

Artist Resources – Lorna Simpson (American, b. 1960)

[Lorna Simpson's website](#)

[Simpson at Hauser & Wirth](#)

In 1995, OPB profiled Simpson as she produced her large-scale silkscreen series, [Public Sex](#) for a show at the Sean Kelly Gallery in New York. View the episode in three parts as [Simpson works with a printmaker](#) in Portland Oregon, [works in the gallery](#), and [completes the installation](#) on opening day.

[BOMB Magazine](#) interviewed Simpson in 1997, discussing her shift to film and digital media with her first films, *Interior/Exterior*, *Full/Empty*, created during her residency at the Wexner Center for the Arts, and *Call Waiting* for [INSITE97](#). "Video installation allows me to play with the artifice or the facade of the individual and what this individual represents. It's still a way of working that's not realistic" Simpson explains. "The stories are short and brief, but they're all constructed. It allows me to have fun with the detail, and the glamour of using the figure within the moving image."

"In terms of ideas and choosing different mediums it really is generated by the idea that I have and when I am pushed technically or by genre into something I have never done before, it is because of an idea... so I feel that anything is possible in the work, in doing all these different things." Simpson explains in her [2010 artist talk](#) at the Walker Art Center, in honor of [the center's exhibition of their holdings of Simpson's work](#).

[The Aspen Museum of Art](#) presented the first exhibition dedicated to Simpson's drawings and collages in 2013, exploring her work with photographic archives and celebrating a [new series](#) created while she was Artist in Residence.

Simpson, 2015
Photograph: Menelik Puryear

"What's just as important as the photographic components are the more tactile, immediate elements, such as the inks I use...Working with ink is very much about being in the moment, and as a result there's a degree of subconsciousness that comes through, Simpson told [The Paris Review](#) in 2015.

In 2017, Simpson returned to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the site of [her first solo museum show in 1992](#), for [a mural commission](#) in the second-floor atrium, which builds on her photo-collage paintings.

[Simpson spoke with Thelma Golden](#), Director and Chief Curator of The Studio Museum in Harlem, in 2018 about her exhibition, [Lorna Simpson: Unanswerable](#) at Hauser & Wirth, London in a conversation that touched on her interest in collage, archives, transition into painting, and dealing with the topics of identity and representation.

[Darkening](#), Simpson's first solo show at Hauser & Wirth's New York gallery in 2019, presented large-scale paintings inspired by photographs of historical expeditions in arctic landscapes and the political climate in the United States. "I still have an interest and a desire for photography, but that does not necessarily mean making photographs...The work that I am doing now, these constructed images, these landscapes, and these faces that are surreal and superimposed upon one another, are not static at all, but surreal portraits," [Simpson told the gallery's New York Director in a studio visit](#).



Simpson in Brooklyn studio, 2019
Photograph: Sim Canetty-Clarke

Lorna Simpson (American, b. 1960)

Howling, 2020

Ink and screen print on gessoed fiberglass

Peterson Family Collection; L2020:82.1

Lorna Simpson emerged from the School of Visual Arts in New York and the University of California, San Diego, as a powerhouse of conceptual photography in the 1980s, quickly establishing herself one of the most important and innovative artistic voices of her generation. Over thirty-five years, Simpson has expanded her multi-faceted practice to explore complex themes of race, identity, gender, cultural representation, and human relationships. Her practice has encompassed bold pairings of photography and text, found images transformed by collage and screen printing, multi-screen video installations, printmaking, and in recent years, painting and sculpture.

Howling is a stellar example of an evolving series of large-scale paintings begun in 2018. It combines Simpson’s distinctive use of text and found images – cut from her favored sources of *Jet* and *Ebony* magazines – with timeworn photographs from arctic expeditions. Strips of text linger in the dripping azure haze, forming a curtain in the frozen landscape from which a woman’s face can be glimpsed peeking through, a mix of caution and daring in her eye. The shifting blues and layers of ink, paint, and digitally enhanced photography that define the series embody Simpson’s grief for the socio-political division, isolation, and unrest she feels increasingly permeating the United States. “It does feel like a preoccupation with an environment that is historically inhospitable, with very dire rules for survival,” she reflected in 2019, speaking of the works as psychological mirrors to the “heightened inhospitable condition” of daily life.

Extra Resources

[Simpson speaks about her most recent painted collage *Ice* series](#)

Simpsons [2017-18](#) and [2019](#) *Ice* series iterations



On view August 19 – November 22, 2020