CCS BARD ARCHIVES

Speakers Series : Lorna Simpson
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00:00:00:00 **ANDREW BLACKLEY:** Hi guys. Okay. Full house. Thanks for all being here. I'm going to spend a minute to kind of introduce Lorna, but to kind of situate what we've done today, which is, this is the second part of a two-part project. And so— Oops, sorry. Sneak peek. Sorry. Alright. So it is a great pleasure and honor to have Lorna with us today at CCS, and thank you for being here, Lorna. And thanks for my colleagues, Lauren Cornell, Amanda Bard, and Marcia, for your support today. What I want to do is kind of situate kind of where we are as part of the Speaker Series, introduce Lorna generally, but also describe a little bit of detail about an event that happened earlier today.

00:00:50:10 Which is, we spent time in the CCS Collection Teaching Gallery, in discussion with Lorna on the seven works of hers at the collection here. And you know, I worked with a number of students the past couple weeks and invited other CCS students to ask questions on general themes in Lorna's practice, but also to ask direct questions on specific works, to study with artworks and with artists. So in advance of the workshop today, we spent about five weeks reading a range of voices from Trey Ellis to Coco Fusco to Saidiya Hartman to Huey Copeland, Frank [inaudible] and Thomas Wax, as well as interviews with Lorna Simpson conducted by Heidi Zuckerman, and Glenn Ligon. Our earliest reading, though, and something that kind of stood as an orientation for us, was reading Allan Sekula's 1986 *The Body and the Archive*. In that essay, which was lengthy and we spent a lot of time on it, Sekula presents the history of the invention and the implementation of photography as a technological and social practice that rose alongside the modern development and articulation of things such as race, ableism, criminality, truth, objectivity, gender, normality, et cetera.

00:02:24:17 And you know, Huey Copeland has written, "Lorna's work has worked to simultaneously register and undo a lot of those procedures by turning photographic history against itself." We look forward to learning more about that tonight. So thanks for your generosity this afternoon. Also, we're spending a lot of time kind of familiarizing ourselves with a certain strand of interpretation, but to also do some unlearning in that process with you is really great, helpful. But of course, a collection research workshop requires a collection. So the Marieluise Hessel, like I said, has seven works of Lorna's, five larger works and two multiples. And I kind of wanted to mention that the inaugural exhibition of this institution, which was 1992's Passions and Cultures, featured a work of Lorna's from 1990 called *Time Piece (Time Piece 1)*. And you know, that work actually was shown again in 2016 in Invisible Adversaries, co-curated by Lauren Cornell and Tom Eccles, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Hessel Museum. At least five other exhibitions have featured Lorna's work here at CCS and the Hessel. And so Lorna's most known for her photography and photo-text works, photo-text works being combinations of photographic images with text, inlaid plaques, or other displays of language. But it's also works sculpturally, both multiply and unique, and in collage, drawing, painting, and film. And it's a great resource that this collection contains numerous works in many of those media.

00:04:23:10 Stepping back a little bit from today and this collection, Lorna Simpson received a bachelor's from the School of Visual Arts in New York City, and then went on to study graduate MFA at UCSD, University of California at San Diego. And from graduate school, [inaudible] might think of her exposure and influence, being influenced by or with Eleanor and David Antin, Allan Kaprow, and filmmaker Jean-Pierre Gorin, on at least your earliest work, if not continuing

forward. Given that CCS is a graduate program situated within Bard College, I wanted to pull this quote that I recently read that Jill Dawsey wrote in an essay in a recent book called *The Uses of Photography: Art, Politics, and the Reinvention of a Medium,* which studied the kind of coterie of UCSD and influence on multiple generations. Jill Dawsey wrote, speaking now, "Indeed, writing in her MFA thesis, Simpson makes clear that documentary was the framework with which she was still contending." Quoting Lorna Simpson, "I reduce the amount of information that appears in documentary photographs to a single anonymous individual who assumes one pose in an otherwise empty frame." Back to Jill Dawsey, "In this light, we might see Simpson's refusal to picture the face as a strategy that interferes with easy acts of identification or empathy on the part of the viewer. And given photography's questionable relationship to realism, her project suggests that even photography is a kind of reenactment, a re-presentation of the real."

00:06:16:13 In the decades since her graduate studies, Simpson has become recognized as one of the most influential and esteemed artists of her generation, with at least fifty-eight solo exhibitions and hundreds of group exhibitions listed on her CV. Simpson's work has been included in some of the most esteemed exhibitions and institutions internationally. In 1990, Simpson was the first African American woman to exhibit at the Venice Biennale. She was also included in the later edition of the Biennale, the 56th, as well as two editions of Documenta, number eight and eleven, and in 1993, 1995, and 2002 Whitney Biennials. I know that tonight we'll be looking at multiple bodies of work, including recent exhibitions that take on found, collaged, and worked-over images, in addition to photo-text and straight photography. So we're thrilled to have you here today, thankful for your time earlier, and will you please join me in welcoming Lorna Simpson?

