



# POSING BEAUTY

In African American Culture

TOURED BY CURATORIAL ASSISTANCE TRAVELING EXHIBITIONS

Willis makes a monumental contribution to contemporary American culture by presenting a definitive history of black beauty. — *The New York Times*

**NUMBER OF WORKS**

83 photographs

1 video

**FRAME SIZES**

Various

**SPACE REQUIREMENTS**

350 linear feet (108 linear meters)

**SUPPORT MATERIALS**

Publication (W.W. Norton, 2009)

Front page:

Ernest C. Withers, *Isaac Hayes in his Office at Stax Records, Memphis, Tennessee*, 1970, gelatin silver print, 22 1/2" x 22"

Back cover:

Jeffrey Henson Scales, *Young Man in Plaid, New York City*, digital print, 1992, 44 1/2" x 44" (detail)

**Curated by Deborah Willis, Ph.D.**

*Posing Beauty in African American Culture* explores the contested ways in which African and African American beauty have been represented in historical and contemporary contexts through a diverse range of media including photography, film, video, fashion, advertising, and other forms of popular culture such as music and the Internet. Throughout the Western history of art and image-making, the relationship between beauty and art has become increasingly complex within contemporary art and popular culture.

The first of three thematic sections, “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. The second theme, “Body and Image,” questions the ways in which our contemporary understanding of beauty has been constructed and framed through the body. The last section, “Modeling Beauty & Beauty Contests,” invites us to reflect 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.

Artists in the exhibit include Carrie Mae Weems, Lyle Ashton Harris, Charles “Teenie” Harris, Eve Arnold, Gary Winogrand, Sheila Pree Bright, Leonard Freed, Renee Cox, Anthony Barboza, Bruce Davidson, Mickalene Thomas, and Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe, among others. *Posing Beauty in African American Culture* challenges contemporary understandings of beauty by framing notions of aesthetics, race, class, and gender within art, popular culture, and politics.



Carrie Mae Weems, *Untitled (Man and Mirror)* from "Kitchen Table" Series, 1990, gelatin silver print, 25" x 25"



Lauren Kelley, *Pickin'*, 2007, color-coupler print, 23" x 23 1/8"



Lola Flash, *Sadako*, 2008, digital color-coupler print, 24" x 20"



Robert H. McNeill, *New Car*, South Richmond, Virginia, 1938, digital print of a TV ad, 20" x 16"



Elayne Mayes, *Otis Redding, Monterey Pop Festival, 1967*, digital print, 20" x 16"





Lewis Watts, *Fez and Dreads, African American Parade, Harlem, 2007*, gelatin silver print, 37" x 27"



Jamel Shabazz, *Rude Boy from Back in the Days*, 1980, digital color-coupler print, 37" x 27"



