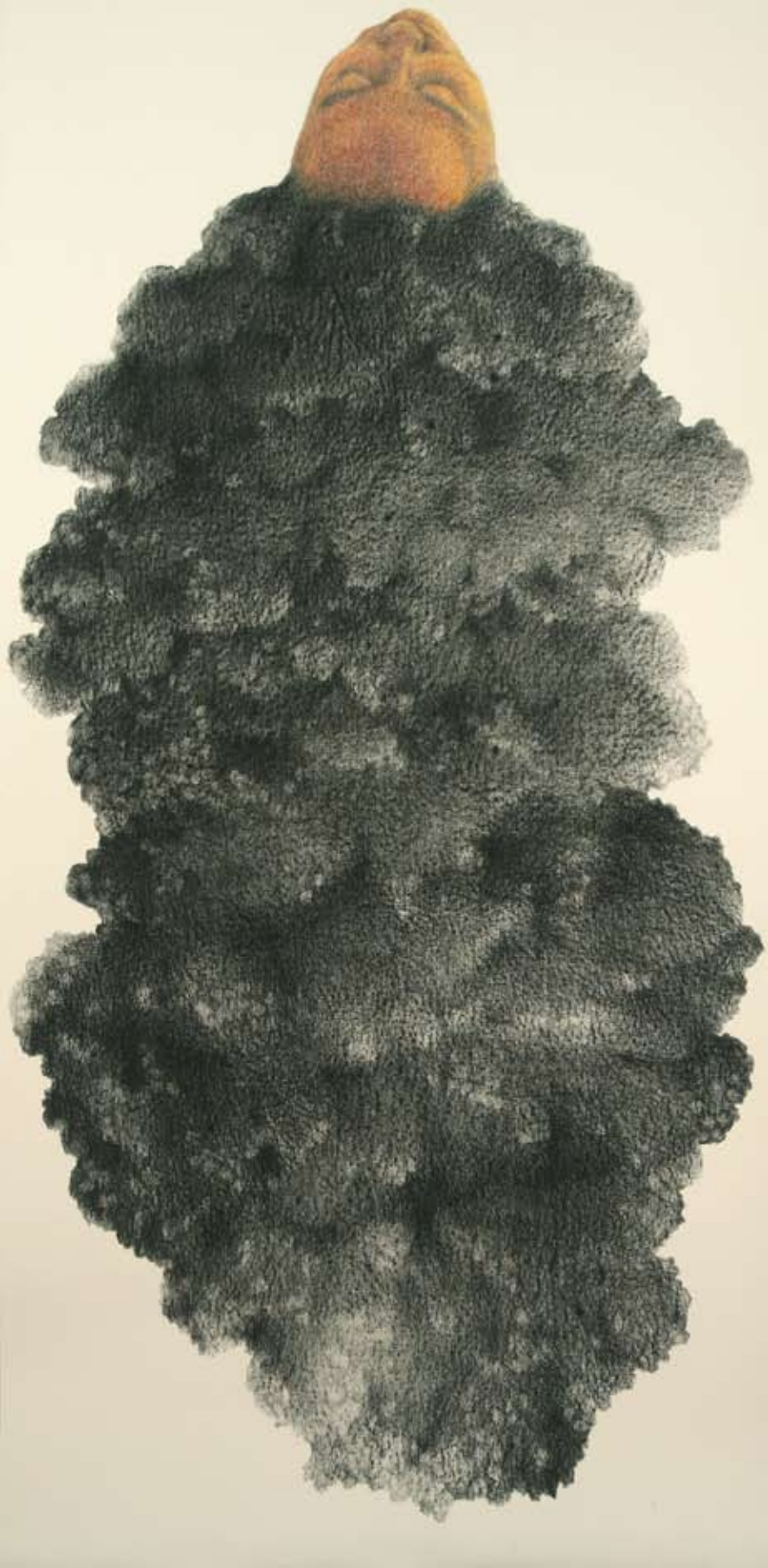




# Undercover

Performing and Transforming Black Female Identities

September 10 – December 5, 2009



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The Spelman College Museum of Fine Art is proud to present *Undercover: Performing and Transforming Black Female Identities*, an original exhibition, which examines the social implications of race, gender, and disguise. *Undercover* considers the complicated practice of black women disguising themselves as well as the historic trend of others camouflaging themselves as black women. The exhibition includes painting, photographs, sculpture, video, and works on paper, that were created from 1926 to today. *Undercover* investigates relevant topics such as self-portraiture, masquerade, cross-dressing, and blackface performance. It features more than 75 works and engages three overlapping themes: disguise, fragment, and adornment.

