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Catherine D. Anspón, "Carrie Mae Weems' RESIST COVID/TAKE SIX 6! is More Than an Art Event," *Paper City*, September 25, 2020

PAPER CITY.

ARTS / MUSEUMS

Carrie Mae Weems' RESIST COVID/TAKE SIX 6! is More Than an Art Event

The Curator, the Artist, and the Patron Weigh in on the Ambitious Project

BY CATHERINE D. ANSPÓN // 09.25.20



Acclaimed contemporary artist Carrie Mae Weems, portrait courtesy of John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

Carrie Mae Weems has been hailed as our nation's best contemporary photographer. Now, an unprecedented collaboration of eight Dallas-Fort Worth art entities, led by the Dallas Contemporary, bring her ambitious public-health project to Dallas-Fort Worth. The curator, the artist, and the patron weigh in.

LAURIE ANN FARRELL, senior curator, Dallas Contemporary

On Carrie Mae Weems in the canon of contemporary art history.

LAF: Carrie is arguably one of the most significant American artists working today. She is a recipient of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation genius grant and is the first African-American artist to have a retrospective at the Guggenheim in New York. As an image maker of our time, Weems' work mines her own family and local community for content. Her "Kitchen Table Series" (1990-2003) paved the way for women in the arts as well as discussions around self representation.

On your relationship.

LAF: Carrie is a very generous friend, strong role model, and a fabulous human being. We've known each other for roughly 12 years, and we make an effort to keep in touch. I first worked with her in 2008 when I was at the Savannah College of Art and Design. At the Detroit Institute of Arts, I was proud to lead the acquisition of the last available "Kitchen Table Series" portfolio into the permanent collection.

Key components of RESIST COVID/ TAKE 6!

LAF: The DFW campaign's first phase uses billboards, public service announcements, public art projects, and other creative strategies in targeted DFW city neighborhoods to offer information aimed at curbing the spread of the virus. The campaign was conceived by Carrie and her longtime friend Pierre Loving. The graphics employ Carrie's photos combined with educational and life-affirming text. The second phase launching on September 4 includes more physical activations across Dallas and Fort Worth coupled with the distribution of reusable cloth face masks to DFW areas with high COVID-19 infection rates. Additionally, a series of promotional items will be made available at community centers, COVID-19 testing sites, food banks, and churches.

How RESIST COVID came to Texas.

LAF: The women curators across the DFW museums invited me to join them for their semi-regular dinner gatherings when I moved to Dallas a year ago. After Carrie shared her idea for this informational, public-facing campaign, I reached out to these curatorial colleagues to see if their institutions wanted to participate, pool resources, and stand together to try and raise awareness about ways to stay safe and help our surrounding communities. The project grew from these enthusiastic responses to create this unprecedented collaboration across the consortium of museums. We then reached out to Darryl Ratcliff as he had just formed his cultural consulting firm Gossypion, and worked together to assemble more than 50 community partners.



Carrie Mae Weems' church fans for RESIST COVID/TAKE 6!

CARRIE MAE WEEMS, Artist

On RESIST COVID in your body of work.

CMW: It's an artist-driven public awareness campaign, and therefore unique to that extent. It's also the only project of its kind. So, besides "Wash your hands and wear a mask," sadly most institutions and government agencies had failed to engage the public.

Why present this project in Texas?

CMW: If ever a city/state needed to raise awareness about the impact of COVID on both the population in general and people of color in particular, it's the great state of Texas where the number of infections and deaths from COVID have soared in recent weeks. Had the governor simply taken a stronger stand, more lives could have been saved. What's happened in Texas is a tragedy and a moral outrage. Regrettably, Texas isn't alone in its handling of the pandemic.



A lawn sign for Carrie Mae Weems' RESIST COVID/TAKE 6!

GEOFF GREEN, board member, Dallas Contemporary

Your role in making RESIST COVID happen in DFW.

GG: As soon as Laurie Ann Farrell told me about Carrie Mae Weems' project, I realized as an African-American board member I had to do whatever it took. Providing seed capital to start the ball rolling was a no-brainer to me.

Parting thought.

GG: RESIST COVID/TAKE SIX 6! is much more than an art event. It creates an opportunity for the Dallas Contemporary to save lives and engage the public to make a difference in communities that too often are invisible and historically discounted by society.

Carrie Mae Weems' RESIST COVID/TAKE 6!, through 2020; dallascontemporary.org.