[APPLAUSE]

00:07:17:14 **LORNA SIMPSON:** Thank you very much. Here's an extra seat, since I realize— Thanks so much for having me. And the last time I was here was a couple years ago, when my daughter was looking for schools, so we were looking at the undergraduate program. So it's nice to be back in a different kind of— You know, the road trip of taking your child to visit colleges can sometimes be a nightmare. So I'm so glad to be past that point, but to be back here in a different kind of capacity.

00:07:49:22 So what I thought I'd show you today is, like, somewhat an overview of the work that I've done over the past 90 million years. And so kind of like just small selections of different bodies, but also then kind of rounding up with kind of a show that I just put up, which is coming down at the end of the month, in London, at Hauser & Wirth. Yeah, so let's begin. Which I never know how to— Show me which button. Sorry. This one? Oh.

00:08:25:03 Okay. Can you guys hear me well? So yeah, my preoccupations and interests have kind of ranged over a group of different kinds of mediums, but yes, I guess my central love and kind of preoccupation is also photography, to this day. And it's so interesting, like, you know, many years later now—that's just a warning—people will be reading from your thesis.

[LAUGHTER]

So I was sitting there, I was like, oh, God, please make whatever he's going to say make sense out of that. But it was interesting, in terms of going to UCSD, because I felt a little bit like a fish out of water, because it wasn't a very diverse or welcoming kind of program. And it was also at a time very immersed in performance art, which I had an interest in as an audience, but not an interest in performing. So I really kind of watched— You know, it was Dada, like every minute.

You know, I had to like, as a group, "No, you have to be in this performance." I'd be just like, oh, God, kill me now. But I think that immersion, like the performative that is present in the work, that's where that kind of experience seeped in. Very much so. So it was a— I am always, in giving advice either to my daughter or, like, her friends or kind of younger people, in decisions, it's like being in— And I guess it's something that I find interesting. You might not think it's an environment that is welcoming or that acknowledges you, but in some ways, if you can carve out an experience that you take the time to do you, then it kind of can become very interesting. And that was kind of my graduate school experience.

00:10:16:08 But this was kind of right after graduate school. And it's called *Waterbearer*. So the piece that I was referring to in terms of my thesis was called *Gestures and Reenactments*, which is so weird because in some ways, at the time that I did it, I kind of repeated the nature of that work, in terms of reenactments, over and over again. And kind of in conversation, there's a book for the exhibition that kind of toured Europe. It started at the Jeu de Paume, in Paris, with Joan Simon. I kind of really realized that. So even as an artist, as I go back and talk to curators now, and thinking and rethinking about the work, there are certain things that I even have blind spots to.

00:11:01:07 But what's funny about that, in terms of blind spots in conversations over the course of time, when I got out of graduate school— I guess I'm going to make this very, like, anecdotal and talky, and talk about the work at the same time. But this particular piece, I had gotten out of graduate school and immediately had to decide, like, well, what kind of job am I going to get, right? So I did a secretary and receptionist and petty cash person for a print shop called ULAE, which is out on Long Island, which was amazing. And like, Elizabeth Murray came to print and Jasper Johns and stuff. I mean, like, it's a really interesting place. But I got to the point that I would dread coming in on Fridays because I had to do petty cash, and I'm kind of a little bit dyslexic. So every time I would do 90 million receipts, it would totally come out different every time. So after about four months of working there, I was kind of like, I'm not feeling good on Friday. And I would try to get— They had a in-house chef that would, you know, cook for the printers and the visiting artists and all of that. I would get her to help me in receipts. And then so finally, I quit.

00:12:12:29 But then after that, I got a job through another friend of mine, Kellie Jones, who's a art historian, for this museum that was just coming up. And again, I was like, "Okay, what kind of job?" "Oh, receptionist." Okay. So then I go in, I have a conversation with the chief curator, who is Joan Simon. So I got the job. I mean, you know, having a graduate degree, you can answer phones. It's not deep. You know, you can take names and numbers and convey messages. And during the evening, I would get the keys to— It was like this warehouse space in SoHo, which was torn down, is now a hotel. But small kind of warehouse space. And at night, I would photograph. So I would kind of have the keys and I would kind of set up a backdrop towards the end of the day, as everybody was leaving, and then I would go back in and kind of have these photo shoots. Which is where I shot this piece, *Waterbearer*. And the person in it is Alva Rogers, who's a performance artist.

