(NEW YORK, NY – December 18, 2013) — In January 2014, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum presents Carrie Mae Weems: Three Decades of Photography and Video, the first major New York museum retrospective devoted to this socially motivated artist. Weems has long been acclaimed as one of the most eloquent and respected interpreters of African American experiences, and she continues to be an important influence for many young artists today. Featuring more than 120 works—primarily photographs, but also texts, videos, and an audio recording—as well as a range of related educational programs, this comprehensive survey offers an opportunity to experience the full breadth of the artist’s oeuvre and gain new insight into her practice.

Carrie Mae Weems: Three Decades of Photography and Video is organized by the Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville, Tennessee. The exhibition has been curated by Kathryn Delmez, the Frist Center, where it opened in September 2012. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum presentation is organized by Jennifer Blessing, Senior Curator, Photography, with Susan Thompson, Assistant Curator. This exhibition is supported in part by The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation. The Leadership Committee for Carrie Mae Weems: Three Decades of Photography and Video is also gratefully acknowledged for its support, including Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder, Robert Menschel Vital Projects, and Jack Shainman Gallery, as well as Henry Buhl, Crystal R. McCrary and Raymond J. McGuire, Beth Rudin DeWoody, Toby Devan Lewis, and Louise and Gerald W. Puscher. Additional funding is provided by the William Talbott Hillman Foundation and the New York State Council on the Arts.

The work of Carrie Mae Weems (b. 1953, Portland, Oregon) invites contemplation of issues surrounding race, gender, and class inequality. Over the past thirty years, Weems has used her art to
bring to light the ignored or erased experiences of marginalized people. Her work proposes a multidimensional picture of history and humanity, intended to spur greater cultural awareness and compassion. Although her subjects are often African American, Weems wants “people of color to stand for the human multitudes” and for her art to resonate with audiences of all backgrounds.

Organized in a loosely chronological order throughout two of the museum’s Annex Levels, the exhibition begins on Level 2 with the series Family Pictures and Stories (1978–84). This series, like many of Weems’s early works, explores matters relating to contemporary black identity, highlighting individuals in social contexts—including in this case her own kin. Her landmark Kitchen Table Series (1990) employs text and photography to explore the range of women’s roles within a community, pointedly situating the photographs’ subject within a domestic setting. Selections from Weems’s Sea Islands Series (1991–92), Africa (1993), and Slave Coast (1993) demonstrate her ongoing interest in language and storytelling. These works, made during the artist’s travels to the titular locales, pair images with evocative vernacular texts or etymological investigations that trace English words to African roots. The artist’s practice emphasizes the role of both spoken and written narrative, reflecting her graduate studies in folklore.

Weems often appropriates words and images, re-presenting them to viewers as biting reminders of the persistence of bigoted attitudes in the United States. Her renowned series From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried (1995–96), presented on Annex Level 4, layers new text over found historical imagery to critique and lament prejudiced attitudes toward African Americans throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A yearning to investigate the underlying causes and effects of racism, slavery, and imperialism has spurred Weems to travel widely throughout the United States, Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean. During extended visits to these places, depicted in series such as Dreaming in Cuba (2002), The Louisiana Project (2003), and Roaming (2006), all represented in the exhibition, she looks to the surrounding land and architecture in order to foster communion with inhabitants past and present.

Video is a natural extension of Weems’s narrative photographic practice, also providing an opportunity for the artist to include music in her work. Although she worked in film during her undergraduate years at the California Institute of the Arts, Weems’s first major endeavor in the medium came in 2003–04 with Coming Up for Air, a work comprised of series of poetic vignettes that will be screened in the New Media Theater in the Guggenheim’s Sackler Center for Arts Education. Other video works, including Italian Dreams (2006), Afro Chic (2009), and Constructing History: A Requiem to Mark the Moment (2008) will be integrated into the exhibition near related photographs.

**Exhibition Catalogue**
The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue, published by Yale University Press. The catalogue includes a foreword by Henry Louis Gates Jr., Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and Director, W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research, Harvard University, and scholarly essays by Kathryn Delmez, Curator, Frist Center for the Visual Arts; Franklin Sirmans, Terri and Michael Smooke Curator of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Robert Storr, Dean, Yale University School of Art; and Deborah Willis, Professor of Photography and Imaging, Tisch School for the Arts, New York University. It will be available for $50 at guggenheimstore.org.
Education and Public Programs
A range of public programs will be presented in conjunction with Carrie Mae Weems, with details to be posted at guggenheim.org/publicprograms. Highlights include:

Carrie Mae Weems: Live from the Guggenheim
April 25, 26, 27
Carrie Mae Weems hosts an all-star cast of musicians, artists, activists, writers, and other celebrated guests in a series of museum sessions drawn from the inspirational context of Carrie Mae Weems: Three Decades of Photography and Video. This multidisciplinary performance salon will embody issues of identity, politics, narrative, and history that Weems engages in her work. Tickets and more information will soon be available on guggenheim.org/calendar.

Exhibition Video
January 24–May 14
Mon–Wed, Fri, Sun, 1 pm and 3 pm
Weems’ Coming Up for Air (2003–04) features a series of unrelated yet linked vignettes that examine human relationships, including those between black men and white women in antebellum New Orleans, quarreling sisters hoping for reconciliation, a child and an adored father, and young idealistic lovers (suggestive of Winnie and Nelson Mandela) before a loss of innocence. The film will be screened in the New Media Theater in the museum’s Sackler Center for Arts Education.
Free with museum admission.

