

The Curators

Rory Bester

Rory Bester is an art historian and curator based in Johannesburg, South Africa. Since 1994 he has taught film, photography and cultural studies in the undergraduate and postgraduate programs in the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Cape Town and the Department of Art History at Wits University.

Bester's special interest in historical and contemporary photography from Africa has resulted in a number of research and curatorial projects funded by, amongst others, Arts and Culture Trust of South Africa; Ford Foundation; HIVOS/Interfund; Human Sciences Research Council; National Arts Council of South Africa; and Standard Bank Group African Art Foundation. He completed a master's thesis on mission photography in colonial Southern Africa and has curated and/or co-curated a number of exhibitions on photography, film and video, including "Democracy's Images: Photography and Visual Art After Apartheid" for BildMuseet (Umea, Sweden, Sep 1998), "Kwere Kwere - Journeys into Strangeness" for The Castle of Good Hope (Cape Town, South Africa, Mar 2000) and Gertrude Posel Gallery (Johannesburg, South Africa, May 2000) and "The Short Century - Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa" for Museum Villa Stuck (Munich, Germany, Feb 2001), House of World Cultures (Berlin, Germany, May 2001), MCA (Chicago, Sep 2001) and P.S.1/MOMA (New York, Mar 2002).

Bester is the associate editor of the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale 1997 catalogue, editor of the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale 1997 short guide, and is currently a consulting editor to *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*. He has written essays for a number of catalogues and journals, including *African Arts*, *Flash Art* and *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*.

Amanda Carlson

Amanda Carlson has a Ph.D. from Indiana University in art history and African studies. Her special interest in contemporary art and photography has led her to this project. Her research on photography has been guided by several projects supervised by Chris Geary, Curator of the Elliot Elisofon Photographic Archives at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art (Washington, D.C.). At the Smithsonian Carlson conducted extensive research which resulted in the master's thesis, "Object Photography: African Art in the Photographic Frame" (1996). Carlson also teaches courses about African photography, which are unique and not offered in most American institutions.

Carlson has conducted research in Nigeria since 1990 on *nsibidi*, an indigenous African writing system. As a Fulbright Scholar in 1996-97, she spent one year attached to the National Museum in Nigeria. She has had four positions at the Smithsonian Institution, which included two research fellowships. While at USF (1999-2002), she worked closely with the African communities in Tampa, along with conducting research on Nigerian masquerades in Florida. She is currently working on an edited volume entitled *Africa in Florida* with Dr. Robin Poyner of the University of Florida. Carlson is also currently producing and directing a documentary about Leopard Societies in Nigeria, Cuba, and the U.S. An exhibition about *nsibidi* and contemporary art is planned for the future. Her interest in the process of transforming research into exhibitions is the basis of her seminar "Exhibiting African Art," which was offered at USF in the spring of 2001.

The Artists

Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons

Cuban-born multimedia artist Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons produces site-specific installations that combine sculpture, photography, performance, sound, and video. Her installations explore her Afro-Cuban roots and variously address questions of gender, race, family and memory. Campos-Pons' 20x24-inch colour Polaroid studio photographs cross the boundaries between still life and portraiture. Campos-Pons use of photography expands the installation-based media for which the artist has become known. From her mother and sisters, to extended family events and celebrations, and the neighborhoods of Cuba, Campos-Pons' works directly engage the role and impact of Diaspora religious and cultural practices on everyday life in Cuba, including aspects of her Yoruba-derived, Santería background, and the intricate hairstyles that convey status and gender in traditional African art. She explores the problematic of belonging, assimilation, and trans-culturation between diverse cultures. The artist's exploration of childhood memories is the direct result from her living in the United States, away from Cuba. Negotiating her place between the here and now, and the there and then is an ongoing process, expressed and performed in diverse artistic forms in this installation.

Berni Searle

Berni Searle is an artist who works and lives in Cape Town, South Africa. She received a MFA from the University of Cape Town in 1995. She has received a Unesco Award (presented by the International Art Critics Association at the 7th International Cairo Biennale, 1998); she was a finalist for the Daimler Chrysler Award for South African Contemporary Artist 2000, she was a finalist of the First National Bank Vita 2000 Award. She has recently completed a residency at Gasworks (London). Searle has participated in exhibitions in South Africa, the United States, and Europe.

