



HIGH MUSEUM OF ART ATLANTA

1280 PEACHTREE STREET, N.E. • ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30309

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**HIGH MUSEUM OF ART PRESENTS FIRST MUSEUM SURVEY  
FOR DEANA LAWSON**

**ATLANTA, Oct. 6, 2022** — This fall, the High Museum of Art presents the first museum survey dedicated to Deana Lawson, who is known for investigating and challenging conventional representations of Black identities and bodies through her photographs. Co-organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art / Boston and MoMA PS1, “Deana Lawson” (Oct. 7, 2022-Feb. 19, 2023) features nearly 60 works made over the past two decades that evoke a range of histories and photographic styles, including family albums, studio portraiture and staged tableaux, and employ documentary pictures and appropriated images.

“Lawson’s works, which are complex not only in their composition but also in the emotions they evoke, challenge us to think critically about Black representation and confront our perceptions of Black identity,” said Rand Suffolk, Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr., director of the High. “Her photographs open important dialogues, and we look forward to bringing them to Atlanta and sharing them with our audience.”

In Lawson’s highly staged tableaux, individuals, couples and families are pictured in intimate domestic spaces and public settings. As they depict these intimate scenes, they also channel broader ideas about individual and social histories, sexuality and spiritual beliefs. Lawson’s practice is global in scope, as she creates her images throughout the African diaspora in locations as varied as Brooklyn, Haiti, Jamaica, Ethiopia, Brazil, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Southern United States. This broad geographical range points to the artist’s interest in a collective memory of shared experiences and various cultural histories of the past.

Lawson also uses photography to challenge assumptions about the facts the medium purports to deliver. She carefully composes each scene but does not always disclose details about how she has created them, or even where the photographs were taken. In some cases, she works with found images that depict people she does not know. Her tableaux tend to be composed of people she encounters on her travels rather than family, friends or acquaintances. Despite what certain pictures may suggest, some of the artist’s subjects may not have met before the shoot.

“Lawson is a singular voice in contemporary photography who causes us to question our assumptions about the medium’s relationship to the real,” said Gregory Harris, the High’s Donald and Marilyn Keough Family curator of photography. “Though her photographs appear to be drawn from the happenstance of everyday life, they are rigorously orchestrated portals to a world of Deana’s creation that nevertheless offers deep insight into the lived experience of people across the diaspora.”

The exhibition is arranged chronologically according to when the photographs were created, with themes of familial bonds, the female figure and the allure of popular media images recurring throughout.

“Deana Lawson” is presented in the Lucinda Weil Bunn Photography Galleries and adjacent galleries on the lower level of the High’s Wieland Pavilion.

### **Related Programs**

#### [Inquiring Minds: Deana Lawson](#)

Tuesday, Oct. 25, 2022

1 to 2:30 p.m.

Members: \$14; Not-Yet-Members: \$18

Registration required

Curious about Deana Lawson? Inquiring Minds invites participants to explore the exhibition through small group conversation. How does Lawson engage with her subjects in her constructed scenes? What recurring themes can we see in her works? What narratives does she create in her photographs? During this program, we will explore these questions and more through close looking and group discussion. Come as you are and share your observations and opinions. Inquiring Minds meets in the Taylor Lobby of the Wieland Pavilion.

#### [As They Appear to Be: Constructing Images Through Photography](#)

Wednesdays, Oct. 26-Dec. 7, 2022 (Virtual Program)

10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Members: \$200; Not-Yet-Members: \$250

Registration required

Offered in tandem with [“Deana Lawson,”](#) this online photography class will prompt participants to construct distinctive smartphone photographs that speak to notions of identity, representation and human relationships. Led by Nydia Blas, the class will explore the opportunities and technical possibilities inherent in using smartphone cameras and the ways we can fashion images that convey information—true or untrue—about ourselves and others.

#### [Conversation Pieces \(Virtual Event\)](#)

Tuesday, Nov. 15, 2022

Noon to 12:30 p.m.

Members: Free; Not-Yet-Members: \$16.50

Registration required

Join professional museum educators in looking closely at an artwork in the Museum’s collection: one work, 30 minutes, deep conversations and discoveries. All curious and eager learners are welcome! At this month’s event, you’ll explore Deana Lawson’s photograph “Nation” (2018).

#### [Talkback with Counter Narrative \(at Friday Jazz\)](#)

Friday, Nov. 18, 2022

Members: Free; Not-Yet-Members: \$25 (including admission to Friday Jazz)

Join an in-gallery talkback focusing on themes found in the exhibition [“Deana Lawson”](#) during the High’s Friday Jazz event. Charles Stephens, founder and executive director of the Counter

Narrative Project, will lead these discussions alongside Maria L. Kelly, assistant curator of photography at the High.

### [Talkback with Counter Narrative \(at HIGH Frequency Friday\)](#)

Friday, Dec. 2, 2022

Members: Free; Not-Yet-Members: \$25 (including admission HIGH Frequency Friday)

Join an in-gallery talkback focusing on themes found in the exhibition [“Deana Lawson”](#) during the High’s HIGH Frequency Friday event. Charles Stephens, founder and executive director of the Counter Narrative Project, will lead these discussions alongside Maria L. Kelly, assistant curator of photography at the High.

