

POSING BEAUTY

IN AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURE

TOURED BY CURATORIAL ASSISTANCE TRAVELING EXHIBITIONS

Willis makes a monumental contribution to contemporary American culture by presenting a definitive history of black beauty. — The New York Times

NUMBER OF WORKS

83 photographs

1 video

FRAME SIZES

Various

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

350 linear feet (108 linear meters)

SUPPORT MATERIALS

Publication (W.W. Norton, 2009)

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Front page:

Susan Taylor, as Model,

Ken Ramsay, c.1970s

Curated by Deborah Willis, Ph.D.

Posing Beauty in African American Culture explores the contested ways in which African and African American beauty have been represented in historical and contemporary contexts through a diverse range of media including photography, film, video, fashion, advertising, and other forms of popular culture such as music and the Internet. Throughout the Western history of art and image-making, the relationship between beauty and art has become increasingly complex within contemporary art and popular culture.

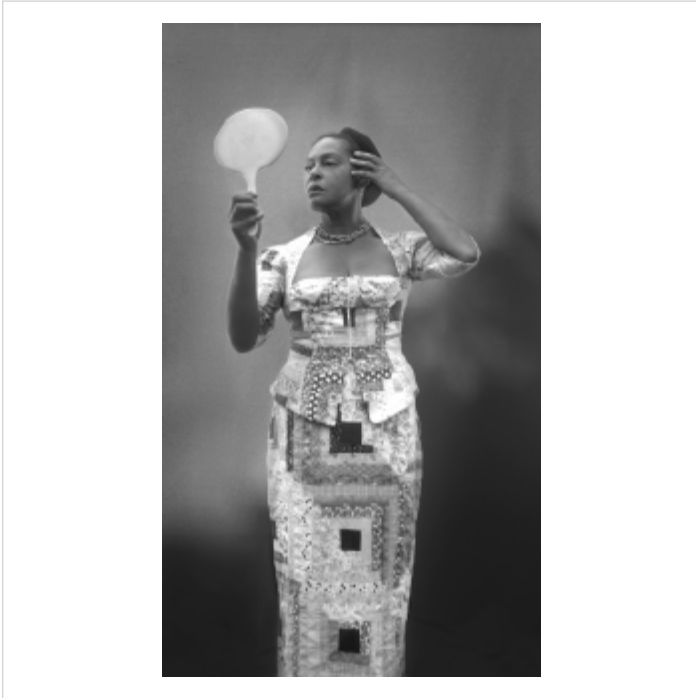
The first of three thematic sections, “Constructing a Pose,” considers the interplay between the historical and the contemporary, between self-representation and imposed representation, and the relationship between subject and photographer. The second theme, “Body and Image,” questions the ways in which our contemporary understanding of beauty has been constructed and framed through the body. The last section, “Modeling Beauty & Beauty Contests,” invites us to reflect upon the ambiguities of beauty, its impact on mass culture and individuals, and how the display of beauty affects the ways in which we see and interpret the world and ourselves.

Artists in the exhibit include, among others, Carrie Mae Weems, Charles “Teenie” Harris, Eve Arnold, Gary Winogrand, Sheila Pree Bright, Leonard Freed, Renee Cox, Anthony Barboza, Bruce Davidson, Mickalene Thomas, and Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe.

Posing Beauty in African American Culture challenges contemporary understandings of beauty by framing notions of aesthetics, race, class, and gender within art, popular culture, and politics.

Posing Beauty in African American Culture

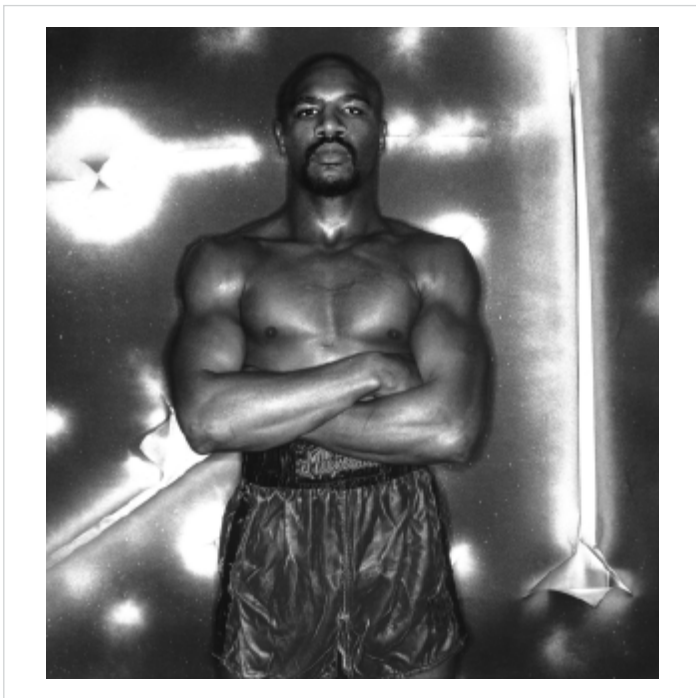
**CURATORIAL
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I Looked and Looked to See What so Terrified You,
Carrie Mae Weems, 2006



Toukie Smith, Model, New York City, Anthony Barboza, c.1970s



Marvin Hagler, Middle Weight Boxing Champion,
New York City, Anthony Barboza 1980



