Published to accompany the mid-career museum retrospective of the same title, Carrie Mae Weems: Three Decades of Photography and Video illustrates overarching themes of gender, sexuality, and race present in the artist’s work. Weems, whose art is included in some of the nation’s most influential art repositories, has been the subject of over fifty solo exhibitions. Yet this exhibition catalog supplements current scholarship by bringing together the artist’s major bodies of work since the 1980s in a single source.

The foreword and introduction address Weems’ biography, highlights of her career thus far, and her mission as an artist. The four essays that follow explore themes of folklore and tradition in Weems’ work; the portrayal of African Americans through documentary versus the satirical takeover of racial stereotypes; Weems’ use of beauty, personal memory, and historical references; and the aspect of performance that surfaces through the artist’s choice to use her own body as subject. Authors include curators from the Frist Center and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and faculty from Harvard, Yale, and NYU.

About three-quarters of the book’s pages are plates, which are seen in both black and white and color. Perhaps this is the most exciting feature of this catalog, as roughly 200 images from nearly thirty different series and video projects are brought together at once. Front matter and short paragraphs preceding the series plates are written with enthusiasm and praise for the artist. Essays are more academic in nature, but both admirers and scholars alike will savor the abundant amount of illustrations.

Physically, the book is hardbound and sturdy. The matte black cloth it is covered with is adorned by silver text and a single image from Weems’ Roaming series, which creates a strikingly simple aesthetic. Back matter includes an extensive list of image credits, essay footnotes, artist biography and selected exhibition history, selected awards list, public collections list, and bibliography.

This exhibition catalog goes beyond museum souvenir, and will prove to be a useful reference source for modern and contemporary art libraries. It would also complement collections that span the fields of photography, gender studies, and African American identity, or any other organization whose holdings mirror themes present in Weems’ art.

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