00:13:14:00 And it was many years later, with Joan Simon, who I— Then she was the curator for the show for the Jeu de Paume. We were having a conversation; we were talking about this piece and its kind of performative quality. But then I had to say to her, "Yeah, but I had the keys to the space and went in and shot that, where you hired me." Which was a kind of really funny kind of roundabout way, in terms of how pieces get made and how artists, in terms of lack of space or kind of making things work or multitasking between jobs, how you get things done. So *Waterbearer* is about memory. As you can see in the text we made for the back, "She saw him disappear by the river. They asked her to tell what happened, only to discount her memory." And that theme of memory, in terms of the way it is acknowledged or reframed by responses,

or how illusive memory can be, even without any kind of disability attached to it, but just how you remember from one memory at one point in time, and how that either fades or distorts or keens into specific details, is something that kind of is a theme that goes throughout all of the work. And kind of either in terms of personal narratives and the way narratives get challenged or the way they are suppressed, is something that I am interested in.

00:14:46:18 From this period of work—this is *Twenty Questions*—I also, in terms of societal structures, in terms of how that plays out in terms of gaze— And so there were a whole series of works that used as their format, these kind of social parlor games. "Is she as pretty as a picture or clear or crystal or pure as a lily or black or coal or sharp as a razor" is these kind of stereotypes, in terms of description. And kind of within the structure of photography, that it's the same head that's repeated, but there is no penetration, in terms of who is in the picture or who the subject is specifically, what she is thinking, or who she is or what. Or even in terms of thinking of this as a portrait. So in this black and white kind of constructed photography in and around kind of the subject of, quote/unquote "portraiture," I then kind of remove details. And it's more to get the viewer, at this particular time, to think about, well, what is it that you expect? And in terms of authorship as a photographer, what is that supposed to deliver? Because I felt in taking a lot of documentary photography myself, and street photography, and exhibiting at that time, I guess in undergraduate school, in group shows, that there was this kind of uncanny— Like, you could have fifty different photographers in one room, of different subjects, and it was kind of the same mechanism of reading those images. You would go from one image to another. And it was never questioned, the photographer's intentions or that the intentions had anything to do with what was pictured. Or even if what is pictured is giving you any information about who is pictured. That I thought we could not take that for granted. So this body of work from the eighties and nineties is really my effort, in kind of having a love for that kind of photography, and continue to, but interrogating it and kind of teasing it apart, in terms of its kind of contract with the viewer.

00:17:03:02 *Stereo Styles*. These are black and white Polaroid, twenty-by-twenty-four images. And again, kind of same figure from behind, in a series of ad language from different kind of advertising, which is kind of "daring, sensible, severe, long and silky, boyish, ageless, silky, magnetic, country fresh, and sweet," as the kind of advertising for products for women. But again, this thing of personality and demeanor that is the kind of stereotype of, like, what makes a woman interesting. Or what are the qualities? And again, the kind of insanity, I guess, of that, these stereo styles. It's not quite going in, I realize, by decade more than chronologically.

00:18:05:00 So working with Polaroids and kind of these fragmentation of images. So my interest in photography was also this thing of the image is separated and put together, and is never— is a completion of a bunch of different parts. Which I feel in terms of identity or— and kind of the experience of the way one fashions one's life or identify, is this thing of putting parts and pieces together selectively. That it doesn't come in this entire whole package. One either is a participant in one's own self or construction of oneself. So this one is *Guarded Conditions* (1989). "Sex attacks and sin attacks," and kind of endless repetition of the words and endless repetition of figures. So by the nineties, I kind of— This was kind of, I think, the last series of work from that period, of these constructed black and white images with text. And with the text kind of functioning as this device. The images are kind of spared down, but the text as a way to get at a different subject matter that's not seen. And so therefore, it's like a bait and switch, in a way. Like you'd pay attention to something else that's not pictured. But again, kind of over the course of the body of work that I've done, in playing with text, the texts go from kind of concrete poetry to playing just with a suffix or a prefix of words as a list. Much like "skin attacks," this flipping of just one word against the word attack. And this one, it's the repetition of the word figure. So this is *Figure*, 1991, and reads, "Figured the worst, figured all the times

there was no camera. He was disfigured. Figured there would be no reaction. Figured legality had nothing to do with is. Figured she was suspect. Figured he was suspect. Figured someone had been there, because the door was open." Sorry, I could barely read it on here. From 1991. But also in response to the kind of presence of the black body in public and private space, and kind of the consequences of its presence and operation in private, but also in public. And I would say also, vulnerability.

