

Laurie Simmons: Two Boys and the Love Doll

The first Midwestern solo museum exhibition of American photographer Laurie Simmons (b. 1949, Long Island, New York), *Two Boys and the Love Doll* features two recent bodies of work that use male CPR dummies and female love dolls as their subject. Simmons emerged in the mid-1970s as a member of the Pictures Generation, a group of photographers who appropriated mass media and commercial advertising to respond to America's political and cultural shifts. Throughout her career, Simmons has photographed a variety of dolls—from ventriloquist dummies to figurines—as a strategy to examine issues of gender, feminism, and domesticity.

For *The Love Doll* series (2009–11), Simmons documented a customized life-size, latex love doll in a variety of staged scenarios. Each photograph is chronologically and descriptively titled, beginning with *Day 1 (New in Box)*. Simmons personifies the doll by reconsidering her as an everyday woman engaging in ordinary activities. Although the majority of the portraits represent the model clothed, *Day 29 (Nude with Dog)* presents the doll entirely naked, confronting the viewer with her essential nature as an erotically charged object. Critically examining themes of femininity and sexuality, Simmons's characterization of the inanimate body also explores the very human sensation of loneliness and ennui.

Two Boys (2013), a corpus of large-scale photographs, visually interprets the true story of a catastrophic Internet relationship between two adolescent boys that ultimately ends in murder. This series was originally created in dialogue with American composer Nico Muhly's (b. 1981) eponymous work for the Metropolitan Opera and invites the viewer into a chilling space of unreality and disillusion. Simmons's photographs feature two slack-jawed CPR dummies wearing hooded sweatshirts and facing computer screens with closed



The Love Doll/Day 29 (Nude with Dog), 2011. Pigment print, 70 × 47 inches. Courtesy the artist and Salon 94, New York.



Audio Tour

Download the CAM app at camstl.org/app or ask for an iPod at the front desk to hear directly from the curator and artist on the audio tour.



Boy // Silver Desk/Three-Quarter View, 2013. Pigment print, 59 1/2 x 89 3/4 inches.
Courtesy the artist and Salon 94, New York.

eyes. The scenes are both haunting and frustratingly inanimate, denying us any semblance of human connection.

In both series of photographs, Simmons asserts the doll as neither a solution for loneliness nor a replacement for bodily contact; instead her work offers a complex look into our current lack of real world connectivity.

Laurie Simmons (b. 1949, Long Island, New York) is a multidisciplinary artist living and working in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include *Kigurumi, Dollers and How We See* at Salon 94, New York, and *Two Boys* at Gallery Met, Metropolitan Opera, New York (2013). Major retrospectives of her work include *The Fabulous World of Laurie Simmons* at the Neues Museum, Nuremberg, Germany (2014); *Laurie Simmons* at the Gothenburg Museum of Art, Gothenburg, Sweden (2012); and an exhibition at the Baltimore Museum of Art (1997).

This exhibition is generously supported by Salon 94, New York.

Laurie Simmons: Two Boys and the Love Doll is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Jeffrey Uslip, Chief Curator.

Related Programs

Artist Talk

Friday, May 29, 7:00 pm

Breakfast with the Curators

Friday, June 12, 8:30 am

Open to all membership levels. Complimentary coffee and crepes. Register at camstl.org/breakfast.

Member Book Club: 33 Artists in 3 Acts

Sunday, July 26, 10:30 am



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