



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY'S DAVISON ART CENTER PRESENTS

***RECLAIMING THE GAZE:
AFRICAN AMERICAN PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS, 1930 TO NOW***

Wednesday, February 7 through Sunday, May 27, 2018

(Closed Friday, March 9, through Monday, March 26)

Opening reception and gallery talk on Wednesday, February 7

(MIDDLETOWN, CT) – The Davison Art Center at Wesleyan University is pleased to present the exhibition *Reclaiming the Gaze*, a dynamic survey of African American prints and photographs from the 1930s to the present. These striking works range from the expressionist style of Hale Woodruff to the photographs of the Civil Rights movement by Ernest C. Withers, and from feminist interventions by Betye Saar and Faith Ringgold to postmodern commentaries on identity by Glenn Ligon and Robert Pruitt. The exhibition will be on view from Wednesday, February 7, through Sunday, May 27, 2018. **The opening will take place on Wednesday, February 7, at 5:00 pm with a gallery talk at 5:30 pm by Peter Mark, Professor of Art History, and Rielly Wieners '18, one of the student curators of the exhibition.**

The exhibition highlights forty-two prints and photographs from the Davison Art Center collection. Created across nine decades, these works represent a wide range of styles and subject matter.

Each artist claimed his or her vision as an African American, intervening in artistic conventions that assume a white male gaze. Hale Woodruff used an expressionist style to convey the horror of lynching in the rural South. In photography, Roy DeCarava sought to create what he described as “the concept of a world shaped by blackness.” Ernest Withers

documented the Civil Rights Movement with close-up images of Dr. Martin Luther King. Betye Saar and Fred Wilson reclaimed racist representations for new purposes. Faith Ringgold quoted quilt traditions to celebrate the stories of African American women. Robert Pruitt turns the gaze back on the viewer with an iconic female basketball player in a work titled *Negra Es Bella*, referring to the phrase “Black is beautiful,” as well as the African diaspora throughout Latin America.

Artists represented in the exhibition also include Romare Bearden, Lyle Ashton Harris (Wesleyan '88), Glenn Ligon (Wesleyan '82 and D.F.A. 2012), Jacob Lawrence, Gordon Parks, Vincent Smith, James Van Der Zee, Kara Walker, and Carrie Mae Weems.

The exhibition was organized by the students in ARHA 368, Advanced Themes in 20th-Century Afro-American Art, taught by Peter Mark, Professor of Art History, and assisted by Clare Rogan, former DAC Curator, in the spring of 2017. Student curators were Anna Flom '17, Miranda Gohh '17, Nathan Johnson '17, Page Nelson '17, Renee Palmer '17, Alexia Warren '17, and Rielly Wieners '18.

RELATED EVENT:

Wednesday, February 7, 2018, 5:00–7:00 pm

Opening reception.

Conversation in the gallery at 5:30 pm by Peter Mark, Professor of Art History, and Rielly Wieners (Wesleyan class of 2018), one of the exhibition's student curators.

Free and open to the public.

Gallery hours are Tuesday–Sunday, 12–4 P.M. (closed Mondays; also closed March 9–26).

The gallery is open to the public free of charge. The Davison Art Center is located at 301 High Street on the campus of Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT. For further information, phone (860) 685-2500 or visit the DAC website at www.wesleyan.edu/dac.

The Davison Art Center was established at Wesleyan University with the founding gifts of George Willets Davison (B.A. Wesleyan 1892). Today it holds approximately 18,000 prints and 6,000 photographs in one of the foremost collections of prints and photographs at an American college or university.

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Editors: A digital image suitable for reproduction is available in an electronic (PDF) press release on the web at www.wesleyan.edu/dac/exhb/press.html; for further information please contact Andrew Chatfield at (860) 685-2806 or achatfield@wesleyan.edu. Below is the caption for that image. Please note that the image may be used only in direct connection with this press release or with other timely coverage of the exhibition it concerns.

Robert Pruitt (American, born 1975), *Negra Es Bella*, 2014. Two-color lithograph. Published by Tamarind Institute. Collaborating printer: Justin Andrews. Hoy Family Afro-American Visual Arts Fund and Friends of the Davison Art Center funds, 2015. Copyright © Robert Pruitt (photo: Logan Bellew for Tamarind Institute).

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