

Essays by
College
of Wooster
Student
Research
Contributors

POSING BEAUTY

IN AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURE



THE COLLEGE OF WOOSTER ART MUSEUM
EBERT ART CENTER / 1220 BEALL AVENUE / WOOSTER, OHIO 44691-2363

January 15–March 3, 2013

Curated by noted artist and photographic historian Deborah Willis, *Posing Beauty* explores the ways in which African and African American beauty has been represented in historical and contemporary contexts through a diverse range of media including photography, video, fashion, and advertising. Beauty in Western art and image-making has long been idealized and contested, and the relationship between beauty and art has become increasingly complex within contemporary art and popular culture.

The first of three conceptual themes in the exhibition, **Constructing a Pose**, considers the interplay between the historical and the contemporary, between self-representation and imposed representation, and the relationship between subject and photographer. The second theme, **Body & Image**, questions the ways in which our contemporary understanding of beauty has been constructed and framed through the body. The final theme, **Modeling Beauty & Beauty Contests**, invites us to reflect upon the ambiguities of beauty, its impact on mass culture and individuals, and how the display of beauty affects the ways in which we see and interpret the world and ourselves.

Artists represented in this exhibition of over 85 works include, among others: Ifetayo Abdus-Salam; Eve Arnold; Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe; Thomas Askew; Anthony Barboza; Sheila Pree Bright; Renee Cox; Edward Curtis; Bruce Davidson; Lola Flash; Leonard Freed; Lee Friedlander; Timothy Greenfield-Sanders; Charles “Teenie” Harris; Builder Levy; Jamel Shabazz; Mickalene Thomas; Carrie Mae Weems; and Garry Winogrand.

Left:

Ken Ramsay

(Jamaican, 1935–2008)

Susan Taylor, as Model, c. 1970s

Gelatin silver print

26 1/2 h x 20 w (inches)

**College of Wooster Student Research
Contributors from the *Museum Studies*
course, Fall 2012**

I would like to thank the students in the Fall 2012 *Museum Studies* course taught by Jay Gates, for their excellent insights and contributions to this exhibition. You were a joy to work with!

Kitty McManus Zurko
Director/Curator, CWAM

CONSTRUCTING A POSE

Isabelle Briggs '13, Africana Studies
Margaret Frick '14, History/Art History
Megan Smeznik '14, History
Emily Timmerman '13, Art History
Jessica Wingen '14, Anthropology

BODY AND IMAGE

Sarah Blosser '13, Chemistry
Abiose Spriggs '12, Studio Art
Hava Yoast-Hull '13, Studio Art

MODELING BEAUTY AND BEAUTY CONTESTS

Olivia Gregory '14, Anthropology
Melissa Ladd '15, Archaeology
Emily Mitchell '13, Art History
Maggie Roberts '13, Studio Art
James Parker '15, Art History
Shelby Pykare '13, Anthropology
Molly Sennett '15, Undeclared

POSING BEAUTY EVENTS

Opening Reception

Thursday, January 17, 6:30–8:00 p.m.
Gallery Talk at 7:00 p.m.

Faculty/Student Roundtable

Wednesday, January 23, 7:00–8:00 p.m.
CWAM's Sussel Gallery
Panelists: Isabelle Briggs '13,
Africana Studies; Panel Moderator,
Christa Craven, Chair, Women, Gender,
& Sexuality Studies; Charles F.
Peterson, Associate Professor of
Africana Studies; and Leslie Wingard,
Assistant Professor of English

Lunchtime Gallery Walk

Wednesday, February 6, 12:00–1:00 p.m.
Presentations by Student Research
Contributors

Curator's Lecture

Monday, February 11, 7:00–8:00 p.m.
Ebert Art Center, Rm. 223
Deborah Willis, *Posing Beauty* Curator

Music in the Galleries

Thursday, February 28, 7:00–8:00 p.m.
d.scott + the beautiful quartet

ASSOCIATED EVENTS

Students Speak to Beauty

This student-generated digital forum,
organized by the Center for Diversity
and Global Engagement (CDGE), will
play on multiple screens across
campus.