*Undercover* is based on the premise that people manipulate their outward appearance for a variety of reasons including: to alter their identity, to gain access that they would not otherwise have, to earn the trust of an individual or an organization, to deflect attention, to mimic, or to garner confidential information. While going undercover is popularly affiliated with law enforcement and espionage, here it is regarded as a critical strategy for artists to carry out or debunk cultural traditions, confront or reinforce stereotypes, explore fetishes, and challenge sociocultural norms.

*Undercover* includes works by well-known artists including Lorraine O'Grady, Cindy Sherman, Lorna Simpson, Doris Ulmann, and James VanDerZee. It also introduces promising emerging and midcareer artists such as Renée Cox, Lalla Essaydi, Ellen Gallagher, Myra Greene, Lyle Ashton Harris, Lauren Kelley, Kalup Linzy, Nandipha Mntambo, Magdalene Odundo, Berni Searle, and many others. Countless exhibitions have examined identity and race. *Undercover*, however, explores broader perspectives about black women and disguise for the first time and approaches the theme of identity anew.

We invite you to investigate how masks, mascara, and masquerade intersect in *Undercover: Performing and Transforming Black Female Identities*.

Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, Ph.D.

*Director, Spelman College Museum of Fine Art and exhibition co-curator*

Karen Comer Lowe

*Director, Comer Art Advisory and exhibition co-curator*

## Exhibition Checklist

**Mequitta Ahuja**, American (b. 1976)  
*Tress I*, 2008  
waxy chalk on paper  
96 x 45 inches  
Courtesy the artist and Artist Pension Trust, New York

**Mequitta Ahuja**, American (b. 1976)  
*Tress IV*, 2009  
waxy chalk on paper  
96 x 45 inches  
Courtesy the artist and BravinLee programs

**Emma Amos**, American (b. 1938)  
*Work Suit*, 1994  
acrylic on linen canvas with African fabric borders and photo transfer  
74 x 54 inches  
Courtesy the artist

**Sheila Pree Bright**, American (b. 1967)  
4 photographs from the *Plastic Bodies* series, 2003  
*Untitled #2*  
*Untitled #10*  
*Untitled #14*  
*Untitled #18*  
all c-prints  
24 x 30 inches each  
Courtesy the artist

**Nick Cave**, American (b. 1959)  
*Sound Suit*, 2005  
mixed media  
100 x 31 x 26 inches  
Courtesy the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA, Purchase with David C. Driskell African American Art Acquisition Fund, 2007.25

**Renée Cox**, Jamaican-American (b. 1960)  
*The Discreet Charm of the Bougies - Miss Thang*, 2008  
archival digital print on aluminum  
30 x 40 inches  
Courtesy the artist

**Renée Cox**, Jamaican-American (b. 1960)  
*The Discreet Charm of the Bougies - Missy At Home*, 2008  
archival digital print on aluminum  
30 x 40 inches  
Courtesy the artist

**Renée Cox**, Jamaican-American (b. 1960)  
*Hot-En-Tot*, 1994  
gelatin silver print  
48 x 60 inches  
Courtesy the artist

**Lalla Essaydi**, Moroccan (b. 1956)  
*Les Femmes du Maroc #23 (The Women of Morocco #23)*, 2006  
C41 print mounted on aluminum  
each panel 60 x 38 inches  
Courtesy the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover New Hampshire; Purchased through the Robert J. Strassenburch II 1942 Fund

**Ellen Gallagher**, American (b. 1965)  
*DeLuxe*, 2004/2005  
portfolio of 60 etchings with photocravure, spitbite, collage, cutting, scratching, silkscreen, plasticine, offset lithography, and hand buliding  
13 x 10½ inches each  
Courtesy the Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation

**Myra Greene**, American (b. 1975)  
*Untitled* from the series *Character Recognition*, 2004 – 2007  
16 ambrotypes on black glass  
3 x 4 inches each  
Courtesy the artist

**Lyle Ashton Harris**, American (b. 1965)  
*Blue #3*, 2008  
pigment print, edition of 10  
40 x 34 inches  
Courtesy the artist and Adamson Gallery, Washington, DC



Renée Cox, *The Discreet Charm of the Bougies - Missy at Home* (detail), 2008, 30 x 40 inches, archival print on aluminum  
Courtesy the artist.

