

# Deana Lawson



Deana Lawson, *Oafth*, 2013. Inkjet print mounted on Sintra, 40 x 50 inches.  
Courtesy the artist and Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago.

Deana Lawson explores and challenges conventional and stereotypical representations of the black body. She engages a range of photographic strategies to craft a multifaceted vision reflecting what she has described as a “knowledge of selfhood through a corporeal dimension.”

Lawson’s large-format photographs are highly staged and often made in collaboration with her subjects. These individuals are frequently strangers she meets in such everyday places as grocery stores, the New York City subway, and on the street. The resulting images, in both domestic and public settings, depict the sitters alone, in couples, and as families. The environments and the belongings they contain portray a diverse array of people living very different lives, and present multiple ideas of kinship, ritual, identity, and desire. Lawson’s tableaux are not only intimate, but they also destabilize the notion of a passively voyeuristic relationship to photography itself.

Lawson also collects found photographs, and at times she selects an appropriated image from her archive to enlarge and recast alongside her own original compositions. Photographic appropriation informs

Lawson’s eye and her overall relationship to photography, with these portraits inviting careful attention to such visual cues as pose and setting.

For the last several years, Lawson has chosen to photograph in sites specific to the African diaspora by shooting in locations as varied as Haiti, Jamaica, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Brooklyn, and the American Deep South. This exhibition includes works from her recent time spent in Alabama, as well as other photographs made on location around the world. Lawson’s meticulously composed images from these travels blur boundaries of time and place, and fact and fiction, imbuing her subjects and settings with a near-mythical power.



## Audio Tour

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**Deana Lawson** (b. 1979, Rochester, NY; lives and works in Brooklyn) has been selected for the 2017 Whitney Biennial. Recent exhibitions include *Deana Lawson* at the Art Institute of Chicago (2015), Greater New York, MoMA P.S.1 (2015, 2010), *tête-à-tête* at Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Brussels, Belgium (2015), and *City Limit* at the Journal Gallery, Brooklyn (2015). Her work has also been exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and the Studio Museum in Harlem. Lawson is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship (2013), Aaron Siskind Fellowship Grant (2008–09), and a New York Foundation for the Arts Grant (2006), among others. Lawson received her BFA from Pennsylvania State University (2001) and MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design (2004). She is currently an Assistant Professor of Photography at Princeton University.

This exhibition is generously supported by Bernard I. Lumpkin and Carmine D. Boccuzzi, and Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago.

*Deana Lawson* is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by guest curator Kelly Shindler.



Deana Lawson, *Cortez*, 2016. Inkjet print mounted on Sintra, 35 × 45 inches. Courtesy the artist and Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago.

## Related Programs

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### Artist Talk: Deana Lawson

Saturday, January 28, 11:00 am

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### Perspective: Artist on Artist

Thursday, February 2, 6:00 pm

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### Conversation with the Curator

Thursday, March 9, 6:00 pm

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### Contemporary Class: The Collaborative Portrait

Thursday, March 16, 6:00 pm

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“The direct gaze for me is definitely an expression of confidence ... confidence to say: ‘I know you’re photographing me and I’m also engaging in this collaboration with you.’ It’s one of power, actually, too. The power to say: ‘Yes, I am halfway in clothes; I have on a bra and some stockings; my stockings have a run. And I have a do-rag on my head. I look beautiful. Look at me.’”  
—Deana Lawson



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