For other CDGE associated events
please visit: wooster.edu/offices/cdge

*This exhibition is presented at
The College of Wooster Art Museum
in collaboration with the College's
Center for Diversity and Global
Engagement and the Office of the
President. Additional support for this
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provided by the Muriel Kozlow
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Events Fund. A book by Deborah
Willis, Posing Beauty: African
American Images from the 1890s
to the Present (2009), accompanies
the exhibition. The exhibition tour
was organized by Curatorial
Assistance Traveling Exhibitions,
Pasadena, CA.*

CONSTRUCTING A POSE

Lola Flash (American, b. 1959)

Karisse, London, 2003

Digital color-coupler print

Courtesy of the artist

Karisse, London, 2003, comes from Lola Flash's *[sur]passing* series which focuses on how skin pigmentation complicates black identity. The title of this series is a pun on the phenomenon of "passing," when lighter skinned blacks "passed" for white in order to access certain benefits of white privilege. Flash's objective with the *[sur]passing* series was to recast black individuals with unique skin tones as being beyond the consideration of pigmentation and as members of a new generation that takes pride in flexible racial boundaries.

In *Karisse, London*, Flash situates her subject on a bridge over the Thames with the London skyline behind her at shoulder height. This gives the impression that the subject, Karisse, is carrying the weight of the city on her shoulders, or more metaphorically, prejudices and preconceptions about her identity. Yet Karisse's sweatshirt which boldly displays the initials NYC, distances her from London and places her in a strangely global interstitial narrative where she is both a Londoner and a New Yorker, yet not obviously one or the other. A more subtle point of reflection is the smattering of freckles on Karisse's face. Although her skin, features and even hairstyle indicate some African ancestry, her freckles suggest a less straightforward ethnicity.

Despite the visual incongruities of Karisse's identity that Flash highlights, there is no shyness or weakness in her stance. Karisse looks assertively into the camera with her hands planted firmly behind her and her shoulders thrown back carrying the skyline with confidence. On some level, it seems that Karisse and Flash are daring the viewer to question their own assumptions about both beauty and difference, while affirming that there is no shame in being different from everyone else.

Isabelle Briggs '13
Major: Africana Studies



Lola Flash (American, b. 1959)

Karisse, London, 2003

Digital color-coupler print

Courtesy of the artist

CONSTRUCTING A POSE

Bruce Davidson (American, b. 1933)

Couple Dancing in a Blues Bar in Chicago's South Side, 1962

Gelatin Silver Print

Courtesy of an anonymous lender, New York

Photographed by Bruce Davidson in 1962, *Couples Dancing in a Blues Bar in Chicago's South Side* tackles issues of African American culture, blues as a dance and musical form, and the beauty of both depicted in a single image. In a single image, Davidson captured not only the personal, intimacy of his subjects but also the political issues of the 1960s and the development of a unique African American culture in Chicago in the mid-twentieth century. According to the artist, such images depict the “gentle, dignified, joyous” human experiences that could be found during the violent period of the Civil Rights Movement.

Chicago was an idiosyncratic location where the northward migration of southern African Americans merged with their musical traditions. In particular, Chicago's South Side was the site of a dynamic black music scene that engaged with the “rougher, grittier styles closely linked to African-American folk tradition.”

Couple Dancing is gritty, almost raw in character, yet it is infused with the soft, gentle experience of a private encounter between the slow dancing couple. The happiness of the woman's face radiates the beauty of the human experience despite the turbulence of the time. The jukebox is a reminder of the blues music, while the party balloons and bar scene place the figures in the developing history and environment of Chicago's popular blues bars.



Bruce Davidson (American, b. 1933)

Couple Dancing in a Blues Bar in Chicago's South Side, 1962

Gelatin Silver Print

Courtesy of an anonymous lender,
New York

Margaret Frick '14

Double Major: History and Art History

CONSTRUCTING A POSE

Builder Levy (American, b. 1937)

Sunglasses and Curlers, Coney Island, New York, 1963

Varnished silver gelatin print

Courtesy of the artist

Growing up during both the McCarthy and Cold War eras, American photographer Builder Levy experienced the rejection of societies, ideologies, and people. Inspired by photographers such as Paul Strand and Dorothea Lange, Levy began photographing various social and communal groupings in America. These included inner city communities in New York City, the civil rights and peace movements in the 1960s, and the coalfields in Appalachia. Through photography, Levy sought to capture the hardscrabble realism of American society during the mid-twentieth century.