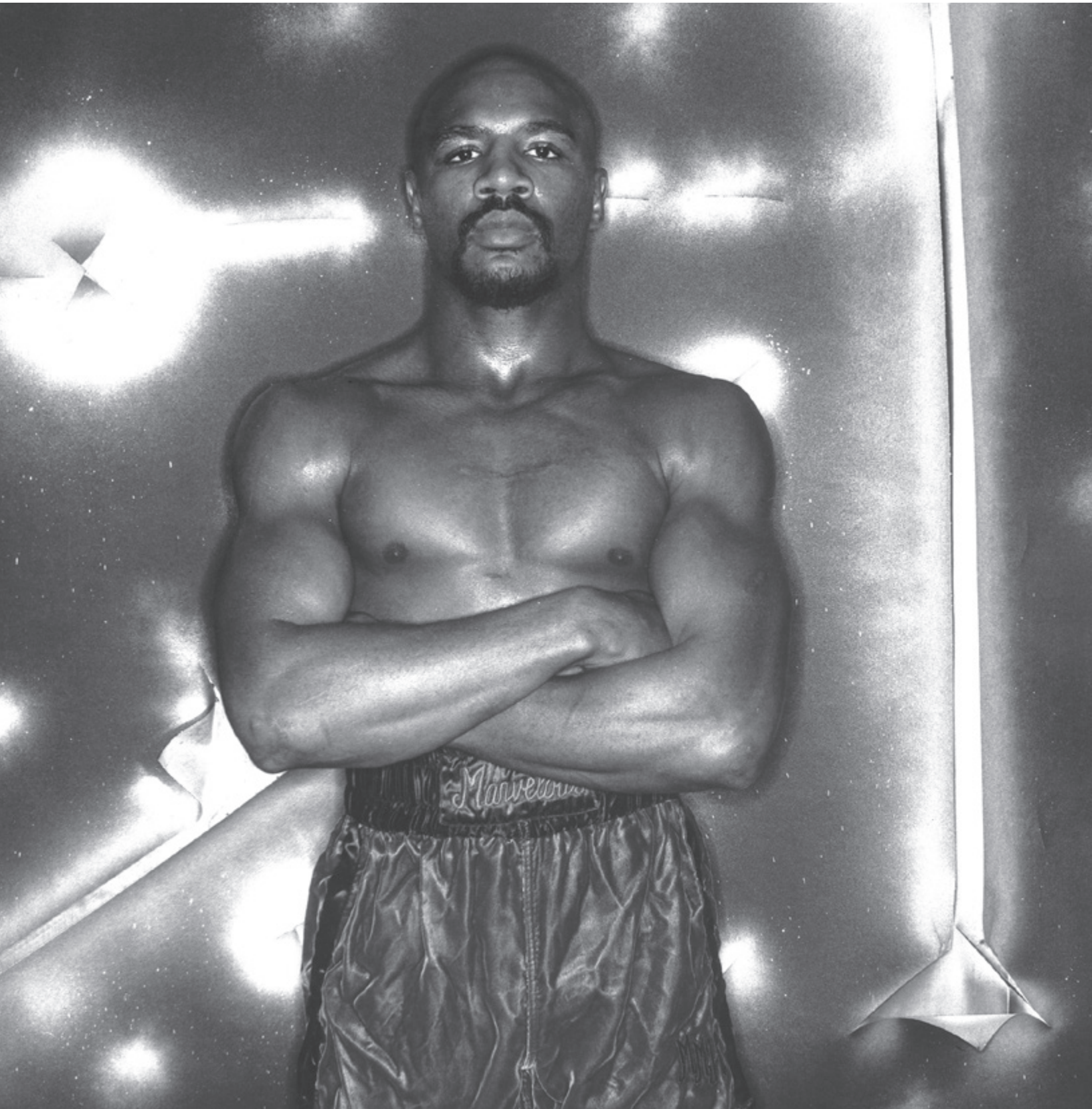
Bruce Davidson, *Couple Dancing in Blues Bar in Chicago's South Side*, 1962, gelatin silver print, 16" x 20"



Mickalene Thomas, *Sista Sista Lady Blue*, 2007, color-coupler print, 37" x 45 3/4"



Bruce Davidson, *Body Builder on Venice Beach, California*, 1964, gelatin silver print, 16" x 20"



Anthony Barboza, *Marvin Hagler, Middle Weight Boxing Champion, New York City, 1980*, digital color-coupler print, 24 1/2" x 24"



Sheila Pree Bright, *From the "Plastic Bodies" Series*, 2005, digital print, 38 1/2" x 32"



Russell Lee, *A Prosperous Chicagoan (Revery Clarence Cobb) Spending an Evening at Home*, 1941, digital print, 16" x 20"





Renee Cox, *Baby Back from "American Family,"* 2001, archival digital print, 30" x 40"

