

Artist Profile – Carrie Mae Weems

b. 1953 Portland, OR; lives and works in Syracuse, NY

Weems attended San Francisco City College where she studied photography, and later attended the California Institute of Arts where she received her BFA in 1981. In 1984 she went on to receive her MFA from the University of California, San Diego. Weems has received a large number of awards and grants, included are The Anonymous was a Woman Award, The Tiffany Award, and the National Endowment for the Arts Award. In 2013 Weems received the MacArthur Genius Grant as well as the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Lifetime Achievement Award. Weems started a project titled Operation Activate, which is a public art campaign to create awareness of an initiative to stop gun violence, and the Institute of Sound and Style, a summer program that engages youth in training in visual art.

Weems investigates family relationships, cultural identity, sexism, class, political systems, and the consequences of power in her works. She investigates these themes through her work in photography, text, fabric, audio, installation, and video. Weems captures intimate depictions of children, adults, and families in simple settings to document and interpret the ongoing struggle for racial equality, human rights, and social inclusion in America. Although Weems works with different mediums, she is best known for her black and white photography work that uses African American subjects to represent her ideas of exposing stereotypes and debunking racist and sexist labels.

Her works started with exploring family pictures, where she investigated her own family history and the movement of black families from the South to the North, other works have discussed racial jokes and internalized racism. Weems creates works that appear to be documentary in style but are actually staged, she also often incorporates text with her photographs, placing multiple images side-by-side; diptychs and triptychs, and constructs narratives. The next big issue for Weems was sexism, she created works that questioned the role of tradition, the nature of family, monogamy, polygamy, and different relationships. This topic of sexism in Weems' work also brought up the topic of the exclusion of images of the black community and how black women are represented, or not represented, in popular media.

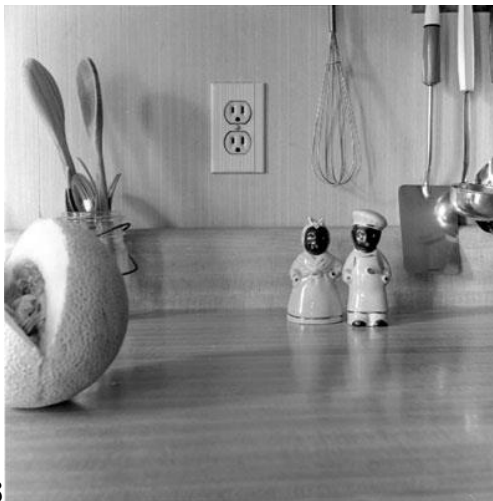
Examples of Weems' work include pieces from the different series she did including *Family Pictures (1)*, *Ain't Jokin (2)*, *American Icons (3)*, and *The Kitchen Table (4)*. These are examples of her well-known early works, later in her career Weems incorporated color into her photographs and began employing alternative processes in her images. An example of her later work that includes color and alternative process is an image from a series titled *Blue Notes (5)*.



1



2



3



4



5