Tecolia Salters, West Atco, NJ, Wendel White, 2009

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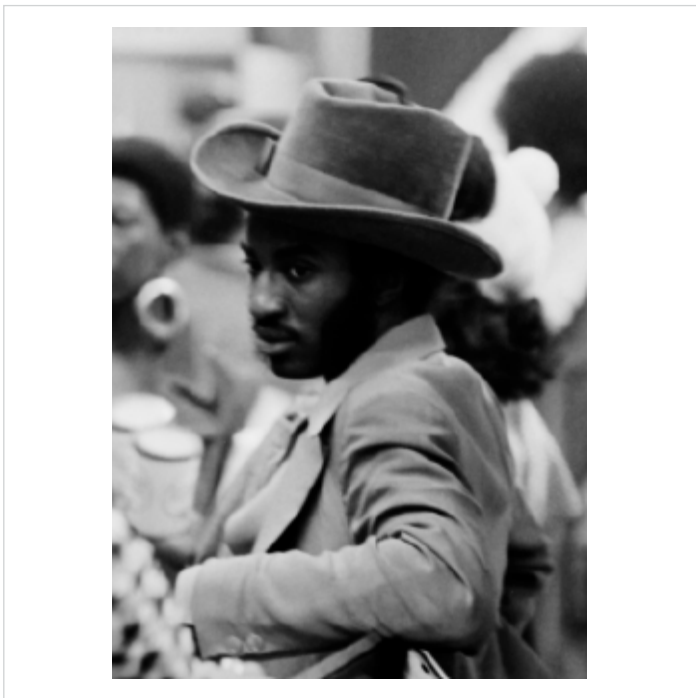
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Isaac Hayes in His Office at Stax Records, Memphis, Tennessee, Ernest C. Withers, November 1970s



Young Man in Plaid, New York City, Jeffrey Henson Scales, 1992



#4 from Brothers from the Hood, Robert Sengstacke, c.1970s



Harlem Fashion Show, Harlem, Leonard Freed, 1963



From the *Plastic Bodies* series, Sheila Pree Bright, 2005



The Teenth of June, pt. 1, lauren woods, 2006

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Dixie Belles, Central Louisiana, Theodore Forville Winans, 1938



Harlem Fashion Show, Harlem, Leonard Freed, 1963



Washington Square, New York City, Dave Heath, 1960



Pregnant Woman on Grass in Vacant Lot, New York (from East 100th Street), Bruce Davidson, 1966



Atlantic City, Four Women, John W. Mosley, c.1960s



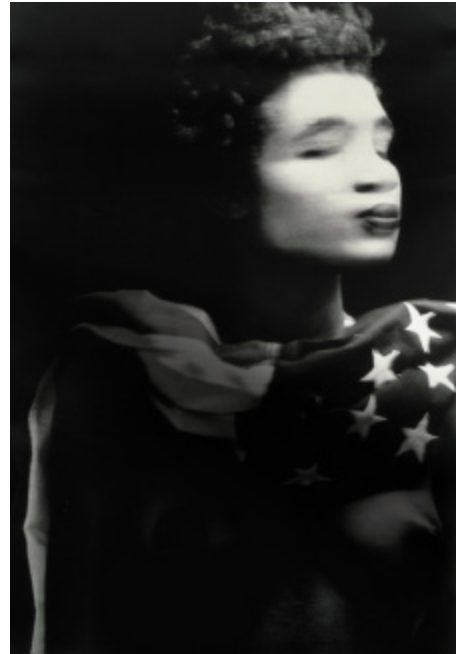
Couples, from the *Harlem* series, Anthony Barboza, c.1970s

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Model Charlotte Stribling aka "Fabulous" Modeling Clothes Designed and Made in Harlem, the Abyssinian Church, New York City, Eve Arnold, 1950



Miss America, Lyle Ashton Harris 1987-88



A Desert Queen, Edward Curtis ,1898



Mary Louise Harris on Mulford Street, Homewood, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Charles "Teenie" Harris, c.1930

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Charles "Teenie" Harris and Another Man, on Sidewalk in Front of Harris Studio on Centre Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA, Charles "Teenie" Harris, c.1935-1945



Sam Codner and His Stutz, Oakland, Unknown, 1920



Street Photographer, New York, Russell Lee, 1935-36



New Car, South Richmond, Virginia, Robert H. McNeill, 1938



Fez and Dreds, African American Parade, Harlem,
Lewis Watts, 2007



Denzel Washington, Los Angeles, Jeffrey Henson Scales, 1990s



Rude Boy from Back in the Days, Jamel Shabazz, 1980



Prom Night—Hi De Ho Man, from the *Pomp & Circumstance: First Time to be Adults* series, Bayeté Ross Smith, 2006



Karisse, London, Lola Flash, 2003



Ray Charles, Lee Friedlander, 1959

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Pickin', Lauren Kelley, 2007



Chillin' with Liberty, Renee Cox, 1998



Drama and Flava from Back in the Days, Jamel Shabazz, 2000



Self-Portrait as Pam Grier, from the *American Exotic* series, Ifetayo Abdus-Salam, 2005



Baby Back, from *American Family*, Renee Cox, 2001

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