the artworks, each of which is paired with a text-free one with the same contours and color scheme.

David-Jeremiah began with the pieces that include the abbreviations, the second of which expresses the same sentiment as the first, but rendered in Dallas slang. The letters look to be etched roughly into the painted surfaces of the plywood sheets, which are cut to mimic the hoods of Lamborghini sports cars (a boyhood

fixation). Actually, the letters are raised, as are other gestures that suggest dents and scratches. The artist paints without brushes, using scraping tools to manipulate enamel paint similar to the pigment used on actual car bodies.

After some visitors to his studio reacted defensively to his new works, David-Jeremiah responded with a second series linked by color, but painted in varied, complex and sometimes more textured arrangements. He calls the lettered ones "Externalized" (anger in your face) and the others "Internalized" (anger in his gut).

In most cases, an "Externalized" is positioned atop its counterpart, suggesting preeminence. Gallery visitors, however, might prefer the "Internalizeds." The former are raw and ardent. The latter are inventive, unexpected and open-ended. They manifest a source of artistic power other than wrath.

David-Jeremiah's 'I.A.H.Y.F.F.A.W.D. / N.F.D.B.J.W.B.D.' runs until April 25 2021