00:20:56:25 So as I was saying earlier today— And I kind of am now skipping to 2009. But there was a exhibition that I had that was mentioned at the MCA Chicago, that was curated by Beryl Wright, and with a catalog by Beryl Wright and Saidiya Hartman. And in the process of doing that show, which I had done maybe about eight year's worth of work— But it was a kind of a big survey show, and first museum show. As a younger artist, I, for the first time, kind of looked at this kind of looking at my work for myself, with a bird's-eye view. So I'd kind of seen— And in conversation with kind of two really important curator and writer, it really kind of opened my eyes of kind of yes, I thought my work was interesting and I had gone down all these roads, and I could kind of— The way the exhibition was laid out was amazing. But I kind of felt like, oh, my God, I can't make this work anymore. And not because I didn't think it was important or not because I lost interest in it, but I kind of felt I wanted to challenge myself. It was like as though the process of actually doing a survey show, which is, as an artist— It involves the studio and it involves a lot of time and conversation and assembling of work, and kind of, you know, getting my perspective of it out there, in a way, in conversation. But also, the process of that kind of put closure to that body of work, which is an interesting thing.

00:22:34:19 So in that, that body of work had very concise mechanisms—meaning structured black and white or color photography, very spared-down image combine with text, et cetera—I then decided, okay, no more figure like that and no more text in that way, and kind of limited myself from working in that fashion purposely. What then came out of that were felt works and a whole `nother way of working, somewhat within the same vein, in terms of constructions of identity and in terms of politics of race and gender, but it forced me to find other mediums and other ways to create other languages visually. Which was a little—what's the word I want—a little crazy. It kind of felt like, why don't you just make a couple more of those? But I guess I as an artist, in terms of my relationship to my practice, I like the idea of not feeling completely comfortable. I like the idea of wondering whether or not these works are trying to work out an idea. And sometimes some ideas don't work. You know, it's like beating a dead horse, in a way. Like, okay, that really doesn't work, even if you flip it this way, that way, and this way. And sometimes, you know, you just kind of move on to other things. And sometimes brilliant new things happen that are unexpected. So from that point on, from I guess 1993, I've always switched it up. And not in that switching it up more makes it more interesting, but it allows me to kind of hone a language in all these different mediums.

00:24:18:16 So this is called *1957-2009*, which comprises of found images and kind of— I'm really jumping here. But found images of a woman that I found on e-Bay, leaning up against a car. And in buying that image, the seller came back to me and said, "I have this archive of, like, 250 images. Are you interested?" In these little albums. And they're all like this. They're all of her posing. So I said yes and I bought them, the entire archive. And I got it back and put it up in my studio, and I was just fascinated that, like, between June and August of 1957, are these amazing photographs of this woman posing for the camera, either as a pin-up or, you know, kind of with aspirations to being an actress, and playing these different roles. There's also a male character in these images, who's kind of— Like she's the muse and he's the artist, and he plays the guitar and is kind of the intellectual, and like, she's the beauty. And what's interesting about it is that they're all kind of amateur set-up photographs, in a way. So I put them up on the wall in my

studio and I said, "Wow, this is really amazing, but what am I going to do with all of this?" And in looking at it, because the nature of the photography and what makes it, to me, not— Yes, the subject is interesting, in the way that the images are constructed; but also, the format of the photography is like a contact sheet. There's a lot of repetition. There's a lot of repetition. The same pose, different outfit, in different situations. And a lot of this kind of construction of two identities that are constructed for the camera. So I said the perfect thing. I said— Well, in a way, I looked at it and said, "Wouldn't that be so interesting?" Like, I treated it as though I was looking at somebody's work in a crit class. And if you walk into a crit class and kind of go, "That's interesting, but if you put yourself into it, that would make it more interesting." It was like, oh, but I don't do that. And so it was kind of this like, that's a really fucking good idea, but I hate doing that. But I did it. And it was really painful and I hated doing it, but I thought it was an interesting idea. So I'm up— Well, you know, as you can see, up on the left. And I kind of— And that's me at the bottom, imitating the male character that appears in it. But since there are so many images of her in repetition, of maybe the same shot or a different outfit or a different kind of pose or these repetition of poses, I kind of can insert myself a bit seamlessly, within that repetition.

00:27:15:17 So that's her playing chess. That's me playing, just a really bad image of it. That's him. That's me. And so it was a project that took, like— You know, some of them are shot upstate in the summertime. Like, it took a few months to complete it to my— Like, God, it was just— It was a grind. And my daughter kind of helped me with photographing it, because her body is a little different than mine. Like, she has longer limbs, she's a little bit double-jointed. So it's kind of like yoga poses, in terms of trying to approximate her pose, which is really annoying. But I don't like being in front of the camera. But then, like, Zora would be helping me, and then she'd be, like, in a— She'd just leave for a while. And I'm like, "Where is she?" Like, she'd be in the other side, where all the costumes were, with wigs, like trying on stuff. Like, she was doing her own thing with the outfits and the wigs and makeup, in another room. Like, she would just, like, walk away from the set after a while.

