

Taming the Chaos: An Eternal Self-Restriction



Igshaan Adams, *Worstel (wrestle)*, 2021. Wood, glass and acrylic beads; variety of metal wires (memory, steel, and plastic coated); iron base; mild steel; enamel paint and resin. 33 ¼ × 46 ¼ × 35 ½ inches (84.5 × 117.5 × 90.2 cm)

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Igshaan Adams' *Worstel* (2020) is crafted out of a variety of materials including wood, glass, and acrylic beads; metal wires; an iron base mild steel; enamel paint; and resin. *Worstel* highlights the way we can deal with hefty external turmoil by harboring the chaos we feel within ourselves. In this artwork, Adams explores how we can tame complex problems rooted in the foreign, external world by first containing it in a more familiar setting: our very own bodies. Only then can we begin to embark on the journey to improvement.

The artwork sits near the back of the Hill Art Foundation's bottom floor. It is placed on the ground, unlike most of the pieces in the show, which are either hanging from the walls or ceiling. At first glance, the piece looks heavy and encumbered, pulled to the ground by its extreme physical—and emotional—weight. There is so much going on with *Worstel* at once: beehives of wire coil around non-uniform wooden beads, and colored glass beads make an appearance within some of the folds and crevices. One begins to appreciate the pureness of the design only with further investigation. The shape of *Worstel* is chaotic yet restricted to specific confines. Moreover, the size of the piece is disproportionate to the large amounts of empty space surrounding it. This creates the impression of control and self-restraint: the entity is very dense, yet it only affects a small region. The exterior shell of *Worstel* is composed of natural, organic lines—with each curve decreasing in size as it moves further away from the core.

Adams frequently talks about the physical and emotional journey he embarked on to “heal himself.”¹ According to the artist, the internal and external worlds affect each other in some ways, but this relationship remains healthy and moderate: we can draw on our peers and the space around us as ways of strengthening our identity and internal peace. Prayer and religion

¹ "2022 E.A.T. #MatterMemory | #IgshaanAdams: Kicking Dust," video, 30:32, YouTube, posted by E.A.T. | Engadin Art Talks, February 3, 2022, accessed December 8, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=se6WWwrIVCY&t=25s>.

were extremely important for Adams on his life journey, especially the practices of Sufism. The artist's value of personal stories over historical retellings is useful for viewers when understanding the ideas behind *Worstel* and its purpose within the larger context of the exhibition. Essentially, what intrigues and is of value to Adams are anecdotes of how people are personally affected by something or someone. In other words, individual experience is key. This idea is emphasized in *Worstel* as the difference between what is part of, and inside, the piece versus what is outside of, or external to, the piece. What is on the outside is not as important as what is on the inside: it is the internal artistic chaos, and its startling visuals compared to the bare white surroundings, that make the piece worth studying.

Worstel is meant to encapsulate and tell a narrative about Adams' internal struggles, namely anxiety. "[*Worstel* is] more concerned with its own energy and it continuously unfolds into itself rather than projecting outwardly... I mean, I've always appreciated anxiety as one of my best qualities to be fair."² Here, Adams describes anxiety along with other internal operations as particularly useful to individuals. The mechanism of constantly controlling one's own thoughts and feelings provides the mind with something to do, something to channel its energy towards—and, ultimately, an alternative path to fretting about external circumstances. Something else Adams emphasizes that is reflected in the piece is the idea of continuity. An important aspect of the healing journey to keep in mind is appreciating “the process itself, being transformative.”³ This idea is manifested in *Worstel* through the piece's movement: *Worstel* will always continue

² "Worstel (wrestle) (2020). Artist Igshaan Adams speaks on Worstel (wrestle)," audio, 1:02, Bloomberg Connects, accessed December 8, 2025, <https://guides.bloombergconnects.org/en-US/guide/hillArtFoundation/item/43df3d5d-4846-4237-aa5e-e56ca5948e11>.

³ "2022 E.A.T #MatterMemory | #IgshaanAdams: Kicking Dust," video.

folding in on itself. It simulates Adams describing his discovery of identity as an “ongoing process of covering and uncovering, doing and undoing.”⁴

Worstel is one of the most fascinating pieces I have ever seen. To start, it is extremely visually captivating—but not in the way delicate and conventionally beautiful artwork is. It is what some might describe as “strange” and “abnormal”—clumps of materials arranged in intricate ways with no clear subject or plot. What fascinated me even more about the piece was the idea behind it: *Worstel* is representative of internal emotional wrestling. Internal turmoil is a concept frequently utilized and described in literature; however, it is difficult to imagine a visual manifestation of the idea. Individual feelings are so complex and are often tied to many other factors. The product of these intricacies is a concept so hectic and densely packed. Not only was Adams able to illustrate the core ideas of internal turmoil, but he portrayed it in a new light.

We often seek to control things external to ourselves when the answer to peace has always been through the balance of thought and mind. This leads some people to utilize prayer, meditation, and other forms of reflection. By controlling the emotions that circulate in our heads, we are able to develop key characteristics that help us deal with situations larger and beyond ourselves.

⁴ "Igshaan Adams," Thomas Dane Gallery, accessed December 8, 2025, <https://www.thomasdanegallery.com/artists/363-igshaan-adams/profile/>.

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