



AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS

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LORNA SIMPSON

FIRST MID-CAREER SURVEY OF THE ARTIST'S WORK

ORGANIZED BY THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS,
EXHIBITION WILL TOUR FIVE VENUES BEGINNING APRIL 2006



New York, NY (January 9, 2006) – The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles will be the opening venue for *Lorna Simpson*, the first mid-career survey of the artist's work. Organized by the American Federation of Arts and curated by AFA Adjunct Curator Helaine Posner, this exhibition provides a comprehensive examination of the artistic production of one of the leading artists working in the United States today.

Lorna Simpson will open at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles on April 16, 2006, after which it will travel to four additional venues, including the Miami Art Museum; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Michigan; and the Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston, South Carolina (see tour schedule for details).

AFA Director Julia Brown remarked, "It is a privilege to celebrate the work of Lorna Simpson over the last two decades, beginning with her earliest photograph and text works and ending with her film and video installations of the last few years and most recent photographs. We are delighted to present this beautiful and provocative body of work to a broad national audience."

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Lorna Simpson, *Call Waiting*, 1997. Number 6 of 12 silver gelatin prints with silk-screened texts, 20 × 16 inches each. From the video installation *Call Waiting* (1997), 16mm black-and-white film transferred to DVD, 13 minutes, 11 seconds, sound. Commissioned for inSite '97. Courtesy the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York. Copyright Lorna Simpson.



Lorna Simpson first became well known in the mid-1980s, confronting and challenging conventional views of gender, identity, culture, history, and memory with large-scale photograph and text works. By the mid-90s, Simpson began to concentrate on creating large multi-panel photographs printed on felt that depict the site of public, yet unseen, sexual encounters. More recently, the artist has turned to creating moving images. In film and video works such as *Call Waiting*, she features couples engaging in intimate yet incomplete conversations that elude easy interpretation but seem to plumb the mysteries of identity and desire.

In his essay in the exhibition catalogue, Okwui Enwezor, Dean of Academic Affairs at the San Francisco Art Institute, observes that "Much of Simpson's work imbricates language, speech, and text. Language is employed like a lever to pry open the lid of the unconscious. Here text plays a subsidiary role. However, when it approximates speech, it functions like a memory trigger in relation to a visual cue. The text panels also confront the viewer with a fundamental contradiction between the sense of vision and voice as separate forms of knowing: between seeing and speaking. If we are to reconcile this contradiction, then much of Simpson's work is not simply annexed to text/image relationship, it is fundamentally audiovisual."

The exhibition will include approximately seventeen of Simpson's acclaimed image and text works (1985–92) and seven major photographs on felt (1994–2005). It will also include six film installations from 1997 to 2004, including *Call Waiting*; *Easy to Remember*; *Interior/Exterior, Full/Empty*, a seven-part projection and related series of photographs; and *31*, a video calendar in which the artist closely observes a month in the public and private life of an unknown woman. The exhibition will conclude with the artist's recent photographs (2001–03), which consist of a group of ghostly, silhouetted profiles of black women and men accompanied by the titles of paintings, songs, and films that date from the 1790s to the 1970s.

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Lorna Simpson, *Interior/Exterior, Full/Empty*, 1997. Number 12 of 18 gelatin silver prints with silk-screened texts, 20 × 16 inches each. From the video installation *Interior/Exterior, Full/Empty* (1997), 7-channel DVD projection of 16 mm black-and-white film, 20 minutes, sound. Commissioned by the Wexner Center for the Arts at the Ohio State University. Courtesy the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York. Copyright Lorna Simpson.



Lorna Simpson was born in 1960 in Brooklyn, New York, and received her BFA in Photography from the School of Visual Arts, New York, and her MFA from the University of California, San Diego. Her work has been exhibited at The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1990), the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (1992), the Miami Art Museum (1997), the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (1999), and the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2003). She has participated in such important international exhibitions as the *Hugo Boss Prize* (1998) at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, and *Documenta XI* (2002) in Kassel, Germany. Simpson has been the subject of numerous articles, catalogue essays, and a monograph published by Phaidon Press.

This exhibition is made possible, in part, by grants from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Peter Norton Family Foundation, the Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Inc., the Martin Bucksbaum Family Foundation, Emily Fisher Landau, and The Barbara Lee Family Foundation Fund at the Boston Foundation.

Tour Schedule:

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles	April 16-July 10, 2006
Miami Art Museum	October 13, 2006-January 21, 2007
Whitney Museum of American Art	February 8-May 6, 2007
Kalamazoo Institute of Arts	May 25- August 19, 2007
The Gibbes Museum of Art	September 7-December 2, 2007

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Lorna Simpson, *Corridor (Phone)*, 2003. Digital chromatic print mounted to Plexiglas, 27 x 72 inches
Courtesy the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York. Copyright Lorna Simpson.

Publication: A fully illustrated catalogue accompanying the exhibition will be published by the AFA and Abrams, New York. The book will include a curatorial foreword by Helaine Posner; a dialogue including Lorna Simpson, artist Isaac Julien, and Studio Museum in Harlem Director Thelma Golden, with a preface by Shamim M. Momin, Associate Curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art; an overview of Simpson's work, from the earlier image and text work to the recent films, by Okwui Enwezor, Dean of Academic Affairs at the San Francisco Art Institute; and an essay exploring the relationship of Simpson's work to cinema by cultural critic and *New Yorker* staff writer Hilton Als.

American Federation of Arts: The AFA is a nonprofit institution that organizes art exhibitions for presentation in museums around the world, publishes exhibition catalogues, and develops education programs.

Press Info: Publicity images may be downloaded from the AFA web site at www.afaweb.org, media corner. Login "afapress", password "photos". To schedule interviews with the artist and for additional information, please contact: Keri Murawski, AFA Manager of Communications, at 212.988.7700 ext. 64 or kmurawski@afaweb.org.

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