**LIST OF WORKS**

- Abdus-Salam, Ifetayo, *From the "American Exotic" Series: Self-Portrait as Pam Grier*, 2005. Archival InkJet print, 26 1/2" x 20"
- Anderson, Henry Clay, *A Beauty Pageant, Greenville, Mississippi*, c. 1960. Gelatin silver print, 20" x 16"
- Askew, Thomas, *African American Family Posed for Portrait Seated on Front Lawn*, c. 1899. Digital print, 16" x 20"
- Askew, Thomas, *African American Man Giving Piano Lesson to Young African American Woman*, c. 1899. Digital Print, 20" x 16"
- Askew, Thomas, *African American Woman*, c. 1899. Digital Print, 20" x 16"
- Askew, Thomas, *Four African American Women Seated on Steps of Building at Atlanta University...*, c. 1899. Digital Print, 20" x 16"
- Askew, Thomas, *Summit Avenue Ensemble, Atlanta, Georgia*, c. 1899. Digital Print, 16" x 20"
- Askew, Thomas, *Young African American Woman, Half-Length Portrait...*, c. 1899. Digital Print, 20" x 16"
- Barboza, Anthony, *Harlem Series, Couples*, c. 1970s. Digital Print, 14" x 11"
- Barboza, Anthony, *Marvin Hagler, Middle Weight Boxing Champion, New York City*, 1980. Gelatin silver print, 24 1/2" x 24"
- Barboza, Anthony, *Pat Evans*, c. 1970s. Digital Print, 24 1/2" x 24"
- Barboza, Anthony, *Toukie Smith, Model, New York City*, c. 1970s. Gelatin silver print, 24 1/2" x 24"
- Bazin, Petrushka, *Corset from "Women Wore White Men Wore Black Affair,"* 2004. Gelatin silver print, 16" x 20"
- Bright, Sheila Pree, *From the "Plastic Bodies" Series*, 2005 (4). Digital print, 38 1/2" x 32"
- Cox, Renee, *Baby Back, from "American Family,"* 2001. Archival digital print, 30" x 40"
- Cox, Renee, *Chillin' with Liberty*, 1998. Archival digital print, 39 3/4" x 29 3/4"
- Curtis, Edward, *A Desert Queen*, 1898. Digital print, 20" x 16"
- Davidson, Bruce, *Body Builder on Venice Beach, California*, 1964. Gelatin silver print, 16" x 20"
- Davidson, Bruce, *Couple Dancing in a Blues Bar in Chicago's South Side*, 1962. Gelatin silver print, 16" x 20"
- Davidson, Bruce, *Pregnant Woman on Grass in Vacant Lot, New York (from East 100th Street)*, 1966. Gelatin silver print, 20" x 16"
- Flash, Lola, *Karisse, London*, 2003. Digital color-coupler print, 40" x 30"
- Flash, Lola, *Sadako*, 2008. Digital color-coupler print, 24" x 20"
- Freed, Leonard, *Black in White America: Brooklyn, New York*, 1963. Gelatin silver print, 17" x 21 1/4"
- Freed, Leonard, *Black in White America: Harlem, New York*, 1963. Gelatin silver print, 12" x 15"
- Freed, Leonard, *Harlem Fashion Show, Harlem*, 1963. Gelatin silver print, 17" x 21 1/4"
- Freed, Leonard, *Harlem Fashion Show in a Stadium, Harlem*, 1963. Gelatin silver print, 17" x 21 1/4"
- Gray, Todd, *M.J. Reflection, Atlanta*, 1981. Gelatin silver print, 20" x 16"
- Greenfield-Sanders, Timothy, *Portrait of Michelle Obama*, 2006. Digital print, 20" x 16"
- Greenfield-Sanders, Timothy, *Serena Williams from the Blacklist Project*, 2008. Digital print, 58" x 44"
- Harris, Charles "Teenie," *Charles "Teenie" Harris and Another Man...*, c. 1935. Gelatin silver print, 20" x 16"
- Harris, Charles "Teenie," *Lena Horne at Mirror in Her Dressing Room at the Stanley Theater, 1940-5*. Gelatin silver print, 16" x 20"
- Harris, Charles "Teenie," *Mary Louise Harris on Mulford Street...*, c. 1930. Gelatin silver print, 20" x 16"
- Harris, Charles "Teenie," *Waitress at the Crawford Grill, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*, 1952. Gelatin silver print, 16" x 20"
- Harris, Lyle Ashton, *Miss America*, 1987-8. Gelatin silver print, 37" x 37"
- Harsley, Alex, *Jean-Michel Basquiat*, c. 1980s. Digital print, 26 1/2" x 20"
- Harsley, Alex, *John Lee Hooker*, 1985. Gelatin silver print, 26 1/2" x 20"
- Harsley, Alex, *Young Men on 42nd Street*, 1959. Digital print, 26 1/2" x 20"
- Heath, Dave, *Washington Square*, 1960. Vintage gelatin silver print, 16" x 20"
- Henderson, LeRoy, *Stokely Carmichael, Activist*, 1968. Gelatin silver print, 20" x 16"
- Henson, Jeffrey Scales, *Denzel Washington, Los Angeles*, c. 1990s. Digital print, 42 1/2" x 44"
- Henson, Jeffrey Scales, *Young Man in Plaid, New York City*, 1992. Digital print, 44 1/2" x 44"
- Ingram, Jessica, *Peace, Change, Hope, Obama*, 2008. Color-coupler print, 17 1/2" x 47"
- Kelley, Lauren, *Pickin'*, 2007. Color-coupler print, 23" x 23 1/8"
- Lee, Russell, *A Prosperous Chicagoan (Revery Clarence Cobb) Spending an Evening at Home*, 1941. Digital print, 16" x 20"
- Lee, Russell, *Family in Church Clothes*, New York, 1935-6. Gelatin silver print, 20" x 16"
- Lee, Russell, *Street Photographer, New York*, 1935-6. Digital print, 16" x 20"

Levy, Builder, *Sunglasses and Curlers, Coney Island*, 1963. Varnished silver gelatin print, 19" x 18"

Lévy-Stab, Philippe, *Jason Moran, Jazz Pianist*, 2005. Gelatin silver print, 24" x 23"

Mayes, Elayne, *Otis Redding, Monterey Pop Festival*, 1967. Digital print, 20" x 16"

McNeill, Robert H., *Barbershop in Washington, D.C.*, 1941. Gelatin silver print, 16" x 20"

McNeill, Robert H., *Joe Louis, Heavyweight Champion, at Howard Graduation*, c. 1930s. Digital print, 16" x 20"