In *Sunglasses and Curlers*, Levi attempts to capture everyday events that occurred within the boundaries of social unrest during the 1960s. Unlike typical definitions of beauty, Levy's photograph alters the concept of perfection. In particular, this multiethnic and multiracial grouping represents the intermingling of communities. More importantly, though, Levy utilizes the sunglasses and the curlers to deconstruct beauty. Although they are only ordinary objects, the sunglasses and curlers explore the daily occurrences of life. In fact, their ordinary quality helps to visually establish the space where lives are lived. While we are only viewers looking back on a moment in history, Levy's photography portrays the casual interacting of diverse communities and reconstructs a different kind of beauty—that of the everyday.

Megan Smeznik, '14

Major: History



Builder Levy (American, b. 1937)
**Sunglasses and Curlers, Coney Island,
New York, 1963**

Varnished silver gelatin print

Courtesy of the artist

CONSTRUCTING A POSE

Jamel Shabazz (American, b. 1960)

Rude Boy from Back in the Days, 1980

Digital color-coupler print

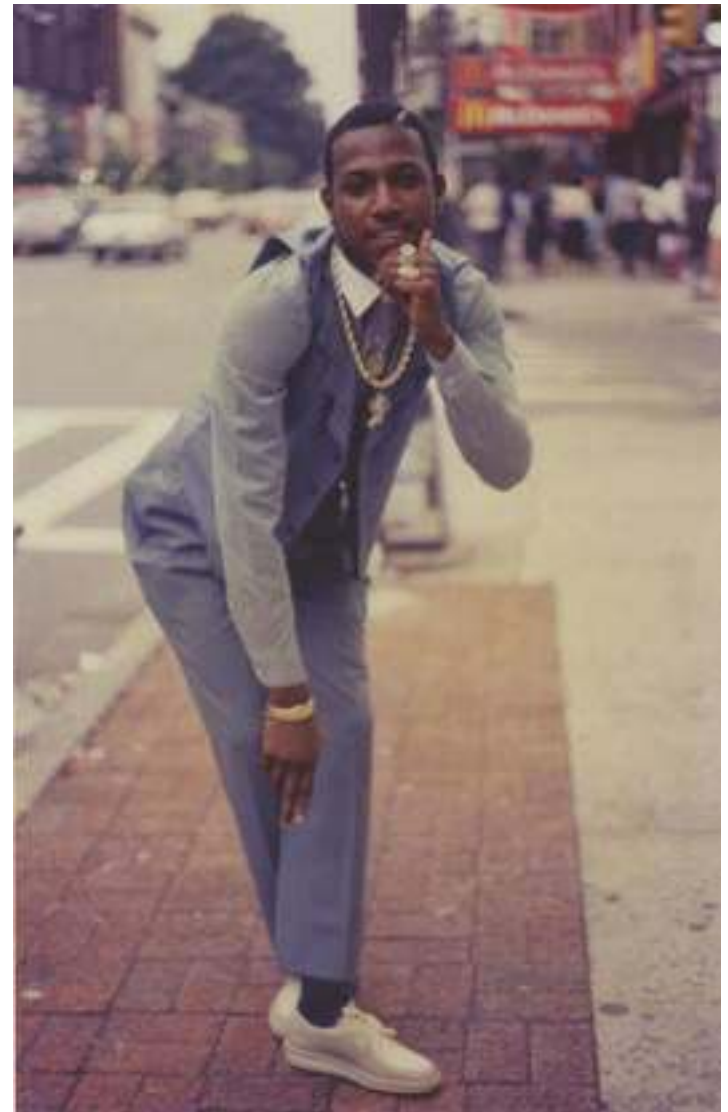
Courtesy of the artist

Jamel Shabazz's digital color-coupler print *Rude Boy from Back in the Days*, is representative of the exhibition's curator Deborah Willis' emphasis and study of the construction of pose in African American portraiture. This image illustrates Shabazz's ability to transcend the limitations of a single image and to communicate the personality and beauty of a subject. Taken in Brooklyn, New York, *Rude Boy* is part of a larger collection by Shabazz called *Back in the Days* that spanned from 1980 to 1989.

