Press Release

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Williams College Museum of Art Presents
Carrie Mae Weems: The Hampton Project
One Hundred Years of Difference
January 13–April 29, 2007

Williamstown, MA—the Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) presents Carrie Mae Weems: The Hampton Project. For twenty years, Carrie Mae Weems has made powerful artwork—often with a fiercely ironic sensibility—from complex social observations. In this installation, part of the museum's permanent collection, Weems knits her concerns about individual identity, class, assimilation, education, and the legacy of slavery into a series of photographic banners that force viewers to reassess their own moral and ethical boundaries, as well as the political and socioeconomic realities of twentieth-century America.

“\textit{I want to make things that are beautiful, seductive, formally challenging and culturally meaningful... I'm also committed to radical social change... Any form of human injustice moves me deeply... the battle against all forms of oppression keeps me focused.}”

Carrie Mae Weems
Weems’s *Hampton Project* is shaped in part as a response to the *Hampton Album* of 1900—vintage photographs by Frances Benjamin Johnston of the historically black Hampton Institute (now Hampton University) in Hampton, Virginia—and period images of African Americans and Native Americans. Her gaze is broad enough to encompass initial contacts between Anglos, African Americans, and Native Americans, the institution of slavery, the era of Jim Crow, the civil rights conflicts of the twentieth century, and the land claim disputes of the present. Weems’s ultimate focus, however, is her response to the philosophy of Hampton’s founder, and to historic and contemporary intersections of race, education, and the democratic ideal.

Weems comments, “I’m interested in the tangled web of history, in the rough edges, and the bumpy surface, the mess just beneath the veneer of order.” In her effort to get beneath the surface, her compelling installation incorporates digitized historic images that are transferred onto muslin banners and stretched canvas and a poetic narrative that resonates throughout the gallery. The exhibition also includes the vintage photographs comprising Frances Benjamin Johnston’s view of Hampton in 1900, putting the works of these two artists in dialogue with one another across a time span of 100 years.

**About the Artist**
Born in Portland, Oregon in 1953, Carrie Mae Weems earned a B.F.A. from California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, in 1981, and an M.F.A. from the University of California, San Diego, in 1984. She also pursued graduate studies in Folklore at UC Berkeley, and in 1999 was presented with an honorary doctorate from the California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland. Weems has taught extensively in colleges and universities throughout the country. New work by Weems has been commissioned by numerous organizations, including the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Chicago Public Library, the 47th Venice Biennale, and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art.
Related Programming

**Gallery Talk: Carrie Mae Weems: The Hampton Project**
Curator of the Collection Vivian Patterson previews this exhibition that sets vintage photographs by Francis Benjamin Johnston in dialogue with a moving installation by Carrie Mae Weems.
Wednesday, March 7
4:00 pm

The Williams College Museum of Art is open Tuesday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m. Admission is free and the museum is wheelchair accessible. Contact: Suzanne A. Silitch, Director of Public Relations and External Affairs, 413.597.3178; WCMA@williams.edu; www.wcma.org.