00:28:20:24 But again, you know, this thing that all projects are— Like, you get your stride in the process. I mean, I find the process can be sometimes disturbing; it can be uncomfortable; it can leave you exhausted. But it's not all— I guess I don't always equate, "Oh, that was great; it went really, really well," with kind of how a project goes and its outcome, in a way. So that project is always reminding me that it doesn't necessarily need to be comfortable or happy to make work. And that is the little character imitating her. So both of these people are anonymous in that way. These albums that I bought are completely of these constructed images. I have a piano in my house just like that. They were easy to imitate.

00:29:16:22 So in that, I guess just going back for a minute, so the image that you saw of the chess, like in rounding that, like that piece, like in its totality, is like maybe 311 images. And what's interesting in being in conversation with writers or different curators from time to time, just about, you know, what I'm working on or what they're working on, I had this idea, you know, which is the most boring— Or they say in film, like, you shouldn't film— Which, you know, is completely out the window, in terms of art, of course. But like, you know, in time-based artwork, chess should not be a subject, nor a clock. Both have been kind of undone within the art world. But in thinking that, I kept saying, "I want to do this doubling." You know, this kind of turn of the century device of the five-way portrait. And because the whole thing of playing chess and playing against yourself is this kind of doubling and kind of this mirroring that happens. That you try to outplay yourself in order to perfect one's game. So it had all these references from twentieth century photography, like this, which is something that I just found online, and kind of the image, a calotype that I bought. But also, every single time I would bring up this five-way

image, everyone's saying, "Oh, like Duchamp and Picabia." You know, the image from 1911. I was like, "No, I don't want to do that." And I'd say at least five people I spoke to were that. And I was like, "No, I'm not doing that. Like, if one more person mentions it to me, I'm not doing it." Until that I mentioned it to another curator. And this is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art. And they said, "Yeah, but there's this other image of a black man in a straw hat." And I was like, "Yeah." And she showed— She happened to have it, because it was on view at MoMA, on her phone. And I was like, "Okay, I give up. That's what I'll use."

00:31:15:16 So I kind of figured out the kind of dynamic of the way you set up mirrors. Because what's, of course, interesting about this configuration is that there's no symmetry. It's not the Hitchcock into infinity; it has this asymmetrical relationship with the images. So that it's a little disarming that you have these different views. I don't know, I jumped to that, but we'll get back to that later. So that's kind of part of the set. And what I did was make this piece called *Chess*, where I wanted to have these two characters from this project, which is basically me playing a male and female character, but bring these two separate individuals, who appear in the photographic project as separate people playing against themselves, to bring them together and playing against one another. And did so in this way. So there's this kind of five-way portrait of the man playing against himself, and this five-way portrait of this woman playing against herself. And over the course of the video they age. It was accompanied by— I asked Jason Moran to perform and to create a piece for this. So I wanted a kind of like Cecil Taylor, in terms of the way Cecil Taylor plays a kind of dual hand. The structure in the way that you play the piano is that the hands are mirroring one another. So he came up with a composition— Oh, God, and I'm forgetting the name of the Classical musician that does that in his music, as well. I want to say it's Brahms. I don't know. I can't remember right now. But as an exercise to kind of strengthen the hands. But this kind of really beautiful, melodic piece for Chess. And then place the piano in the same position as the figures, and so you get this kind of five-way portrait of him playing piano. So it's a three-part production. Three-part installation, video installation. So these are excerpts, because it's kind of impossible to— Because architecturally, the way that the room is constructed for this piece is that it kind of foreshortens very quickly. All the walls are kind of in on an angle. So I'll just show a bit. I don't know, can you see that in this light, kind of? And then the music will start. But we kind of have to— It's put together in excerpts.

[CLIP PLAYS]

00:35:08:06 And this is Jason, an excerpt of Jason Moran's piece.

[CLIP PLAYS]

00:37:01:17 So kind of the music plays over this kind of length of time of all the moves. And then the characters kind of depart. So that's *Chess*. So I guess *Chess* now—I've forgotten, what year are those?-2013—was kind of the last video piece that I did. But it was an interesting way to think about, like, all of this construction of these two characters, kind of bringing them into life in a video work. But also, which plays a lot in the video works that I do, in relationship with music as a form of pacing or context.