**Lyle Ashton Harris**, American (b. 1965)  
*Blue #5*, 2008  
pigment print, edition of 10  
40 x 34 inches  
Courtesy the artist and Adamson  
Gallery, Washington, DC

**Lyle Ashton Harris**, American (b. 1965)  
*Billie #1*, 2008  
pigment print, edition of 10  
40 x 34 inches  
Courtesy the artist and Adamson  
Gallery, Washington, DC

**Lyle Ashton Harris**, American (b. 1965)  
*The America Series: Miss Girl*,  
1987–1988  
gelatin silver print  
60 x 40 inches  
Collection of Kimberly and Elliot Perry

**Lyle Ashton Harris**, American (b. 1965)  
*The America Series: Miss America*,  
1987–1988  
gelatin silver print  
60 x 40 inches  
Collection of Kimberly and Elliot Perry

**Lyle Ashton Harris**, American (b. 1965)  
*The America Series: Lyle, Kim and  
Crinoline*, 1987–1988  
gelatin silver print  
60 x 40 inches  
Collection of Kimberly and Elliot Perry

**Lauren Kelley**, American (b. 1975)  
*Get the Bones from 88 Jones*, 2008  
single channel video  
6:41 minutes  
Courtesy the artist

**Marcia Kure**, Nigerian (b. 1970)  
*Dress I Wish I Could Wear-Feathered  
Hat*, 2006  
kolanut pigment and watercolor on  
paper  
11 x 7½ inches  
Collection of Nancy Delman Portnoy

**Marcia Kure**, Nigerian (b. 1970)  
*Dress I Wish I Could Wear-Baby Cells*,  
2006  
kolanut pigment and watercolor on  
paper  
11 x 7½ inches  
Collection of Nancy Delman Portnoy

**Marcia Kure**, Nigerian (b. 1970)  
*Hormones-0.5 Tons*, 2006  
kolanut pigment and watercolor on  
paper  
11 x 7½ inches  
Collection of Nancy Delman Portnoy

**Marcia Kure**, Nigerian (b. 1970)  
*Hormones-Is a Tree Growing in My  
Head?*, 2006  
kolanut pigment and watercolor on  
paper  
11 x 7½ inches  
Collection of Nancy Delman Portnoy

**Marcia Kure**, Nigerian (b. 1970)  
*Model II with Gagon Mask*, 2004  
kolanut pigment and watercolor on  
paper  
11 x 7½ inches  
Courtesy the artist and BravinLee  
programs

**Marcia Kure**, Nigerian (b. 1970)  
*untitled* (masquerade with bird and  
feather), 2004  
kolanut pigment and watercolor on  
paper  
11 x 7½ inches  
Courtesy the artist and BravinLee  
programs

**Deana Lawson**, American (b. 1979)  
*Diva at 73 Yrs. Old*, 2009  
pigment print  
32 x 40½ inches  
Courtesy the artist

**Kalup Linzy**, American (b. 1977)  
*Chewing Gum and Dirty Trade* from  
*SweetBerry Sonnet*, 2008  
video  
9:52 minutes  
Courtesy the artist and Taxter &  
Spengemann, New York



Magdalene Odundo, *Mangbetu*, 1993, reduced red clay, 15¼ x 12 x 15 inches. Courtesy the Birmingham Museum of Art; Museum purchase.



Myra Greene, American, *Untitled* from the series *Character Recognition*, 2004–2007, ambrotype on black glass, 3 x 4 inches each. Courtesy the artist.

**Beverly McIver**, American (b. 1962)  
*Dear God, I, II, III, and IX*, 2003  
 oil on canvas  
 30 x 30 inches each  
 Courtesy the artist and LewAllen  
 Contemporary, Santa Fe, NM

**Nandipha Mntambo**, South African  
 (b. 1982)  
*Europa*, 2008  
 archival ink on cotton rag paper  
 Paper size: 44 x 44 inches  
 Courtesy the artist and Michael  
 Stevenson Gallery, Cape Town

**Nandipha Mntambo**, South African  
 (b. 1982)  
*Mlwa ne Nkunzi*, 2008  
 diptych, archival ink on cotton rag  
 paper  
 44 x 33 inches each  
 Courtesy the artist and Michael  
 Stevenson Gallery, Cape Town

**Nandipha Mntambo**, South African  
 (b. 1982)  
*Ukungenisa*, 2007  
 video  
 2:30 minutes  
 Courtesy the artist and Michael  
 Stevenson Gallery, Cape Town

**Zanele Muholi**, South African (b. 1972)  
*Closer to my heart II*, 2005  
 Lambda print  
 31 x 23 inches  
 Courtesy the artist and Michael  
 Stevenson Gallery, Cape Town

**Zanele Muholi**, South African (b. 1972)  
*Closer to my heart IV*, 2005  
 Lambda print  
 31 x 23 inches  
 Courtesy the artist and Michael  
 Stevenson Gallery, Cape Town

**Zanele Muholi**, South African (b. 1972)  
*Closer to my heart V*, 2005  
 Lambda print  
 31½ x 23 inches  
 Courtesy the artist and Michael  
 Stevenson Gallery, Cape Town