Odili Donald Odita

Born in Enugu (Nigeria), Odili Donald Odita is currently a professor in painting at USF. He received an MFA from Bennington College (VT) in 1990 and is a multi-media artist, writer, and curator. In addition, he is a consulting editor for NKA Journal of Contemporary African Art. He has had solo exhibitions at Kunsthalle (Switzerland), Jenn Joy Gallery (San Francisco), Florence Lynch Gallery (NY), and Gallery 101 (Ontario). Of the more than 50 group exhibitions, Odita has contributed to the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale 1997 among other prestigious international venues.

Colin Richards

Colin Richards is an art critic and curator. He is Associate Professor in the Department of Fine Arts at Wits University in South Africa, where he lectures art criticism, art practice and art theory. He has also taught at the University of Leeds and the Glasgow School of Art. In addition to serving as consultant for a number of local and international exhibitions on South African art, he recently co-curated *Taking Liberties: The Body Politic* for the 1995 Johannesburg Biennale, *Siyawela: Love, Loss and Liberation in Art from South Africa* (Birmingham City Art Museum, 1995), and *Graft* at the South African National Gallery for the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale. His research interests include contemporary art criticism; image-text relations; allegory in contemporary art; the social production of art in colonialism and post-colonialism; and the work of artists Jasper Johns and Durant Sihlali. He is also an art therapist with a qualification from Goldsmiths College, University of London. Richards is also an acclaimed practicing artist, and has exhibited in shows

in South Africa, England and America. His work is represented in most of the public collections in the country. Of his work, Richards says: "My recent work touches on, amongst other things, the presence of 'religious' power and poverty in my cultural environment. Specifically I am concerned with the power of fathers, sons, masculinity and emasculation. The work is multimedia, with a few processes and images recurring throughout. For example, I often include small-scale watercolor paintings (worked in an anachronistically labored way) with set-up situations in which organic processes – literal germination, growth and decay – occur. I might, for instance, plant mielie or bean seeds in some container (a photographic developing dish, an invalid cup), water these for a period, and then stop. Finally, I frequently use either actual or mediated found material of a heavily sentimentalized but ultimately traumatic nature – like fragments of local funerary sculpture. At present, the most common 'religious' image in my work involves some or other variation of the cloth of 'Veronica' (*vera icona* means 'true image'). St Veronica is the patron saint of photography."

Teboho Mahlatsi

Teboho Mahlatsi is a pioneering young South African filmmaker. He studied film theory at the Afrika Cultural Centre in Johannesburg. Mahlatsi directed *Yizo Yizo*, a multipart television series on youth culture in South African townships. *Yizo Yizo* is the most watched series in the history of South African television. *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* (1999, 11min) is a 35mm short film directed by Mahlatsi. The film is set in the tough urban landscape of South Africa. It focuses on a young man who used to be a member of a self-defense unit that operated during the apartheid era on the East Rand, and who searches for redemption and a space within his community. Of the film, Mahlatsi says, "I am very much interested in individuals who stand apart from the community. Because of the nature of our history we, as black people, were treated as mobs. If you looked at the headlines, you read, 'a mob of rioting youths', and 'a mob of striking workers'. It was never about individuals. In some ways it is understandable because, as black people, we had to come together for a certain cause." *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning* won a Silver Lion at the 56th Venice Film Festival.

Carrie Mae Weems

Carrie Mae Weems is both an artist and a cultural critic, who addresses themes of identity, race, gender, class, the legacy of slavery, and the African Diaspora. Her work challenges us to rethink our culture and to question the extent of art's impact on society. Weems states that, "photography can still be used to champion activism [and] as a powerful weapon toward instituting political and cultural change." With those ends in mind, Weems plays with the idea of documentary photography, subverting, even while appropriating, the authority of the genre; reconfiguring its format to better express her subjects' iconic, metaphoric, or symbolic value, and whatever discourse she chooses to pursue. She is well known for her exhibition, "Family Pictures and Stories" in which she focuses on the construction of the family narrative.