Using candid street photography style, Shabazz's stated goal was to capture the subjects "sight and innermost thoughts, all the while invoking a myriad of emotion and exposing the inner beauty that exists through struggle." Shabazz did not pose his subjects. Instead, he let them choose their own stance, thus allowing them to choose how they wished to be seen by others. While the identity of the subject is unknown, he is anything but anonymous—he puts his character on display. The beauty of this figure is found in his ease of self-expression; nothing in his pose looks forced or assumed. Instead, he looks comfortable and as if he belongs in his environment. His own self-possessed identity is what makes him beautiful.

Emily Timmerman '13

Major: Art History



Jamel Shabazz (American, b. 1960)

Rude Boy from Back in the Days, 1980

Digital color-coupler print

Courtesy of the artist

CONSTRUCTING A POSE

Bruce Davidson (American, b. 1933)

Bodybuilder on Venice Beach, California, 1964

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of an anonymous lender, New York

The *Constructing A Pose* section of this exhibition explores the “duality” of posing that is both personal and political according to the exhibition’s curator Deborah Willis. In her essay, Willis states that a pose can both be read in an aesthetic context conceived from how pleasing the pose is to the eye, and also in a cultural context by looking at the symbolic meaning of a pose. In other words, a simple pose can reveal cultural norms that are unknown to the viewer.

In this 1964 photograph by Bruce Davidson, the artist reveals a glimpse into the bodybuilding culture of Venice Beach, California. On first glance, the photo seems to explore the aesthetic aspects of Willis’ proposition as the pose is a showcase of the time and care the subject has put into his body by eating well and spending time in the gym sculpting his muscles by lifting weights. Within a cultural context, however, a deeper, political aspect to this photo is revealed through the objectification of the bodybuilder being photographed by the white woman as he takes his pose.

Jessica Wingen '13

Major: Anthropology



Bruce Davidson (American, b. 1933)

Bodybuilder on Venice Beach, California, 1964

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of an anonymous lender, New York

BODY AND IMAGE

Ifétayo Abdus-Salam (American, b. 1983)

From the “American Exotic” Series: Self Portrait as Pam Grier, 2005

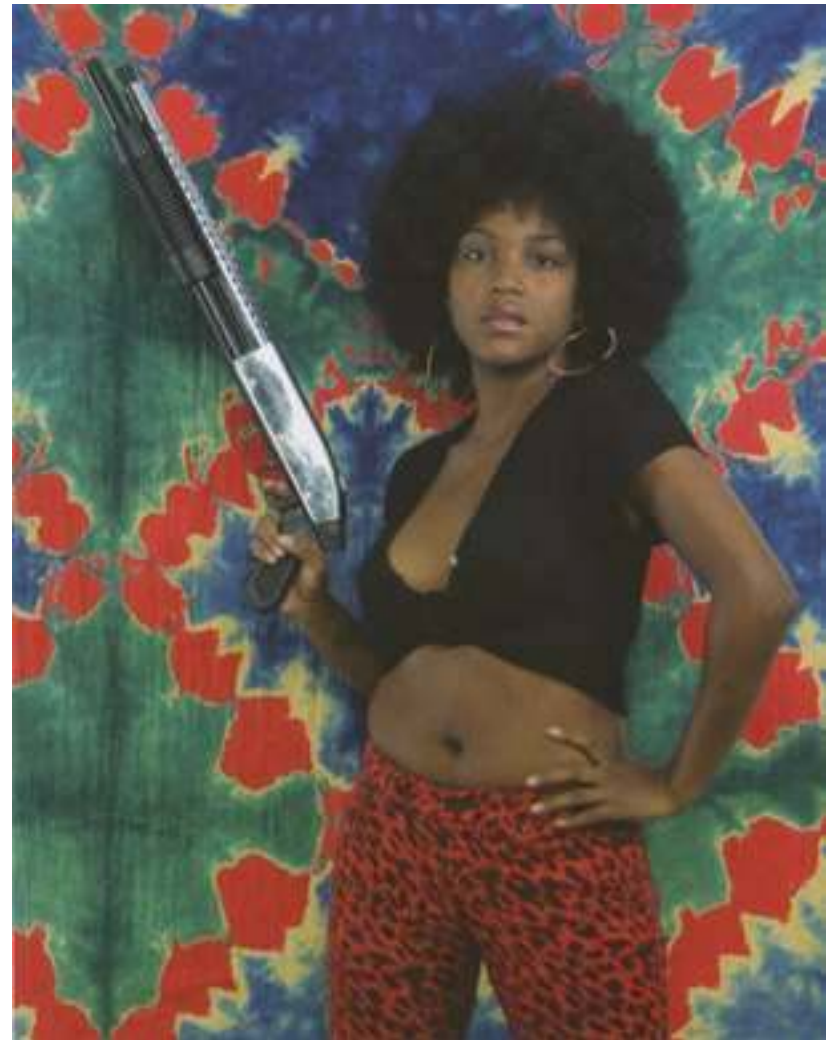
Archival Inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