00:37:55:07 So then now to jump to another thing. I guess, yeah, in 2013, I started making collages. And based on *Ebony* magazines and Jet magazines, this is called *Miss Betty* or *Nurse Betty*. And had a show at the Aspen Art Museum, and actually, I have a book that just came out with Chronical Books, on just a new series of collages. There's one with works on paper through the Aspen Art Museum, but anyone— That is kind of collages since that point. And it's been an interesting way—and I'm just going to kind of run through them—to think about a quick, fast kind of opening up of

my own subconscious and imagination as a way of working, with kind of this material that is so rich and kind of these journals of kind of black culture and politics over the past, I don't know, seventy years. It's an interesting, like, archivist sitting in the studio. So after doing these collages for a while—so I'll just kind of go through some of them, and some of them with these, again, used as the figures. It's like all the figures are from advertising. I kind of rarely use the famous entertainment or industry or music industry kind of— or politic individuals that show up in *Ebony* magazine, but a lot of them are just kind of out of the advertising segment of the magazine. And this is kind of contained or pushed up against a geological book of identifying different kinds of formations.

00:39:41:07 And then I started doing these photo collages. So all of this— I mean, I'm kind of leading up to other preoccupations, other than the film and the video and the photography that I'm known for. And started then using AP photographs, found images of stuff that I find on e-Bay that are kind of abandoned archives that are analog images from newspapers and magazines. And then just they're very simply kind of put together. They're very binary. It was like a head on a thing. But I notice, like, the images that I'm attracted to are surreal from the beginning, which even heightens them a little bit more. So the kind of sculptural photographs from museum exhibitions, identifying a particular artwork. There's a fascination with having deer in domestic situations, which I found a lot of images like that, which I find uncanny. Who has deers in their house and takes snapshots of them?

00:41:23:122 And then kind of this fascination with ice. So it's kind of as though the collages, as I find materials and kind of— It's like you don't pay attention to something until it comes into your view. So then there are all these different things I keep finding over and over as archive images, that I then kind of insert these heads into. And I love the analog cropping signatures for reproduction, which I used to, I guess before— As I got out of collage, I did copy and pasting and graphic design for a— Graphic design meaning, like, laying out text in a real analog cutting-and-pasting form for newspapers and brochures, which was so painstakingly uninteresting kind of work. But I absolute— Like, the percentages and all this cropping was kind of part of that language. So for me personally, it's kind of this jump between kind of the past way that I would work, you know, kind of as a job, and in a very analog sense, and kind of melding it kind of physically, by cutting and pasting. But I definitely, like, very much in a kind of digital, have resisted that kind of work [inaudible] digital world now.

00:42:23:05 So in terms of painting and in terms of the collages, the collages then turned into paintings. And thinking like, how could I make this size up, what I do I mean, I think the scale of my work and working in the collage form was really nice, because this is very intimate. Like, either eight by ten or eleven by fourteen or whatever kind of size. And these collages are mounted on paper. But what's not really— A lot of what I do has to do with scale and kind of relationship to the body. So I kept thinking about, like, what would I do? Or how could I size this up, and still preserve— I mean, many of these are done—which I should've said before—with ink. And ink is kind of the main medium that I use in it. Not oil, not pastels, not any of that kind of stuff. And how to preserve the kind of liquidity and kind of transparency of that medium, but at a larger scale. So I kind of figured it out. And again, this thing of, like, kind of not caring about— So much to me, part of the work is about process. So I don't have to enjoy the process, but it has to be interesting. And a lot of what I do gets done in public. So this was a kind of— One of the images that was part of a show, part of the work that was included in the Venice Biennale, in the Arsenal section, curated by Okwui Enwezor. And it was really interesting because I thought, like, wow, if I can't pull this off and this isn't any good, you really, really, very publicly, have like, ruined your own career. And to my surprise— Or I shouldn't say ruin my career, but in the sense of— It was a very risky thing to do because I hadn't shown any of that before. Nor by the time— I was

kind of working on the work while the exhibition was kind of being programmed, in a way. So it wasn't as though I said, `Oh, here's paintings I've done over the past two years; let's curator and—' You know, `Pick one, and then we'll put it in the show. They've never been seen.' It's like for some reason, a lot of what I do is that I kind of have an inkling or an idea or sketches or one or two examples, and then the rest, it's like, okay. So we see how that comes out. And I've been fortunate to be supported in that way, because for some reasons, that's just the way that I work.

00:44:49:21 So in terms of the collages, they also become part of the subject of the paintings. And so this is from another very teeny little collage, but it's of one that I flipped, which is actually a woman standing in a leopard suit, with a leopard on a leash. A photograph. And then switched the faces that the— The face of the woman is on the leopard and the leopard is on the woman's body.