McNeill, Robert H., *New Car, South Richmond, Virginia*, 1938. Digital print, 20" x 16"

Mosley, John W., *Atlantic City, Four Women*, c. 1960s. Gelatin silver print, 20" x 16"

Mosley, John W., *Billy Eckstein and Billie Holiday, Philadelphia*, c. 1956. Digital print, 16" x 20"

Mosley, John W., *Crowning the Queen*, c. 1960s. Gelatin silver print, 20" x 16"

Moutassamy-Ashe, *Jeanne, Nude (Self-Portrait)*, 2004. Gelatin silver print, 26 1/2" x 20"

Ogburn, David "Oggi," *Lil' Kim Rapping in the Flesh*, 2000. Color-coupler print, 26 1/2" x 20"

Parks, Gordon, *Washington, D.C. Government Chairwoman Ella Watson Cleaning Offices...*, 1942. Digital print, 20" x 16"

Ramsay, Ken, *Susan Taylor, as Model*, c. 1970s. Gelatin silver print, 26 1/2" x 20"

Roberts, Richard S., *Woman Wearing White Apron*, c. 1920s. Digital print, 20" x 16"

Roberts, Richard S., *Woman Wearing White Collar*, c. 1920s. Digital print, 20" x 16"

Ross Smith, Bayeté, *Prom Night: Here Come the Girls...*, 2006. Fuji crystal archive print, 20" x 23"

Ross Smith, Bayeté, *Prom Night: Hi De Ho Man...*, 2006. Fuji crystal archive print, 30" x 23"

Roskam, Edwin, *Crowds Outside of a Fashionable Negro Church after East Sunday Service*, 1941. Digital print, 16" x 20"

Shabazz, Jamel, *Drama and Flava from Back in the Days*, 2000. Color-coupler print, 37" x 27"

Shabazz, Jamel, *Ethiopian Love*, 2010. C-print, 24" x 20"

Shabazz, Jamel, *Rude Boy from Back in the Days*, 1980. Digital color-coupler print, 37" x 27"

Shabazz, Jamel, *Sophisticated Lady*, 2007. C-print, 20" x 24"

Shames, Stephen, *At Home, Huey P. Newton Listens to Bob Dylan's "Highway 61 Revisited"*, 1970. Gelatin silver print, 26" x 20"

Shames, Stephen, *Glen Wheeler and Claudia Grayson ("Sister Sheeba") Stand Outside...*, 1971. Gelatin silver print, 20" x 26 1/2"

Shames, Stephen, *Kathleen Cleaver...*, 1968. Gelatin silver print, 37 1/2" x 27"

Sengstacke, Robert, *#4 from "Brothers from the Hood"*, c. 1970s. Digital print, 20" x 16"

Sengstacke, Robert, *#6 from "Brothers from the Hood"*, c. 1970s. Digital print, 16" x 20"

Thomas, Hank Willis, *Posing Beauty*, 2009. Archival InkJet print, 59" x 163"

Thomas, Mickalene, *Sista Sista Lady Blue*, 2007. Color-coupler print, 37" x 45 3/4"

Unidentified Photographer, *Amelia Ramey, "Mardi Gras Queen"*, c. 1920s. Digital print, 20" x 16"

Unidentified Photographer, *Sam Codner and His Stutz*, 1920. Digital print, 16" x 20"

Watts, Lewis, *Beauty on West 142nd Street*, 2007. Gelatin silver print, 37" x 27"

Watts, Lewis, *Fez and Dreds, African American Parade*, 2007. Gelatin silver print, 37" x 27"

Weems, Carrie Mae, *I Looked and Looked to See What so Terrified You*, 2006 (2). Digital print, 44 1/2" x 32"

Weems, Carrie Mae, *Untitled (Man and Mirror) from "Kitchen Table" Series*, 1990. Gelatin silver print, 25" x 25"

White, Wendel, *Tecolia Salters, West Atco*, 2009. Pigmented inkjet print on paper, 30 1/2" x 30"

Williams, Carla, *Venus (Self-Portrait)*, 1994. Archival inkjet print, 49" x 40"

Withers, Ernest C., *Isaac Hayes in His Office at Stax Records*, c. 1970s. Gelatin silver print, 22 1/2" x 22"

woods, lauren, *The Teenth of June, pt. 1*, 2006. Digital video, sound

**Curatorial Assistance Traveling Exhibitions (CATE)** is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating opportunities for access, outreach, and education in the visual arts through the origination and circulation of diverse and innovative exhibitions for museums and art organizations worldwide.

**113 EAST UNION STREET  
PASADENA CALIFORNIA 91103**

**maurice@curatorial.com  
626-577-9696**