This image is one of five in a series by Ifétayo Abdus-Salam titled *American Exotic*, where the artist portrays herself as well-known female African American entertainers in order to examine the hyper-sexualized perceptions of black women created by the entertainment industry over the last 40 years. In this staged photograph, Abdus-Salam portrays actress Pam Grier, who was once referred to as “the first female action star” by acclaimed director Quentin Tarantino. Grier is perhaps best known for her multiple anti-heroine roles in “blaxploitation” films.

The blaxploitation genre emerged during the Black Power Era of the 1970s, and was intended for an urban black audience. The genre was controversial, and gained support from young African Americans while being denounced by associations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) because women in these films, including Grier, wore revealing clothing as a way to purposely reject the ideals of “respectability.” Abdus-Salam’s revealing outfit and Afro puff hairstyle emulates how Grier appeared in numerous films, and the gun she poses with represents power and is also a reference to the blaxploitation genre.

Despite the original intentions of Grier and other women of the blaxploitation genre who wore revealing clothing as a form of protest, the intent has been misconstrued over the years. Interpretation of these women’s outfits has been oversimplified, even suggesting that the hyper-sexualized appearance was normal for the time and represented a normative standard of African American beauty. By appropriating this 1970s genre and inserting herself into the images in 2005, Abdus-Salam attempts to raise questions about the difficulties of using extremely sexualized images of black women as standards of beauty in contemporary society.

Sarah L. Blosser '13
Major: Chemistry



Ifétayo Abdus-Salam (American, b. 1983)
**From the “American Exotic” Series:
Self Portrait as Pam Grier, 2005**
Archival Inkjet print
Courtesy of the artist

BODY AND IMAGE

Sheila Pree Bright (American, b. 1965)

From the *Plastic Bodies Series*, 2005

Digital print

Courtesy of the artist

Plastic Bodies, contrasts trends of Eurocentric beauty culture by using the fragmented bodies of ethnic women merged with dolls. The work contrasts idolatry with the way that society views beauty. The series examines propagandized standards of perfection in female body and beauty politics portrayed in mainstream media. More importantly, it examines the global assimilation of cultures, ethnicities, and loss of personal identity many women of color experience as a result.

—Sheila Pree Bright

Sheila Pree Bright's photographs depict Afro-American Barbie dolls fused with real Afro-American adult woman thru digital alteration. The right side of the face in this piece is where you see the human image merged with the plastic Barbie. One of the first things I noticed after looking at the photograph is the distinct difference of eye color. The left eye is green or blue, and comes from the Barbie along with overly exaggerated eyelashes. This is without a doubt a subconscious way to slip Eurocentric ideas of beauty into the minds of minority girls and reaffirms the need to buy into mainstream ideas of beauty. These subtle and somewhat alarming visual morphs by Pree Bright suggest that such ideals of beauty being produce by the Mattel Corporation, more importantly society, do not reflect the numerous views that women of all colors have on beauty in society today.

