



JENKINS JOHNSON GALLERY

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Carrie Mae Weems, *The Edge of Time – Ancient Rome*, from *Roaming* 2006, c-print, 73 x 61 inches, edition of 5

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Seven Sisters

October 3 – December 7, 2013

Opening Reception

Thursday, October 3, 5:30 - 7:30 pm



Mickalene Thomas, *Din Facing Forward*, 2012, c-print, 60 x 50 inches, edition of 3

Jenkins Johnson Gallery is pleased to present *Seven Sisters*, a group exhibition opening Thursday, October 3 with a reception from 5:30 to 7:30pm, and running through December 7, 2013. *Seven Sisters* features ethnically diverse and world-renowned artists' commentaries on the intersection of ethics, race, culture, and self-expression. Among the hottest young and established artists of today, *Seven Sisters* includes **Carrie Mae Weems, Mickalene Thomas, Rina Banerjee, Patricia Piccinini, Camille Rose Garcia, Kenyatta A.C. Hinkle, Toyin Odutola, and Vanessa Prager**. Coinciding with *Seven Sisters* is a traveling retrospective, *Carrie Mae Weems: Three Decades of Photography and Video*, arriving at Cantor Center for Visual Art at Stanford University on October 16. This September, Weems was honored with the MacArthur Foundation's "Genius Grant," and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Lifetime Achievement in Fine Arts.

The mythologically significant star cluster Pleiades is the touchstone for *Seven Sisters*. While only six are discernible to the naked eye, these stars represent the seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione. Each daughter held a mythological role: one was the goddess of spring and farmers while another was the queen known to ward off storms. Like these daughters, goddesses, and queens immortalized in the sky, each artist in *Seven Sisters* brings a lasting cross-cultural approach and influence. Through painting, drawing, sculpture, and video, they remind us that the power of the female role is timeless. Photographs and video installations highlight femininity, African-American identity, and humanity's past and present conditions. Sculpture compassionately portrays biotechnical affects on the living and mixed media artwork harnesses myth to demonstrate cultural connectivity. Pen drawings recreate the color of one's skin, and paintings and drawings utilize pop cultural references to comment on society. In ancient times, the appearance of the constellation marked the start of a new season. Now, these artists mark a subliminal time when the voice of women sets the world ablaze.

Carrie Mae Weems' artistic accomplishments and contributions to contemporary art are arguably as important as any other female artist of her time. As *The New York Times* writer Holland Cotter describes, "No American photographer of the last quarter-century...has turned out a more probing, varied and moving body of work." Weems uses film, video, photograph, and text to answer questions of blackness and beauty, investigating family relationships and gender roles, as well as the histories of racism, sexism, class, and various political systems. In "*The Edge of Time – Ancient Rome*," from *Roaming*, Weems tackles questions of identity and the sense of belonging; the black-clad figure serves as a muse and a leader, Weems stating, "This woman can stand in for me and for you; she leads you into history. She's a witness and a guide." In the series *Slow Fade to Black*, Weems addresses the fade from cultural prominence of such famous women as Josephine Baker, Lena Horne, and Katherine Dunham by blurring publicity images. Further addressing femininity, beauty, and race, Weems' video "*Afro Chic*" captures women as they stride down the runway in brightly colored clothes, complementing their huge Afros; these women are confident, vibrant, and beautiful, but projected behind them are images of Angela Davis and Huey Newton, elevating the work from a simple commentary on aesthetics to a juxtaposition between beauty and civil rights. Weems has exhibited at such prominent institutions as: the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston.

Similar to Weems' ability to capture her perception of beauty, Brooklyn artist **Mickalene Thomas** celebrates the relationship between women and beauty. Thomas, primarily a colorist painter and photographer, uses her art history background to inspire her elaborate and ornately colorful images, approaching the romanticized image of femininity and power with a new perspective. Similar to Weems' "*Afro-Chic*," Thomas' video "*Ain't I a Woman*" transforms photographs to portraits that hone in on her subject's intrinsic beauty. Thomas has shown at: the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Brooklyn Museum of Art; and the Guggenheim Museum, New York, among others.

Taking a different approach to our environment, Australian artist **Patricia Piccinini** is interested in bioethics and biotechnologies. Piccinini's mixed media sculptures and installations of half-human, half-animal creatures are interpretations of technology's new ability to control what nature cannot yield. As *The New York Times* noted in 2005, Piccinini's sculptures blur the distinction between human and animal. Her sculptures are interpretations of technology's ability to manipulate nature. With the same concern for human-induced environmental changes, Piccinini's "*Eulogy*" portrays the blobfish, a victim of overfishing in Australia's waters: the man in this hyper-realistic sculpture bends over the fish, lamenting the loss of a species on the brink of extinction. The artist is fascinated by and empathetic towards the creature, seen



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as the collateral damage of unethical circumstances. Piccinini represented the Australian pavilion in the 2003 Venice Biennale, and her work has been exhibited at many prestigious institutions including Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; The Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography; 21c Museum Hotel, Louisville; National Gallery of Art, Warsaw.