Thembinkosi Goniwe

Thembinkosi Goniwe is a native of Cape Town whose work is an attempt to hold traditional rituals (*ulwaluko*, *ukuchaza* and *ingqithi*) for contemplation and examine the influence of contemporary culture and art on them. He received his MFA from the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town and is currently in working on a Ph.D. in art history at Cornell University. Some of his recent awards include University of Cape Town Research Grant (1998-2000) and the Centre for Science and Development Scholarship (1998). His work has been exhibited in a solo exhibition called "RITUAL" (Association of Visual Arts, Cape Town) and in

numerous group exhibitions in South Africa, Norway, England, Japan, Australia, Germany and the United States.

Fatimah Tuggar

Born in Kaduna (Nigeria), Fatimah Tuggar received her MFA from Yale University School of Art (1995) and now lives and works in New York. In 1995-1996, the artists participated in the Independent Study Program at the Whitney Museum of American Art (NY). The work of Fatimah Tuggar has been shown in numerous group and solo exhibitions, including Keeping Track of the Joneses (New Museum of contemporary Art, NY 1998) and the 2nd Johannesburg Biennial (South Africa 1997). She has also exhibited at the Jack Tilton Gallery (NY), Via Farini Gallery (Milano), Galerie Die Werkstatt (Copenhagen), Black and Greenburg Gallery (NY), among others. Moreover, critical attention has been paid to Tuggar in publications such as Newsweek and The New York Times.

Lorna Simpson

Lorna Simpson was born in Brooklyn, New York. She began her career as a documentary photographer and continues to address themes of cultural, social, and political significance. Her work explores the experiences of African-American women through conflicting narratives, and examines the nature of miscommunication. Simpson's use of media has evolved to include video and film installations.

The Field's Edge: Africa, Diaspora, Lens

October 19 - December 21, 2002

Curated by Rory Bester & Amanda Carlson

USF Contemporary Art Museum
Institute for Research in Art
College of Visual & Performing Arts

4202 E. Fowler Avenue, CAM101
Tampa, FL 33620
813.974.2849 • www.usfcam.usf.edu

Checklist of Works

1. Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons

Meanwhile, The Girls Were Playing, 1999-2000

Installation: glass, fabrics, video

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

2. Thembinkosi Goniwe

Communication XYZ, 1999

Video; 7 min. (NTSC)

Courtesy of the artist

3. Thembinkosi Goniwe

Communication XYZ II, 1999

Digital inkjet prints, video stills

47.25 x 59.50 inches (4 panels/each)

120cm x 150cm

Courtesy of the artist

4. Teboho Mahlatsi

Portrait of a Young Man Drowning, 1999

Video © Film Four/Xencat and Xenos Pictures; 12:29 minutes (NTSC)

Courtesy of the artist

5. Odili Donald Odita

Authentic African, 1997

Digitally manipulated photographs

40 x 30 inches (4 panels/each)

101.6cm x 76.2cm

Courtesy of the artist and Florence Lynch Gallery, New York

6. Odili Donald Odita

Erotic Invisible Empires, 1999

Photocopies, framed digital photograph, housepaint on wall

60 x 67 inches

152.4cm x 170.18cm

Courtesy of the artist

7. Colin Richards

Veil I- VI, 1996

Veil VII (Biko Postmortem)- Skin, 1996

Veil VIII (Biko Postmortem)- Exposed Tissue, 1996

Cloth, screenprint, pins

26.2 x 32.28 inches (8 panels/each)

820 x 662mm

Collection of South Africa National Gallery, Cape Town

8. Berni Searle

Still, 2000

Digital prints on backlit paper (installed with flour)

39 1/2in x 47 1/4 in

120cm x 120cm (8 panels/each)

Courtesy of the artist

9. Berni Searle

Profile, 2002

Duraclear digital lamda prints

39 1/2in x 47 1/4in

100cm x 120cm (8 panels/each)