Abiose Spriggs '12

Major: Studio Art



Sheila Pree Bright (American)

From the *Plastic Bodies Series*, 2005

Digital print

Courtesy the artist

BODY AND IMAGE

Charles "Teenie" Harris (American, 1908–1998)

Lena Horne at Mirror in Her Dressing Room at the Stanley Theatre, Pittsburgh, 1944-45

Gelatin silver print

Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Heinz Family Fund,
Charles "Teenie" Harris Archive

Through his photography, Charles "Teenie" Harris told a story about African American culture in the twentieth century. Harris grew up in Pittsburgh in the heart of the Hill District, where he became a "rare sort of photographic artist who came of age in the heyday of image-driven newspapers, illustrated magazines, and storefront photography studios." His portraits, news photos and street photography from the 1930s to the 1970s explored racial discrimination, segregation and unemployment. He also documented the beauty, dignity, pleasures, and passions of his community.

Harris admired the legendary entertainer Lena Horne (1917–2010). It has been said that Horne's light complexion helped her break into the entertainment business, in part, because whites found her attractive. An accomplished singer, actress and dancer, Horne was also a civil rights activist.

In this photograph, Harris chose to photograph Horne in her dressing room, which is unusual because most pictures of the actress from this period were glamorous pin-ups. This somewhat unconventional photograph focuses closely on her in a moment of reflection, where she sits before a makeup table in her dressing room with her back to the viewer. The mirror frames her reflection, and her profile is dramatically lit with her elegant shoulders and upper back exposed. A Western Union Telegram taped to the mirror suggests that Horne already has a growing national reputation by age 27 when this photograph was taken. As her career progressed, she continued to be a role model and was increasingly inspirational to other African Americans.

Hava Yoast-Hull '12
Major: Studio Art



Charles "Teenie" Harris
(American, 1908–1998)

Lena Horne at Mirror in Her Dressing Room at the Stanley Theatre, Pittsburgh, 1944-45

Gelatin silver print

Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh,
Heinz Family Fund, Charles "Teenie"
Harris Archive

MODELING BEAUTY AND BEAUTY CONTESTS

Anthony Barboza (American, b. 1944)

Pat Evans, c. 1970s

Digital Print

Courtesy of the artist

During the 1970s and 1980s, the world-renowned African American photographer Anthony Barboza found himself living in a world of ongoing racial inequality. Despite the end of the Civil Rights Movement, it was clear that African Americans still had a long road toward achieving racial parity. Against this cultural backdrop, Anthony Barboza began to photograph prolific African American celebrities that represented power, strength, and intelligence. Barboza best illustrates these concepts in this photograph of Pat Evans.

The African American and Native American model Pat Evans was known for her rebellious nature within the modeling world. For years, African Americans had struggled to fit within the boundaries of white models and photographers, but during the 1970s, African American models were expected to grow and straighten their hair in order to appear more “white.” Pat Evans was dissatisfied with this false portrayal of African American beauty and decided that in order for this pattern to change, something drastic needed to happen. Evans pushed the boundaries by completely shaving her head.

This portrait accentuates Evans’ strong, profound, and unique profile. The empty background accentuates Evans’ poise and beauty as the studio lights reflect off her radiant skin and high cheekbones, highlighting the natural flawlessness of her body. Her eyes are gently closed and her head is tilted upward, making her posture nothing less than perfect. The simple jewelry hangs on Evans’ is noticeable, yet does not take away from her effortless exquisiteness. This image of the courageous Pat Evans deliberately evokes a sense of power within the viewer, emphasizing the influential message that Barboza was trying to convey about the uniqueness of African American beauty.

Olivia Gregory '14
Major: Anthropology



Anthony Barboza (American, b. 1944)

Pat Evans, c. 1970s

Digital Print

Courtesy of the artist

MODELING BEAUTY AND BEAUTY CONTESTS

Eve Arnold (American, 1912–2012)

In Harlem, Arlene Hawkins, Model With Afro Puff, 1968

Vintage Silver Gelatin Print

Tosca Photography Fund

Eve Arnold was a photographer best known for her work photographing the actress Marilyn Monroe, and was the first (and only one of five) woman ever to be signed on by the Magnum Agency, which specializes in model and celebrity photography. This image of Arlene Hawkins, an African American model, was taken in the late 1960s in Harlem in New York City.

