

# GLADSTONE GALLERY

Tessa Solomon, "Carrie Mae Weems Makes History as First Black Woman to Win Prestigious Hasselblad Photography Prize," *ARTnews*, March 9, 2023

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### Carrie Mae Weems Makes History as First Black Woman to Win Prestigious Hasselblad Photography Prize



BY **TESSA SOLOMON** March 9, 2023 1:56pm



Carrie Mae Weems, *Kitchen Table Series (Woman Standing Alone)*, 1990.  
©CARRIE MAE WEEMS. COURTESY THE ARTIST, JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK, AND GALERIE BARBARA THUMM, BERLIN.

**Carrie Mae Weems**, one of the most influential artists working today, has added another accolade to her storied resume. The Hasselblad Foundation announced Wednesday that Weems was the winner of its 2023 Hasselblad Award, making her the first African American woman to claim one of the most prestigious honors bestowed on a living photographer.

Named after Swedish camera inventor Victor Hasselblad, the annual award acknowledges “significant achievement” in photography and is endowed with SEK 2,000,000 (about \$187,000). Previous winners include Nan Goldin, Graciela Iturbide, Walid Raad, Cindy Sherman, and Wolfgang Tillmans. Last year, **Dayanita Singh** became the first artist of South Asian descent to win the prize.

Over nearly four decades, Weems has explored the subjectivity of personal and global history through a racial and feminist lens. She has a prolific oeuvre that spans multimedia installation, video, and performance, but she’s most celebrated for her photography, which has a sparse composition that belie complex ruminations on familial and romantic entanglements. *The Kitchen Table Series (1990)*, considered a seminal body of contemporary photography, stars Weems herself and is set at a kitchen table. In each elegant black-and-white photo, Weems is the constant as the tableaux is rearranged with a cast of lovers, friends, and family who act upon each other. She’s both the protagonist and perpetual observer, “a guide into circumstances seldom seen,” according to Weems.

Her body of work has “anticipated salient issues of our time – the struggle for racial equality and human rights – with unflinching visual and ethical force,” the Hasselblad Foundation said in its citation for Weems, adding that “Her artistic practice is inherently activist, poignant, and lyrical. She creates evocative, potent tableaux and confronts painful histories, institutional power, and social discriminations.”

Weems will be honored with a gold medal at an award ceremony in Gothenburg, Sweden on October 13. That same day, an exhibition of her work will open at the Hasselblad Center and a new text about her practice will be released.

In a statement, Weems said: “In the midst of the radical shifts taking place across cultural institutions, and as the first African American woman to receive the Hasselblad Award, some might say, ‘it’s about time!’ Nevertheless, receiving the Hasselblad Award has left me speechless.”

“To be recognized comes with the continued responsibility to deliver on the promise made to myself and to the field, which is to shine a light into the darker corners of our time and thereby, with a sense of grace and humility, illuminate a path forward,” she added.