00:45:20:08 I want to say this is a still from *Carrie*, the original film, with a head that's floating above, which this is called Nightmare. Again, with the crop marks. And so parts, in terms of— And these were kind of actually painted painted. Like, I didn't use silkscreen for these. So they were kind of doubly like, hm, that's interesting, of how that gets resolved. Or painted from projections like this one, where the figure's head is on backwards.

00:45:57:07 And also kind of—which this wasn't part of Venice—but playing with these small moments. Like this is an architectural Modernist space in Liberia, of a woman ascending a staircase, and kind of playing, in terms of the inks and such, with part of that architectural device of the staircase.

00:46:23:00 These are smaller panel pieces called Polka Dot With Bullet Holes. So it actually comes from an image of Diana Ross, who's sitting in her living room in a yellow and black polka dot dress. So that part, the visage of, like, you know, her face has got this obliterated, but it's these holes that kind of bleed. And then beneath it is a panel of bullet holes. Speaking much to the violence that is occurring every day. And that's another version of the same piece.

00:47:00:23 So it's been interesting, the way that, in terms of visual imagery, now it's kind of appropriating images from magazines and newspaper, and kind of recombining them in a certain way for these painted panels. And this is called *Famous Statue Damn*, which there's a actual dam in the background. *Famous Statue Volcano*. These are like, I don't know, seven by nine foot paintings. And again, so the ice kind of, as a little device, keeps showing up over the course of the past couple of years. To the painting that's here as part of the collection. So I think this is around the same time of the one that is here at the museum, where there's these figures that kind of come in and out of these ice formations.

00:48:05:24 So the sculptural work in the show that I have up at Hauser & Wirth now, this is called *Famous*— Excuse me, no. *Missing Film*. And in combination with the paintings, since there's so much ice that is kind of the backdrop to those heads from last year, are these pieces of glass that look like blocks of ice, that I have fabricated. But sitting atop a film canister of a film that's kind of about missing aspects of African American history. And there is no film in the container; the film is missing, as this kind of preservation of an archive, and also a missing archive.

And in my studio. So it was kind of this thing of bringing in from doing all these collages and having stacks and stacks— I mean, I even have a picker, a person who does flea markets, who looks for me, *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines, because he does flea markets kind of all over the South and the Northeast. And it's kind of like a drug deal at this point. Like, "Okay. I've got twenty-five." "Okay, how much I owe you? Okay, meet me in twenty minutes." "Where do you want me to meet you?" It's like— And with my friends who are with me, are like, "What are you buying?" God! "You need cash? I got cash. Okay, wait, let me go to the cash machine." So I do have all

these different stacks. And after a while, it's like the beauty of the— Kind of they're wrapped as archives. Some of them are wrapped in plastic, some of them with covers. You know, it's like little labels that have addresses of people from all over the country. Like that this magazine was sent to their home with their and stuff. And started kind of playing with them as objects. So this is kind of *They Cheated Death*. *Tried By Fire*. And that's kind of as you look at them, they kind of create these distortions of magazines.

00:50:00:18 So this is— I'm almost done. This is a show at Hauser & Wirth. And so as you walk in, there's this wall of all these collages. So what I was trying to bring in is, like, all these different things I had been doing over the past year, and maybe over the past couple of years, because I've done the collages for such a long time, but like, didn't sell them and kind of just held onto them. So I could curate, out of the ones that I'd made over the past two years, a really interesting collection that kind of spoke to the content of this particular show. So the show's called Unanswerable. And these are kind of— I'm just going to go through, like, a couple of the collages that are part of that.