### [Photography Now: Eva Respini and Deb Willis on Deana Lawson](#)

Friday, Feb. 10, 2023

Members: Free; Not-Yet-Members: \$20

Join us in the new year to learn more about [“Deana Lawson,”](#) the first museum survey dedicated to Lawson and featuring her work made over the past two decades. Hear from Eva Respini, exhibition curator and deputy director for curatorial affairs and Barbara Lee chief curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston. She will be joined by professor and chair of the Department of Photography and Imaging at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, Deborah Willis. Their conversation will explore Lawson’s work in the exhibition.

### **About Deana Lawson**

Deana Lawson (American, born 1979) lives and works in New York and Los Angeles. She received her B.F.A. from Pennsylvania State University (2001) and her M.F.A. from the Rhode Island School of Design (2004). She is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship (2013), an Aaron Siskind Foundation Fellowship Grant (2008-2009), and a New York Foundation for the Arts Grant (2006), among others. In 2020, she was selected for the Hugo Boss Prize, the first photographer to receive the award in recognition of achievement in contemporary art. She is also the inaugural Dorothy Krauklis ’78 Professor of Visual Arts at Princeton University’s Lewis Center for the Arts.

### **Exhibition Catalogue**

The exhibition is accompanied by the first scholarly publication on the artist, surveying 15 years of her photography. Featuring the voices and perspectives of a variety of scholars, historians and writers, the catalogue includes essays by exhibition curators Peter Eleey and Eva Respini, Kimberly Juanita Brown, Tina M. Campt, Alexander Nemerov and Greg Tate, and a conversation between the artist and Deborah Willis.

### **Exhibition Organization and Support**

“Deana Lawson” is co-organized by ICA/Boston and MoMA PS1. This exhibition is organized by Eva Respini (Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs and Barbara Lee Chief Curator, ICA/Boston) and Peter Eleey (Curator-at-Large, UCCA Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing and Shanghai) with Anni Pullagura (Curatorial Assistant, ICA/Boston). Major support for “Deana Lawson” is provided by the Henry Luce Foundation and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.



The presentation at the High Museum of Art is made possible by Premier Exhibition Series Sponsor Delta Air Lines, Inc.; Premier Exhibition Series Supporters ACT Foundation, Inc., Sarah and Jim Kennedy, Louise Sams and Jerome Grilhot, Harry Norman Realtors, and wish foundation; Benefactor Exhibition Series Supporters Robin and Hilton Howell; Ambassador Exhibition Series Supporters The Antinori Foundation, Corporate Environments, the Arthur R. and Ruth D. Lautz Charitable Foundation, and Elizabeth and Chris Willett; and Contributing Exhibition Series Supporters Farideh and Al Azadi, Sandra and Dan Baldwin, Lucinda W. Bunnan, Marcia and John Donnell, Mrs. Peggy Foreman, Helen C. Griffith, Mrs. Fay S. Howell/The Howell Fund, Mr. and Mrs. Baxter Jones, Joel Knox and Joan Marmo, Dr. Joe B. Massey, Margot and Danny McCaul, the Ron and Lisa Brill Family Charitable Trust, Wade Rakes and Nicholas Miller, the Fred and Rita Richman Fund, In Memory of Elizabeth B. Stephens, USI Insurance Services, and Mrs. Harriet H. Warren. Generous support is also provided by the Alfred and Adele Davis Exhibition Endowment Fund, Anne Cox Chambers Exhibition Fund, Barbara Stewart Exhibition Fund, Dorothy Smith Hopkins Exhibition Endowment Fund, Eleanor McDonald Storza Exhibition Endowment Fund, The Fay and Barrett Howell Exhibition Fund, Forward Arts Foundation Exhibition Endowment Fund, Helen S. Lanier Endowment Fund, Isobel Anne Fraser–Nancy Fraser Parker Exhibition Endowment Fund, John H. and Wilhelmina D. Harland Exhibition Endowment Fund, Katherine Murphy Riley Special Exhibition Endowment Fund, Margaretta Taylor Exhibition Fund, and the RJR Nabisco Exhibition Endowment Fund.

### **About the High Museum of Art**

Located in the heart of Atlanta, the High Museum of Art connects with audiences from across the Southeast and around the world through its distinguished collection, dynamic schedule of special exhibitions and engaging community-focused programs. Housed within facilities designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architects Richard Meier and Renzo Piano, the High features a collection of more than 18,000 works of art, including an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American fine and decorative arts; major holdings of photography and folk and self-taught work, especially that of artists from the American South; burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, including paintings, sculpture, new media and design; a growing collection of African art, with work dating from prehistory through the present; and significant holdings of European paintings and works on paper. The High is dedicated to reflecting the diversity of its communities and offering a variety of exhibitions and educational programs that engage visitors with the world of art, the lives of artists and the creative process. For more information about the High, visit [www.high.org](http://www.high.org).

###

**DIGITAL IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

**Media contact:**

Marci Davis  
Manager of Public Relations  
404-733-4585  
[marci.davis@high.org](mailto:marci.davis@high.org)