Arnold used the style of celebrity photographs in this image to show the power and beauty of black women in the 1960s. Wearing a simple dress, the model Arlene Hawkins stands in front of a white-brick wall. The pose encourages the viewer to investigate the beauty of the female African American as Hawkins gazes into a hand mirror, admiring her own reflection. In a way, this action encourages the viewer to acknowledge not only Hawkins' beauty, but also the black and white of the photograph, which to many is considered beautiful. Fundamentally however, the overall manner in which Hawkins so boldly presents herself to the viewer says, "This is who I am. I am beautiful. No one can change this, and I don't want them to."

Melissa Ladd '15
Major: Archaeology



Eve Arnold (American, 1912–2012)

**In Harlem, Arlene Hawkins, Model
With Afro Puff, 1968**

Vintage Silver Gelatin Print

Tosca Photography Fund

MODELING BEAUTY AND BEAUTY CONTESTS

Leonard Freed (American, 1929–2006)

Black in White America: Harlem, New York, 1963

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of Bruce Silverstein Gallery, New York

Copyright Leonard Freed

Leonard Freed was one of many photographers who documented the Civil Rights movement in America. Freed took photographs of Civil Rights leaders and of riots, but he also undertook a project to document the daily lives of black Americans. He called this project *Black in White America*. This photograph from that series shows a parade of local beauty contest contestants lined up for judging in a Harlem theater. They look elegant and poised, as they wait to hear the results of their competition. We do not know the rules of this particular contest, what the prizes were, or why these women chose to participate.

We do know that this image was taken at the height of popularity for the televised Miss America pageant, which until 1970 when Cheryl Brown of Iowa represented her state, had never had a black contestant. The only black women that had appeared onstage at Miss America were cast as slaves for a musical number in 1923. In 1968, the Miss Black America Pageant was born in Atlantic City, though it wasn't until 1984, 21 years after this image was taken, that a black woman, Vanessa Williams, won the title of Miss America.

Emily L. Mitchell '13

Major: Art History



Leonard Freed (American, 1929-2006)

**Black in White America: Harlem,
New York, 1963**

Courtesy of Bruce Silverstein Gallery,
New York

Copyright Leonard Freed

MODELING BEAUTY AND BEAUTY CONTESTS

Timothy Greenfield-Sanders (American, b. 1952)

Serena Williams from *The Black List Project*, 2008

Digital print

Courtesy of the artist

Modeling Beauty and Beauty Contests explores contemporary understandings of beauty by framing the notion of aesthetics, race, class, and gender within art, popular culture, and political contexts.

—Deborah Willis, Curator. *Posing Beauty*

This photograph of tennis megastar Serena Williams does what *Posing Beauty* exhibition curator Deborah Willis contends in this section of the exhibition; it both frames and reveals not only Williams' accomplishments as a woman, but her strength as an African American tennis player. In the United States, tennis has generally been recognized as a white sport. Serena Williams broke through that barrier because according to *Newsweek* journalist Allison Samuels, Williams recognized race as part of her motivation to succeed.

This photograph by Timothy Greenfield-Sanders portrays Williams as a secure woman. It is part of the photographer's series *The Black List*, which is a "who's who" of African American men and women who share the common denominator of activism. In this photograph Williams holds her hands delicately together in a feminine manner on her right hip. Yet, the photograph also reveals great strength, as if to say, "I won't back down, no matter what the cost." Here Serena is taken out of her tennis environment, and is instead dressed in a black sweater dress with a shiny black belt loosely fastened around her waist. She comes across as a woman of sport, beauty and classical qualities who has played a crucial role in African American society. However, it is Serena's reputation on the court that makes the viewer consider her as an African American woman who strives for success and domination off the court.

Serena Williams and her sister Venus broke through the race/gender barrier by becoming two of the first African American women to achieve national and international success in a sport dominated by whites. Serena Williams established a dedication, strategy and support system as an African American athlete, which helped her to evolve into a positive role model for women athletes and spectators all over the world.

Maggie Roberts '13

Major: Studio Art



Timothy Greenfield-Sanders (American, b. 1952)

Serena Williams from *The Black List Project*, 2008

Digital print

Courtesy of the artist

MODELING BEAUTY AND BEAUTY CONTESTS

Timothy Greenfield-Sanders (American, b. 1952)

Portrait of Michelle Obama, 2006

Digital print

Courtesy of the artist

She came to the house a few years ago when President Obama was a mere senator. She needed a single photo, I got the shot, and said wonderful, we're done . . . I wish I had shot 20 rolls.

