

# FRÆNKEL

49 GEARY STREET SAN FRANCISCO 94108 415 981 2661

For immediate release:



## CARRIE MAE WEEMS

Jan. 9 – Feb. 22, 2025

Fraenkel Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition by Carrie Mae Weems featuring new work as well as highlights from several key series in the artist's four-decade career. The exhibition continues Weems's long exploration of questions about power, history, and identity. Two new photographs from Weems's ongoing *Museum Series* depicting San Francisco's Legion of Honor will be on view for the first time, shown with other selections from the project. Large-scale photographs from *Painting the Town* present boarded-up storefronts in Portland, Oregon following protests against the murder of George Floyd. Other works reference earlier moments in the struggle for racial justice, including scenes from Civil Rights protests in the 1960s. Weems will speak at FOG: Design+Art on Saturday, January 25, at 5pm, followed by a conversation with San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Director Christopher Bedford.

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For nearly 20 years, Weems's *Museum Series* has pictured the artist standing before influential art institutions around the world. Dressed in black with her back to the camera, in these black and white photographs Weems stands as a witness, inviting questions about how power is inscribed in the architecture of the buildings and embodied by the institutions. Debuting in this exhibition are two new images, created in the fall of 2024, where Weems photographed herself in the iconic courtyard of the Legion of Honor. In one photograph, she confronts its monumental Rodin sculpture *The Thinker*. In the other, Weems walks through a marble portico, framed by columns and shadows. Other works depict the Guggenheim Bilbao, the Louvre, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Themes of silence, erasure, and exclusion recur throughout several of the series on view, highlighting the power struggles of race relations in America. The large-scale color photographs in *Painting the Town* record swathes of paint used by local authorities to cover up anti-racist graffiti in Portland, Oregon, the city where Weems was born. The drab expanses of paint serve to mute the voices of protesters, while the resulting images resemble paintings by Abstract Expressionists, recalling the erasure of Black artists from the history of modernist art movements. Weems's 2014 series *Listening Devices* also explores questions about voicelessness. In it, twelve photogravure prints depict old-fashioned tools for conveying sound, from tin cans connected with a string to vintage telephones. Shown as isolated instruments, the objects suggest a failure of communication, demanding the human participation that real listening requires.

Other works depict protest and the struggle for racial justice. In the two-channel video *Cornered*, historical footage from Boston in 1965 shows angry marchers for and against desegregation. Accompanied only by the sound of Samuel Barber's mournful *Adagio for Strings*, men in each group gesture and move towards each other but never meet, in an eternal confrontation spatialized by the walls of the gallery. In *Blues and Pinks*, Weems repurposes archival photographs by Charles Moore from the 1963 Children's Crusade in Birmingham, Alabama, and images from the funerals of Medgar Evers and Martin Luther King Jr. In the multipanel works, hung askew on the wall, images are tinted blue and pink in a tender reference to the children they depict. *All the Boys (Profile 2)* presents a blurred, dark blue image of a young Black man in a hoodie, shown from the front and the side. Ghostlike, the diptych suggests a mugshot and transforms the subject from an individual into the hazy outline of a person, referencing the history of police brutality against Black people.

Carrie Mae Weems's recent solo exhibitions include *Remember to Dream* at the Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-On-Hudson, New York; *Looking Forward, Looking Back* at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; *Reflections for Now*, at the Barbican Centre, London; and *The Shape of Things*, at the Park Avenue Armory in New York and LUMA, Arles, France. *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* was organized by Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart, in Germany and a version of the exhibition traveled to Kunstmuseum Basel in Switzerland. Weems was featured in the two-person exhibition *Dawoud Bey & Carrie Mae Weems: In Dialogue*, which premiered at the Grand Rapids Art Museum, Michigan and traveled to the Tampa Museum of Art, Florida; Seattle Art Museum; and The Getty Center, Los Angeles. Fundación MAPFRE in collaboration with Fundación Foto Colectania and WKV organized the survey *A great turn in the possible*.

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Weems has received numerous awards, grants, and fellowships, including most recently a 2024 National Medal of Arts, a Hasselblad Award, a MacArthur “Genius” grant, the Joseph Hazen Rome Prize Fellowship from the American Academy in Rome, NEA grants, the Louis Comfort Tiffany Award, and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation’s Lifetime Achievement Award, among others. Her work is in the collections of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Tate Modern, London, and many others.



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Images from top: Carrie Mae Weems, *Painting the Town #1*, 2021  
Carrie Mae Weems, *The Legion of Honor*, 2006-present  
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