Courtesy of the artist

10. Lorna Simpson

Wigs, 1994

Waterless lithograph on felt

15 @ 23 x 18 inches / 3 @ 32 x 16 inches

58.42cm x 45.72cm / 81.28cm x 40.64cm

Collection of Eileen and Peter Norton, Santa Monica

11. Lorna Simpson

Stack of Diaries, 1994

Photo-linen panel, glass sheets, steel

18 panels: 15 each 23 x 18 inches / 3 panels 32 x 16 inches

Collection of Eileen and Peter Norton, Santa Monica

12. Fatimah Tuggar

Minding the Livingroom, 1998

Inkjet print

48 X 61 inches

121.92 x 154.94 cm

Courtesy of BintaZarah Studios, New York

13. Fatimah Tuggar

Iyali (Family), 1998

Inkjet print

48 X 67 inches

121.92 x 170.18 cm

Courtesy of BintaZarah Studios, New York

14. Fatimah Tuggar

Untitled (Army), 1996

Inkjet print

18 X 25 inches

45.72cm x 63.5cm

Courtesy of BintaZarah Studios, New York

15. Fatimah Tuggar

Bath Time, 1999

Inkjet print

48 X 52 inches

121.42cm x 132.08cm

Courtesy of BintaZarah Studios

16. Fatimah Tuggar

People Watching, 1997

Inkjet print

34 X 96 inches

86.36 x 243.84cm

Courtesy of BintaZarah Studios

17. Fatimah Tuggar

Suburbia, 1998

Inkjet print

34 X 96 inches

86.36 x 243.84cm

Courtesy of BintaZarah Studios

18. Carrie Mae Weems

Kitchen Table Series, 1990

Untitled (Woman and Phone)

Silver print

27 1/4 x 27 1/4 inches

69.22cm x 69.22cm

Courtesy Private Collection, New York

19. Carrie Mae Weems

Kitchen Table Series, 1990

Untitled (Woman Brushing Hair)

Silver print

27 1/4 x 27 1/4 inches

69.22cm x 69.22cm

Courtesy Private Collection, New York

20. Carrie Mae Weems

Kitchen Table Series, 1990

Untitled (Putting on Make Up)

Silver print

27 1/4 x 27 1/4 inches

69.22cm x 69.22cm

Courtesy of the artist and PPOW, New York

21. Carrie Mae Weems

Kitchen Table Series, 1990

Untitled (Man Smoking)

Silver print

27 1/4 x 27 1/4 inches

69.22cm x 69.22cm

Courtesy of the artist and PPOW, New York

22. Carrie Mae Weems

Kitchen Table Series, 1990

Untitled (Nude)

Silver print

27 1/4 x 27 1/4 inches

69.22cm x 69.22cm

Courtesy of the artist and PPOW, New York

23. Carrie Mae Weems

Kitchen Table Series, 1990

Untitled (Women with Friends)

Silver prints (3 panels/Triptych)

27 1/4 X 27 1/4 (each)

69.22cm x 69.22cm (each)

Courtesy of the artist and PPOW, New York

24. Carrie Mae Weems

In the Garden, 1993

from *The Africa Series*

Silverprints (4 panels)

27 1/4 x 27 2/4 (each)

69.22cm x 69.22cm each

Courtesy of the artist and PPOW, New York

25. Carrie Mae Weems

Passageway, 1993

from *The Africa Series*

Silverprints (2 panels)

27 1/4 x 27 1/4 inches

Courtesy of the artist and PPOW, New York

The Field's Edge is a multimedia exhibition that explores the relationship between contemporary art and colonial ethnography, most notably the legacy of colonial ethnography on readings of contemporary art from Africa and the Diaspora. The visual exploration of this often contested relationship between art and ethnography focuses on major themes around the politics of narrative and domestic life.

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This exhibition title refers to the legacy of ethnographic "field" images in relation to images in contemporary photography and lens-based media that are used to investigate current and historical concepts of representation, agency, and body.

The exhibition includes the work of Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, Thembinkosi Goniwe, Teboho Mahlati, Odili Donald Odita, Colin Richards, Berni Searle, Lorna Simpson, Fatimah Tuggar and Carrie Mae Weems. The exhibition is guest curated for *CAM* by Rory Bester and Amanda Carlson.

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