—Timothy Greenfield-Sanders

In the 2006 quote above, Timothy Greenfield-Sanders recalls a photo shoot with Michelle Obama when Barack Obama was still an Illinois senator. Greenfield-Sanders commented that her personality was enough for him to want to photograph her more.

A renowned American photographer Greenfield-Sanders is best known for his work with wounded American soldiers, photographing Lou Reed, and for producing multiple volumes of *The Black List*, a series of portraits showcasing the accomplishments of well-known African Americans. Although Michelle Obama's portrait is not a part of *The Black List*, he believes it to be one of his most important works and, according to the artist, the now First Lady had a poise that filled the room; "She's an extremely easy person to feel comfortable around." It is this kind of repose and composure that photographers need to have to make their subject feel at ease, and as Greenfield-Sanders further comments, "That's what I do as well—try to make people feel comfortable around me."

James Parker '15

Major: Art History



Timothy Greenfield-Sanders
(American, b. 1952)

Portrait of Michelle Obama, 2006

Digital print

Courtesy of the artist

MODELING BEAUTY AND BEAUTY CONTESTS

Eve Arnold (American, 1912–2012)

Black Debutante Ball, Waldorf Hotel, New York, 1964

Gelatin silver print

Tosca Photography Fund

It doesn't matter if you use a box camera or a Leica, the important thing is what motivates you when you are photographing. What I have tried to do is involve the people I was photographing. To have them realize without saying so, that it was up to them to give me whatever they wanted to give me . . . if they were willing to give, I was willing to photograph.

—Eve Arnold

Eve Arnold, born April 12, 1912 to Russian immigrant parents, did not take up photography until the 1940s. She travelled extensively photographing minorities and those in the margins as well as celebrities such as Marilyn Monroe. She passed away in January 2012 at the age of 99. In her lifetime, Arnold published twelve books and received numerous awards such as being elected Master Photographer by New York's International Center of Photography in 1995.

This photograph taken by Arnold depicts a black debutante ball in New York City at the Waldorf Hotel. Although a common practice among elite white families, the black elite adopted this tradition as well, and it has continued to the present-day as a rite of passage for many African American girls. This particular photograph, taken from behind the couples lined up in two rows and in black and white, makes it difficult to identify the ethnicities of the young men and women at first glance. This debutante ball was held to raise funds for the black cause during the civil rights movement. During the same year as the ball, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed which made discrimination in hiring, based on sex and race, illegal.



Eve Arnold (American, 1912–2012)
**Black Debutante Ball, Waldorf Hotel,
New York, 1964**

Gelatin silver print

Tosca Photography Fund

Shelby Pykare '13

Major: Anthropology

MODELING BEAUTY AND BEAUTY CONTESTS

John W. Mosley (American, 1907–1969)

Atlantic City, Four Women, c. 1960s

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of Charles L. Blockson,
Afro American Collection,
Temple University

John W. Mosley was an American photographer active during much of the 20th century. He photographed both black and white celebrities ranging from Jackie Robinson to President Eisenhower to Albert Einstein. His true passion, however, was in photographing the African American residents of his hometown of Philadelphia going about their daily activities.

In this particular work, Mosley photographed four beautiful, black women at the beach in Atlantic City. This stretch of beach, known to locals as Chicken Bone Beach, was a popular hangout for the black youth and families of Atlantic City where they came together to enjoy each other's company. As evidenced by the style of bathing suits that the women are wearing, this photograph was taken during the 1960s, a revolutionary era for the rights of American blacks. These unnamed women display not only beauty, but also self-assuredness as they pose, make direct eye contact with the camera, and have genuine smiles. Mosley's photograph illustrates that even during a socially tumultuous era, beauty can be found in a place as simple as the local beach.

Molly Sennett '15
Major: Undeclared



John W. Mosley (American, 1907–1969)

Atlantic City, Four Women, c. 1960s

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of Charles L. Blockson, Afro American
Collection, Temple University