Banerjee, *Upon first myth and empirical observation the hero her angel leaps in cry opens the moon to urge on a rain that may cleanse all from the sweat of her jealous man*, 2013, mixed media on wood panel, 16 x 12 inches

India-born, New York-based artist **Rina Banerjee** is fascinated by the roles of culture and mythology as they relate to the development of one's identity. *Seven Sisters* will feature her works on paper and on panel, which explore fairy tale and myth. Banerjee combines these overarching concepts with the forces of tourism and global commerce insofar as they inform ideas of the self. Banerjee received her Masters of Fine Arts from Yale University in 1995, and her work is currently featured at Smithsonian's Sackler Gallery in Washington D.C., ending in June 2014. Banerjee was featured in 2013's Venice Biennale, the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, 2005's *Greater New York* exhibition at PS1, 2003's Japan's Tsumari-Echigo Exhibition 3rd Triennial, and the 2000 Whitney Biennial.

Nigerian-born, Alabama-based artist **Toyin Odutola** is considered one of the brightest emerging international art stars. She explores blackness through portraiture, questioning the materiality of race, using ballpoint pen to draw her elaborate studies of portraits, many of which are self-portraits. As she captures her subject's demeanor, Odutola's portraits raise questions of not only how she sees herself, but also how we see each other. Treating "skin as geography," Odutola's drawings are intricate and reflect her immaculate attention to detail as well as her unique use of line. Without utilizing social markers, her subjects are timeless and ask the viewer to forget societal, racial, and cultural constraints. She was featured in *Forbes*' "30 under 30" list, as well as *The Huffington Post*'s "30 Black Artists under 40." Odutola was included in the Studio Museum in Harlem's exhibition, *Fore*. Her work is in the permanent collections of: The Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art; The Birmingham Museum of Art, Alabama; The Contemporary Museum in Honolulu.

Kenyatta A.C. Hinkle, a Los Angeles-based visual artist, writer, and performer, is interested in giving voice to those who have passed or been lost, and those whose voices has been stolen. Hinkle is at the forefront of emerging artists, and she was featured in *The Huffington Post*'s "30 Black Artists under 40." Her newest series is rooted in Maryse Condé's novel *I, Tituba: Black Witch of Salem*, written in 1992. This piece of historical fiction captures the story of a woman of color who was a pivotal figure during the Salem Witch Trials. Fascinated by Condé's depiction of Otherness, racism, gender, and sexuality, as well as cultural and religious hegemony, Hinkle compiles a drawn narrative of Tituba's experiences. Her series *The Uninvited* was also shown in the Studio Museum in Harlem's *Fore*. Hinkle was the youngest participant in the biennial *Made in LA* 2012, organized by the Hammer Museum.

Similar to Banerjee's focus on fantasy, Los Angeles-born **Camille Rose Garcia** paints broken narratives of wasteland fairy tales. Her style is gothic and cartoon-like, mirroring her youth filled with Disneyland visits and punk shows. Garcia's work comments on the failures of capitalist utopias, mixing pop culture references with a satirized portrayal of modern society. Her current exhibition at the Walt Disney Museum illustrates the popular story *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Curator Tere Romo says, "Garcia's aesthetics have pushed illustration further into the art world and brought it to the attention of a new, younger generation." Her work has been featured in *The LA Times*, *Juxtapoz Magazine*, *Rolling Stone*, *Modern Painters*, and is included in the collections of the LA County Museum and the San Jose Museum of Art.

Los Angeles artist **Vanessa Prager** creates ethereal and dream-like portraits that reflect the timeless quality of the clothes and hairstyles of the forties and fifties. By building a narrative around contemporary pop culture and Americana, Prager's cultural appropriation becomes evident. She has exhibited at the Santa Monica Museum of Art and was featured in *W Magazine*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *LA Weekly*, *The Huffington Post*, and *Elle Magazine*, among others.



Images, left to right: Odutola, *You Are No Different*, 2013, ink and marker on paper, 9x12; Garcia, *Grey Empire*, 2009, acrylic, silver leaf, and glitter on wood, 24x24; Piccinini, *Eulogy*, 2011, silicone, fiberglass, human hair, clothing, 43.3x25.6x23.6; Hinkle, *Tituba Siphons Up Her Spectators in Order to Feed Her Young*, 2013, india ink and compressed charcoal, 48x48; Prager, *Rain*, 2013, pen on paper, 8x7. All dimensions in inches.

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Jenkins Johnson Gallery, established in 1996, is a member of the San Francisco Art Dealers Association and AIPAD.