00:50:58:25 And so there's this collage, which is— As crazy as it is, I made a giant snowball of a woman sitting on top, and then I pieced it on this little head out of Ebony magazine on top. And it was funny because I went to— I decided to have the kind of glass sculptures fabricated in Switzerland because I was like, it is so crazy to kind of have a lot of things fabricated in the United States, and then have them shipped all the way over to London, when it's easier to actually have things fabricated in Europe and then shipped over, as a way of working. And so I did that. And went to this foundry called [inaudible], right outside of Zurich. And so I was just talking about, okay, they're like, "Oh, we know where you can get some glass done." They had showed me samples. And like, the samples were not as crystalline or clear as the ones that I had made previously. They were kind of gray and— They looked like dirty-water kind of blocks of ice. Although they were bigger, they kind— We were all like, "Oh, it doesn't look so great." And I didn't realize how vested or how much— how invested they were to make that work. So the idea— And they're very— Like, you come there and they, like, have portfolios of the people that they just worked with in these amazing projects out of Venice, out of that, out of that. So the idea, within five minutes, I was like, "Nah. Nah, I'll stick with the one I'm doing in the States." They were kind of shocked. They were like, "*What*?" Because that was like the main bulk of what we were— And then building armatures for different things. That was the main bulk of what we were going to do. So as smart as they were— And like, you know, when you're doing production— And sometimes I lose sense of the kind of scope of what it is I'm doing or kind of where the ideas are coming from. So it's very funny. They start telling me this story. "Yeah, we did this piece. Fischli and Weiss had this amazing piece that is of a snowman that's in a refrigerator. And they couldn't get it done right, so we've redone it." And it's actually quite a beautiful piece of a snow— It's like, you know, you have this kind of refrigerant device that's in the shape of, you know, two balls like a snowman. And you can— You know, it's an outdoor or indoor sculpture, but it stays frosted. Right? So you're kind of looking in on this snowman that—or snow person—that remains undisturbed. And I was so— Like, I was like, "Oh, my God, that's so amazing." And I was like, why do I find that so amazing? It's like, oh, because I have collages about snow and ice.

00:53:27:24 And but like a half an hour later, I was like, oh. It kind of hit me like that. And I said, "I have something to do." So like, on— Which is kind of interesting, in terms of being open to ideas and switching plans. I said, "Why don't we make a snowball?" I said, "I have the perfect thing." So I kind of pull up on my phone, this collage and I go, "Why don't we make this?" And they kind of look at me like, 'fuck. You don't have enough time for all—' But I was like, "This is Switzerland. You guys can do this. You can pull it off. You can make it look like Snow. I know you can." And they did. But they were just like, "You've gone from, like, ice that's not working, and now you

want to do, like, a nine foot tall snow woman." So we did it. And kind of I'm just realizing now, like, I don't have any of this. Like, all of this stuff was on my phone, so it took me a moment to put it here into the lecture. But they kind of built it out of this, like, amazing material, of course. So it glistens like snow and looks like it's packed ice and snow. Which doesn't look so great in the photographs, but this is kind of part of putting it together. And as you can see, in the bottom, on the slat of wood, you know, the figure and kind of figuring out the head. And so it was a really interesting process to get this thing made, but it turned into that.

00:54:49:06 So it was kind of bringing alive one of the aspects from one of the collages into the kind of body of the exhibition. And in a way that I hadn't worked before. And she kind of presides or kind of looks over the entire exhibition. So there are these kind of ice landscape paintings in the background. Those are the floor sculptures of glass and magazine stacks. It's called *Twelve Stacks*. It's another kind of— this other thing that I did for another show, but was a basket, baskets that I found on the street, that I got fabricated or cast into bronze. And they have kind of glass [inaudible].

00:55:40:29 And so kind of that's a view of the exhibition. But there's another part. So you have these landscapes that have strips of text that are kind of embedded in it, that look like these kind of slightly apocalyptic ice kind of imploding or exploding landscapes, mixed with— Well, it's another one. These. So I'm showing you kind of detail out of the studio. But two years or three years ago, in kind of thinking about different works that I did, these giant panels that have a woman out of Ebony magazine, which was an ad. For what, I don't know. Or maybe an editorial about depression. So there's a picture of a woman sleeping on a bed with her shoes on, and then another article that had AP images of people trying to commit suicide. So there's a woman on a ledge. And a few years ago, I had them, like, on really, like I guess the same size, like seven-by-nine-foot panels. And I was like, okay, even for me, this is a bit much. And I was like, let's put those in storage for a minute. I'm not ready to work on that. But this time around, for this show, like, we pulled them back out again. I kind of had them in storage and pulled them back into the studio. And I was like, they're just the wrong scale, in terms of the way that they operate. So I then, in using some of the stuff of collage, collaged these two images that— It's almost as though it's the same person, between this waking and sleeping state of sleeping, and at the same time is she dreaming, or is she actually standing on a ledge thinking about sleeping or what? This kind of emotional state.

00:57:31:19 So this is called *Montage*, and has kind of, I think, five different panels. But the images are kind of collaged in different viewpoints of either the woman on the bed sleeping or they're kind of collaged together, of different croppings of those two images. So I guess— Oh, yeah, it's twenty works. Like, you know, and the body's relation. They're kind of blown up in a way that the bodies are the same scale or a little bit larger. But in doing so, what's nice about that is one, in terms of the silkscreening, you get either fine dots or you get this hyper-real Ben-Day dot, that kind of just blasts. It's blasted out. So that's out of the studio, just to give a sense of the scale of the big panel ones. It wasn't part of the show, but it was painting that came after. Yeah.

[APPLAUSE]