

SIKKEMA
JENKINS&CO.
DEANA LAWSON

May 8 – June 12, 2021

Sikkema Jenkins & Co. is pleased to present a solo exhibition of new work by Deana Lawson, on view May 8 through June 12, 2021. This is Lawson's second solo show with the gallery, and features photographs previously shown in her solo exhibition *Centropy*, at Kunsthalle Basel in Fall 2020.

Existing along the boundary between staged narrative and candid documentation, Lawson's photographic practice explores the styles, relationships, and aesthetics of the African diaspora, both within the United States and globally. With careful attention given to lighting and composition, Lawson draws upon a range of visual traditions, including studio portraiture and vernacular family photography. Her models, often strangers whom Lawson encounters in her daily life, are posed within their own homes or familiar spaces of friends and family: in living rooms and kitchens, on beds and couches, in front of monochrome drapery and painted murals. Various mementos and personal artifacts surround her subjects, embellishing their environment with symbols of cultural and familial legacies.

The power of reflection is a central theme in Lawson's work: literally, in the mirrored frames enveloping her images, and symbolically, through the representation of Blackness and Black subjectivity. The figures within these delicately composed scenes are transformed into living reflections, holding a gaze equal in power to the sight of one's own appearance in the surrounding mirrored frames. If her subjects are reflective beings, in reflective spaces, her work itself becomes a mirror, presenting the world an exaltation of Blackness as vital and transcendent.

Shown alongside these photographs are two soundless 16mm films, featuring the subjects of *Jacqueline* and *Taneisha* in two familiar environments: at church, during a small yet congenial worship, and in the home, settled on a couch in the living room. The intimate scale of the settings belies the gravity of the camera's focus, with both films culminating in close, prolonged shots of the subjects. Whether turning away from the camera, or holding its extended gaze, they assert themselves within a moment of time and space, embodying their own filmic domain.

Deana Lawson (b. 1979, Rochester, NY) received her BFA in Photography from Pennsylvania State University (2001) and her MFA from Rhode Island School of Design (2004). Her work will be the subject of a major retrospective jointly organized by MoMA PS1 and the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston in 2020-21. Other notable solo exhibitions include shows at Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland (2020); Huis Marseille, Amsterdam (2019); the Underground Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2018); the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA (2018); and Contemporary Art Museum Saint Louis, MO (2017).

Her work is held in the permanent collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Brooklyn Museum of Art, NY; Carnegie Museum of Art, PA; Huis Marseille Museum voor Fotografie, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Museum of Modern Art, NY; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY; and Whitney Museum of Art, NY. Lawson is the recipient of the Art Matters Grant, John Gutmann Photography Fellowship, Rema Hort Mann Foundation Grant, Aaron Siskind Fellowship Grant, and a NYFA Grant. In 2013, Lawson was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, and was the 2020 recipient of the Hugo Boss Prize.

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MAY 5 – 14, 2021