

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Harn Museum of Art presents *Posing Beauty in African American Culture*

GAINESVILLE, FL, Jan. 11, 2023—The Harn Museum of Art at the University of Florida is bringing to Gainesville the nationally-touring exhibition *Posing Beauty in African American Culture*. More than 100 works of art by more than 45 artists and photographers will explore the ways in which African and African American beauty has been represented in historical and contemporary contexts. *Posing Beauty* will be on view from Jan. 31 to June 4, 2023.

Throughout the history of Western art and image-making, beauty has been idealized and challenged, and the relationship between beauty and art has become increasingly complex within contemporary art and popular culture. In the exhibition works of photography, video, fashion and advertising will challenge the relationship between beauty and art by examining the representation of beauty and different attitudes about aesthetics. *Posing Beauty* examines contemporary understandings of beauty by framing the notion of aesthetics, race, class and gender within art, popular culture and political contexts.

“I am looking forward to visitors viewing this exciting display of photographs taken by and of Black people,” said Jade Powers, Harn Curator of Contemporary Art. “There are contemporary works alongside works from the early 20th century, spanning over 116 years, all interested in conversations of beauty, what we consider beautiful, why we think this way and who has molded this perception. I hope that as visitors experience this exhibition and the three themes within the show, they have a chance to be inspired both by the photographic styles of the artists and by the resilience of the people being photographed.”

Posing Beauty in African American Culture is organized into three conceptual themes: “Constructing a Pose,” “Body & Image” and “Modeling Beauty & Beauty Contests.” “Constructing a Pose” considers the interplay between the historical and the contemporary, between self-representation and imposed representation, and the relationship between subject and photographer. “Body & Image” questions the ways in which our contemporary understanding of beauty has been constructed and framed through the body. The final theme, “Modeling Beauty & Beauty Contests,” invites us to reflect



Omar Victor Diop, *Khady*, 2011
Courtesy MAGNIN-A Gallery, Paris



Ken Ramsay, *Susan Taylor, as Model*, c. 1970s,
Courtesy of Susan Taylor

upon the ambiguities of beauty, its impact on mass culture and individuals, and how the display of beauty affects the ways in which we see and interpret the world and ourselves.

A highlight of artists and photographers in the exhibition includes Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, Anthony Barboza, Sheila Pree Bright, Renee Cox, Victor Diop, Leonard Freed, Charles "Teenie" Harris, Dave Heath, Lauren Kelley, John W. Mosley, Ken Ramsay, Jeffrey Scales, Stephen Shames, Mickalene Thomas, Carrie Mae Weems and Hank Willis Thomas, among others.

Harn Museum of Art Director Dr. Lee Anne Chesterfield stated, "We are thrilled to be bringing this exhibition to the University of Florida, along with renowned

photography scholar Dr. Deborah Willis who is the exhibition curator, and Professor and Chair in the Department of Photography & Imaging at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. *Posing Beauty in African American Culture* will offer many programs that will provide an opportunity for visitors to engage in conversation about the works on view."

Programs associated with the exhibition include a gallery discussion between *Posing Beauty* Curator Deborah Willis and Harn Curator of Contemporary Art Jade Powers. Art After Dark, Museum Nights and Museum Days will offer art-making activities, performances and tours in connection with the exhibition. All programs are free and open to the public. A list of programs follows at the end of this release. Updated information can be found at www.harn.ufl.edu/posingbeauty.

Posing Beauty in African American Culture is curated by Deborah Willis and organized by Curatorial Assistance Traveling Exhibitions, Pasadena, California. The exhibition is curated for the Harn by Jade Powers, Curator of Contemporary Art. This exhibition is made possible locally by the generous support of Dr. M.F. "Midge" Smith, Ken and Laura Berns, and Visit Gainesville, Alachua County, with additional support from the Sidney Knight Endowment and other generous donors.

Admission is free to the Harn Museum of Art.

Programs

Harn Member Preview

First Look at *Posing Beauty*

Sunday, January 29, 1 – 5 pm

Harn members will have the first opportunity to view the exhibition before opening to the public.

Membership is free. Visitors may join at the door during the event or become a member prior to the event online at www.harn.ufl.edu/join.

Extended Museum Hours

Art After Dark

Thursdays, 5 – 9 pm

The Harn is now open late every Thursday evening allowing more time for visitors to view the exhibition. The Camellia Court Café will be open and special entertainment will be offered on select evenings.

Museum Nights

Africa Everywhere

Thursday, February 9, 6 – 9 pm

Visitors of all ages can experience tours, art-making and music and dance performances offered in conjunction with the exhibition. Museum Nights is an ongoing program made possible by University of Florida Student Government and the Office of the Provost, the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Arts and Culture and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture. This evening sponsored in part by the UF Center for African Studies.

Gallery Talk

Posing Beauty: Conversations around Black Beauty

Sunday, February 19, 3 pm

Jade Powers, Harn Curator of Contemporary Art

Jade Powers will lead visitors through a deeper exploration of themes within the exhibition: “Constructing a Pose,” “Body and Image” and “Modeling Beauty and Beauty Contests” and will discuss the complex and evolving relationship between beauty and art in contemporary art and culture.

Curator Talk

Posing Questions on Posing Beauty: A Conversation with Deborah Willis

Thursday, March 30, 6 pm

Deborah Willis, Exhibition Curator and University Professor and Chair, Department of Photography & Imaging at the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University

Deborah Willis, award winning MacArthur Fellow, artist, curator, professor and eminent scholar in the history of Black photography, and Jade Powers, Curator of Contemporary Art at the Harn will explore topics presented in the exhibition, including themes of beauty, joy and self-fashioned Black identity in photographs dating from the 1890s to the present. This talk is sponsored by the Center for the Humanities and the Public Sphere (Rothman Endowment). Co-Sponsored by Harn Eminent Scholar Chair in Art History (HESCAH) program.

Museum Days

Pose!

Saturday, April 8, 1 – 4 pm

Visitors of all ages will take a tour of the exhibition and then participate in a photography activity.

About the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art

Since opening in 1990, the Harn Museum of Art at the University of Florida has been a cornerstone of the North Central Florida arts and culture ecosystem. In addition to serving the students and faculty of the University, the Harn is the most prominent fine art museum in the greater North Central Florida region and demonstrates its commitment to being a cultural resource through its free admission and educational activities. The museum is known for its high quality and relevant exhibitions, many of which have toured across the United States. The Harn's collections consist of more than 13,000 works of art. They focus on African, Asian, modern and contemporary art, and photography with significant representation of Ancient American and Oceanic art, and a growing collection of prints and drawings before 1850.

The Harn Museum of Art, at 3259 Hull Road in Gainesville, Florida, is part of the University of Florida's Cultural Plaza, which is also home to the Florida Museum of Natural History and the Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. Admission is free. Hours are 10 am to 5 pm, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; 10 am to 9 pm on Thursday and 1 to 5 pm on Sunday. For more information visit harn.ufl.edu.