

DEANA LAWSON

April 21 – May 26, 2017

Opening reception:

Friday, April 21, 2017

5 – 7:30 pm



Deana Lawson, *Ring Bearer*, 2016

Rhona Hoffman Gallery is very pleased to present New York-based photographer Deana Lawson's second solo exhibition. Deana Lawson carefully orchestrates and captures domestic portraiture that is richly detailed, intimate, and communicates a sincere love for the black body and interpersonal relationships. Raw, imperfect settings like a chaotic apartment with torn furniture and roughly covered windows, drawn into precise focus with Deana Lawson's large format camera, provide a stage for the subjects, who are strangers or recent acquaintances Deana Lawson is drawn to photograph. Each work paints a rich narrative of humanity, selfhood, and relationships; taken together, Deana Lawson's oeuvre provides a singular, collective portrait of the African diaspora and African-American identity. Musician and critic Greg Tate recently wrote, "Drawing the spectator's eye to how people command space within the frame, how they proclaim ownership of selfhood before the camera is a recurring motif. Her work seems always about the desire to represent social intimacies that defy stereotype and pathology while subtly acknowledging the vitality of lives abandoned by the dominant social order."

Deana Lawson's new works, also on view in the 2017 Whitney Biennial, deepen her exploration of male and female strength, sexuality, and familial dynamics. After photographing in the Caribbean, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lawson returned to the American landscape, picturing the black body in Alabama, Los Angeles, and Rochester, NY. Her photographs subvert simple categorization and dominant cultural stereotypes. In *Sons of Cush*, 2017, the tough appearance of a heavily muscled, tattooed man is countered by his soft, charming eyes and protective embrace of a lovingly-dressed infant. In *Nicole*, a nude woman crouches on a rug like a tigress; juxtaposing her fiercely confrontational and seductive gaze is the pink and purple children's playhouse positioned directly behind her. Deana Lawson plans each thoughtful detail in her compositions, yet she allows space for the workings of chance, humanity, and the magic of photography.

Deana Lawson is currently featured in the 2017 Whitney Biennial; in 2015 Lawson's solo exhibition inaugurated the Art Institute of Chicago's Rutenbergl Contemporary Photography Series; and she recently had a solo exhibition at the Contemporary Art Museum-St. Louis. Group exhibitions include the Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Studio Museum, Harlem; MoMA P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center; Artists Space, New York; and the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Atlanta. Her work has been published in *The New Yorker*, *TIME Magazine*, *BOMB*, *The Collector's Guide to New Art Photography*, *Photo District News*, *Time Out New York*, *Contact Sheet #154*, and *PQ Journal for Contemporary*

Photography. Lawson is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, the John Gutmann Photography Fellowship, a Rema Hort Mann Foundation Grant, an Aaron Siskind Fellowship Grant, and a New York Foundation for the Arts Grant. Deana has participated in the Workspace residency at the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, the Light Work residency in Syracuse, and the Visual Studies Workshop residency in Rochester, New York.