Curator’s Eye Tours
Friday, February 7, 2 pm: Jennifer Blessing
Friday, March 14, 2 pm: Susan Thompson
Free with museum admission

About Carrie Mae Weems

Weems has been celebrated with numerous awards and honors, including a Smithsonian Fellowship (1987); Louis Comfort Tiffany Award (1992); National Endowment for the Arts Visual Arts Grant

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The May Ingraham Bunting Award, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA (1995); The Alpert Award for Visual Arts (1996); Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant in Photography (2002); Joseph H. Hazen Rome Prize Fellowship (2005–06); Honorary Degree from Colgate University, Hamilton, NY (2007); Skowhegan Medal for Photography, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, ME (2007); Anonymous Was a Woman Foundation, New York (2007); Honorary Doctorate, Smith College, Northampton, MA (2011); Medal of Arts award from the U. S. State Department (2012); Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Honoree (2013); and National Academician (2013). In addition, Weems was recently awarded a 2013 MacArthur Fellowship by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

About the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation
Founded in 1937, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation is dedicated to promoting the understanding and appreciation of art, primarily of the modern and contemporary periods, through exhibitions, education programs, research initiatives, and publications. The Guggenheim network that began in the 1970s when the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, was joined by the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, has since expanded to include the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, which opened in 1997, and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, currently in development. Looking to the future, the Guggenheim Foundation continues to forge international collaborations that take contemporary art, architecture, and design beyond the walls of the museum. More information about the foundation can be found at guggenheim.org.

VISITOR INFORMATION
Admission: Adults $22, students/seniors (65+) $18, members and children under 12 free. The Guggenheim’s new, free app, available with admission or by download to personal devices, offers an enhanced visitor experience. The app features content on special exhibitions, including Carrie Mae Weems, as well as access to more than 1,300 works in the Guggenheim’s permanent collection and information about the museum’s landmark building. A verbal imaging guide for the collection is available for visitors who are blind or have low vision. The Guggenheim app is sponsored by Bloomberg.

Museum Hours: Sun–Wed, 10 am–5:45 pm; Fri, 10 am–5:45 pm; Sat, 10 am–7:45 pm; closed Thurs. On Saturdays, beginning at 5:45 pm, the museum hosts Pay What You Wish. For general information, call 212 423 3500 or visit the museum online at: guggenheim.org and guggenheim.org/connect.

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#1326
December 18, 2013

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PRESS IMAGES

Carrie Mae Weems: Three Decades of Photography and Video
January 24–May 14, 2014
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

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Carrie Mae Weems
Family Reunion (from Family Pictures and Stories), 1978–84
Gelatin silver print, 30 x 40 inches (76.2 x 101.6 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York
© Carrie Mae Weems

Carrie Mae Weems
Blue Black Boy (from Colored People), 1989–90
Triptych, three toned gelatin silver prints with Prestype and frame, 16 x 48 inches (40.6 x 121.9 cm) overall; images: 16 x 16 inches (40.6 x 40.6 cm) each
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase, with funds from the Photography Committee
© Carrie Mae Weems
Carrie Mae Weems
*Untitled (Man and mirror)* (from *Kitchen Table Series*), 1990
Gelatin silver print, 27 1/4 x 27 1/4 inches (69.2 x 69.2 cm)
Collection of Eric and Liz Lefkofsky, promised gift to The Art Institute of Chicago
© Carrie Mae Weems
Photo: © The Art Institute of Chicago

Carrie Mae Weems
*Untitled (Woman and daughter with makeup)* (from *Kitchen Table Series*), 1990
Gelatin silver print, 27 1/4 x 27 1/4 inches (69.2 x 69.2 cm)
Collection of Eric and Liz Lefkofsky, promised gift to The Art Institute of Chicago
© Carrie Mae Weems
Photo: © The Art Institute of Chicago

Carrie Mae Weems
*Untitled (Box Spring in Tree)* (from *Sea Islands Series*), 1991–92
Gelatin silver print, 20 x 20 inches (50.8 x 50.8)
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, gift of Carrie Mae Weems and P.P.O.W.
© Carrie Mae Weems
Photo: Robert Gerhardt

Carrie Mae Weems
*An Anthropological Debate* (from *From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried*), 1995–96
Chromogenic print with etched text on glass, 26 1/2 x 22 3/4 inches (67.3 x 57.8 cm)
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Carrie Mae Weems

*Listening for the Sounds of Revolution (from Dreaming in Cuba)*, 2002
Gelatin silver print, 28 1/2 x 28 1/2 inches (72.4 x 72.4 cm)
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York
© Carrie Mae Weems

Carrie Mae Weems

*A Broad and Expansive Sky—Ancient Rome (from Roaming)*, 2006
Chromogenic print, 73 x 61 inches (185.4 x 154.9 cm)
Private collection, Portland, Oregon
© Carrie Mae Weems

Carrie Mae Weems

*Untitled (Colored People Grid)*, 2009–10
11 pigment ink prints and 31 colored clay papers, dimensions variable overall; individual components: 10 x 10 inches (25.4 x 25.4 cm) each
Collection of Rodney M. Miller
© Carrie Mae Weems

Carrie Mae Weems

*Afro-Chic*, 2010
Digital color video, with sound, 5 min., 30 sec.
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York
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