

PRESS RELEASE

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Lorna Simpson Retrospective at the Addison Gallery This Fall Examines the Artist's 30-Year Career

Andover, Massachusetts (August 5, 2014) – This fall, the Addison Gallery of American Art, located on the campus of Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, will present *Lorna Simpson*, a comprehensive exhibition that highlights the artist's concerns and themes from her earliest photo-text works of the mid-1980s to her most recent works in a variety of mediums, including the three-channel video installation *Chess* (2013) created especially for this touring show and making its American debut at the Addison. The Addison's presentation of the exhibition, curated by noted scholar Joan Simon for the Foundation for the Exhibition of Photography and the Jeu de Paume, Paris, where the show originated, is the first stop in the United States following critical success at the Haus der Kunst, Munich, and the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, England. *Lorna Simpson* will be on view at the Addison from September 20, 2014 through January 4, 2015.

Lorna Simpson (b. 1960, Brooklyn, New York) came to prominence in the mid-1980s through large-scale, performative works provoking questions of identity, memory, race, gender, class, and, most critically, exploring the uses of photography and the nuances of language. Spanning more than 30 years of Simpson's practice, this exhibition includes the early, proto-cinematic works synthesizing traditional photo techniques and speakerly texts that first brought her to critical attention; the large-scale, multi-panel screenprints on felt invoking *film noir* in image and text that she began to create in the mid-1990s and continues to explore in new ways; constellations of found vintage photographs and inexpensive photobooth portraits accompanied by Simpson's drawings of details of those photos; as well as key films and videos from the late 1990s to the present.

In the epic, 307 component work *1957–2009* (2009), Simpson herself performs for the first time, recreating the poses and dress of an anonymous woman (and, at times, man) seen in photographs taken in Los Angeles in 1957, which the artist found in an album she bought on eBay and are also part of the work. In *Chess* (2013), Simpson expands upon *1957–2009* by re-enacting in two of the three

video projections select images of the man and woman playing the game, each figure multiplied to five around the table in a Surrealist “trick” mirror set-up and aging as the game progresses. The third projection of this installation features jazz pianist and composer Jason Moran performing an improvised score for the project, himself echoing the mirroring theme through a score in which one of his hands re-enacts the gesture of the other. Additional recent works included in the exhibition are Simpson’s collage and ink ensemble *Ebony Collages* (2013) and the bas-relief and photo combine *Poets and Players* (2014).

“A conceptual artist who uses the camera as catalyst, Lorna Simpson is one of the most important and influential artists of the past thirty years,” notes the exhibition’s guest curator, Joan Simon. “The earliest work in the show is Simpson’s performative 1985 *Gestures/Reenactments*, a title literally capturing the work’s visual/verbal aspect that is also descriptive of what could be called her method for the next three decades. Simpson’s most recent video installation, *Chess* (2013)—re-enacting gestures from her 2009 epic still photo work, *1957–2009*, for which she had re-enacted scenes from vintage photos—makes its U.S. premiere here at the Addison Gallery of American Art. The exhibition route departs from chronological order immediately after the first room to reveal turning points in Simpson’s oeuvre as well as thematic continuities and related images, offering new perspectives and surprises for those long familiar with her work as well as a tightly focused overview for those engaging with it for the first time.”

“The Addison is proud to be the first American institution to show this retrospective of Simpson’s remarkable career,” adds Allison Kemmerer, the Addison’s Mead Curator of Photography and Curator of Art after 1950. “For decades, Simpson’s work has simultaneously incorporated and challenged the mediums of photography and film encouraging viewers to think critically about representation—about what and how they see—and in doing so to reconsider their assumptions about gender, identity, culture, history, and memory. Continuing a tradition at the Addison of presenting exhibitions that explore complex and often charged societal issues, *Lorna Simpson* will spark lively dialogue at many levels.”

The Addison will celebrate the opening of *Lorna Simpson* and its other fall exhibitions on Friday, September 19, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue featuring essays by Joan Simon as well as Marta Gili, Director of the Jeu de Paume, Naomi Beckwith, curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art

in Chicago, Thomas J. Lax, associate curator at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and Elvan Zabunyan, historian of contemporary art and lecturer at the University of Rennes 2 and author of *Black is a Color* (2005).

Lorna Simpson has been co-organized by the Foundation for the Exhibition of Photography, Minneapolis, and the Jeu de Paume, Paris, in association with the Haus der Kunst, Munich, and in collaboration with the Addison Gallery of American Art for this venue.

Generous support for the Addison's presentation of this exhibition has been provided by the Winton Family Exhibition Fund and the Mark Rudkin Fund.

The Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, is open to the public from Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., and Sunday 1:00–5:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on Mondays, national holidays, December 24, and the month of August. Admission to all exhibitions and events is free. The Addison Gallery also offers free education programs for teachers and groups. For more information, call 978-749-4015, or visit the website at www.addisongallery.org.

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About the Addison Gallery of American Art

Devoted exclusively to American art, the mission of the Addison Gallery of American Art is to acquire, preserve, interpret, and exhibit works of art for the education and enjoyment of all. Opened in 1931, the Addison Gallery has one of the most important collections of American art in the country that includes more than 17,000 works by prominent American artists such as George Bellows, John Singleton Copley, Thomas Eakins, Winslow Homer, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Jackson Pollock, as well as photographers Eadweard Muybridge, Walker Evans, Robert Frank, and many more. The Addison Gallery, located on the campus of Phillips Academy in Andover, offers a continually rotating series of exhibitions and programs, all of which are free and open to the public. For more information, call 978-749-4015, or visit the website at www.addisongallery.org.

