

GLADSTONE

Carolina Benjumea, "Carrie Mae Weems: The Shape of Things | Gladstone Gallery," *Musée*,
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MUSÉE
VANGUARD OF PHOTOGRAPHY CULTURE

OCT 16 CARRIE MAE WEEMS: THE SHAPE OF THINGS | GLADSTONE GALLERY

Written by Carolina Benjumea



Carrie Mae Weems, *Painting the Town #24*, 2021, Archival pigment print, 59x 88 x 2 inches (149.9 x 223.5 x 5.1 cm) framed © Carrie Mae Weems Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York, Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, and Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin Photography by David Regen

In her urge to dismantle the oppressive systems that rule American politics and society, Carrie Mae Weems has created a body of work that is profound and complex. She focuses on the experiences of marginalized groups in the US, especially African Americans. Deeply intertwined with race, gender, and class, her rich work is more than just photographs; it is a deep exploration into the wounds of society.



Carrie Mae Weems, *Painting the Town #33*, 2021, Archival pigment print, 59 x 88 x 2 inches (149.9 x 223.5 x 5.1 cm) framed © Carrie Mae Weems Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York, Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, and Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin Photography by David Regen

The Gladstone Gallery in New York is presenting *Shape of Things*, Weems' latest artistic venture. The exhibition centers around a video installation in the form of a panoramic 19th-century cyclorama, a popular form of entertainment that traveled between towns, displaying 360° depictions of military conquests and battles. The 40-minute video, divided into seven parts, portrays scenes of police brutality against people of color, refugees attempting to enter the country, and the politically agitated climate the country is currently experiencing.



Installation view, Carrie Mae Weems: *The Shape of Things*, Gladstone Gallery, New York, 2024. © Carrie Mae Weems. Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York, Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, and Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin. Photo: David Regen

Alongside the cyclorama, the exhibition also displays large-scale photographs from her series *Painting the Town*, in which she photographed the erased graffiti made by protesters on walls following the murder of George Floyd. The powerful images create an aesthetic that is abstract, but at the same time, imprints a subversive nature by capturing a dark atmosphere, almost depicting an abandoned city.

With *The Shape of Things*, Carrie Mae Weems aims to create a conversation around the "circus of politics," as well as the rise of the right wing in the country. Her relentless political activism, characterized by a lack of self-censorship and an honest, humanistic portrayal of reality, is perfectly illustrated in this work.



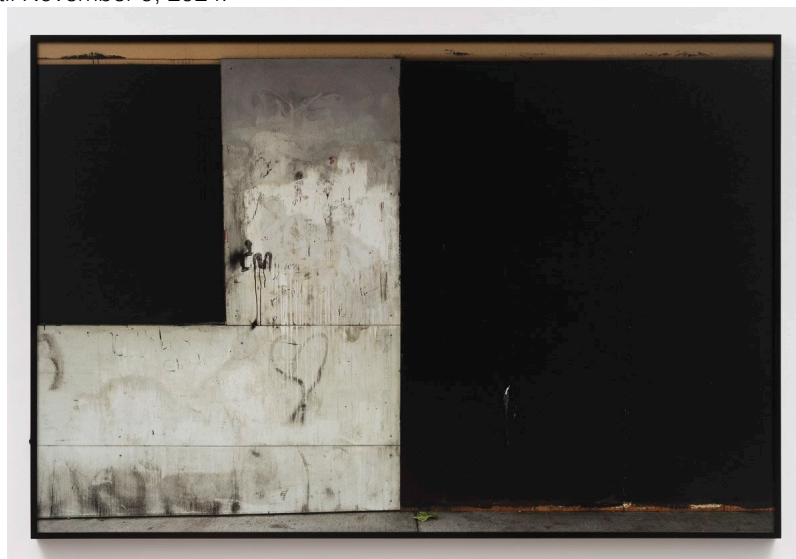
Carrie Mae Weems, *Painting the Town #1*, 2021, Archival pigment print, 59 x 88 x 2 inches (149.9 x 223.5 x 5.1 cm) framed © Carrie Mae Weems. Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York, Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, and Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin. Photo: David Regen

As we delve into her work, we discover the different nuances of human existence: the somber truths that surround us and the inevitable hope that unites us as a society. Her radical commentary on society imbues her work with a unique wit and poignant imagery, leaving the viewer emotionally moved and challenged to reflect on the society around them. This deep approach to image is not only evident in this exhibit but throughout her 40-year career. Installations such as *Land of Broken Dreams*, *Varying Shades of Brown*, and *It's Over — A Diorama* bear witness to Weems' commitment to social justice and raising awareness of the current state of the country.



Carrie Mae Weems, *Cyclorama-The Shape of Things*, A Video in 7 Parts, 2021, 7 parts video Duration: 40 minutes © Carrie Mae Weems Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York, Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, and Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin Photography by David Regen

Inviting reflection on the society that surrounds us, her work is saturated with a deep interest in showing the truth without filters, making it both uncomfortable and raw. Her ability to tell stories through images is powerful and stems from a sensitive approach to the human experience, which feels deeply personal. *The Kitchen Table Series*, one of her most iconic works, is an in-depth exploration of women's domestic lives, depicting themes of solitude, love, and identity. The solemnity of the photos evokes strong emotions in the viewer, with feelings of despair and sadness emerging from the poignant scenes. Already exhibited in various museums, *Shape of Things* returns to New York at the Gladstone Gallery and will be on display until November 9, 2024.



Carrie Mae Weems, *Painting the Town #5*, 2021, Archival pigment print, 59 x 88 x 2 inches (149.9 x 223.5 x 5.1 cm) framed © Carrie Mae Weems Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York, Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, and Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin Photography by David Regen