**Wangechi Mutu**, Kenyan (b. 1972)  
*Double Fuse*, 2003  
 ink and collage on mylar  
 Panel 1: 45 x 36 inches/Panel 2: 44 x 36  
 inches  
 Courtesy the Hood Museum of Art,  
 Dartmouth College, Hanover, New  
 Hampshire; Purchased through the  
 Charles F. Venrick 1936 Fund

**Magdalene Odundo**, Kenyan (b. 1950)  
*Mangbetu*, 1993  
 reduced red clay  
 15¼ x 12 x 15 inches  
 Courtesy the Birmingham Museum of  
 Art; Museum purchase

**Lorraine O'Grady**, American (b. 1934)  
*Mlle Bourgeoise Noire*, 1980–1983  
 photographs/performance  
 documentation by Coreen Simpson  
 and Salima Ali  
 14 x 14 inches each (total of 14  
 photographs)  
 Courtesy the artist and Alexander Gray  
 Associates, New York

**Gordon Parks**, American (1912–2006)  
*Ethel Shariff in Chicago*, 1963  
 gelatin silver print; printed later  
 14 x 11 inches  
 Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery,  
 New York

**Jessica Ann Peavy**, American (b. 1982)  
*Jane Doe*, 2004  
 digital c-print  
 16 x 20 inches  
 Courtesy the artist

**Etiyé Dimma Poulsen**, Ethiopian-  
 Danish (b. 1968)  
*Untitled I and II*  
 mixed media, paint, and baked clay  
 26 x 3 x 4 inches each  
 Collection of Vicki and John Palmer

**Berni Searle**, South African (b. 1964)  
*Profile*, 2002  
 8 Duraclear Lambda prints  
 19 x 23 inches each  
 Courtesy the artist and Michael  
 Stevenson Gallery, Cape Town

**Cindy Sherman**, American (b. 1954)

8 photographs from the *Bus Riders* series 1976/2000

*Untitled* (image #3/MP#365)

*Untitled* (image #5/MP#367)

*Untitled* (image #10/MP#372)

*Untitled* (image #13/MP#375)

*Untitled* (image #15/MP#377)

*Untitled* (image #7/MP#433)

*Untitled* (image #15/MP#441)

*Untitled* (image #17/MP#443)

all gelatin silver prints

7 3/16 x 5 inches each

Courtesy the artist and Metro Pictures, New York

**Lorna Simpson**, American, (b. 1960)

*Wigs II*, 1994–2006

serigraph of fifty-four panels with nineteen felt text panels

98 x 265 inches overall

Collection of Margaret and Daniel Loeb

**Coreen Simpson**, American (b. 1942)

*Masqued Nude*, 1999

gelatin silver print

20 x 24 inches

Courtesy the artist

**Renée Stout**, American (b. 1958)

*Pretty Poison at Passion Paradise*, 2008

mixed media on panel

24 x 36 inches

Courtesy the artist and Hemphill Fine Arts, Washington, DC

**Renée Stout**, American (b. 1958)

*Secret Society Passport*, 2008

wood, glass, paint, mixed media

3 x 4 x 1 inches

Courtesy the artist and Hemphill Fine Arts, Washington, DC

**Mickalene Thomas**, American

(b. 1971)

*Sweet Surrender*, 2005

enamel and rhinestones on wood

48 x 36 inches

Collection of Kimberly and Elliot Perry

**Sheila Turner**, American (b. 1961)

*Kiss My Grits*, 1998

gelatin silver print

24 x 28 inches

Collection of Judy and Scott Lampert

**Iké Udé**, Nigerian (b. 1966)

4 photographs from the *Cover Girl* series, 1994

*American Vogue*

*Cosmopolitan*

*Nigerian Vogue*

*W*

all Type-C prints

11 x 8 inches each

Courtesy the artist

**Doris Ulmann**, American (1882–1934)

*Nun with Girl, New Orleans*, 1931

platinum print

19.7 x 14.9 inches

Courtesy the New York Historical Society

**James VanDerZee**, American

(1886–1983)

*Beau of the Ball*, 1926

gelatin silver print

12 x 10 inches

Courtesy Donna M. VanDerZee

**Pat Ward Williams**, American (b. 1948)

*Negro Poster Girl*, 1989

cyanotype, window frame

36 x 42 inches

Courtesy the artist



Lauren Kelley, still from *Get the Bones from 88 Jones*, 2008, single channel video. Courtesy the artist.

## Calendar of Exhibition-Related Events

**:: Thursday, September 10, 2009 | 6:30pm**

*Opening Reception*

**:: Thursday, October 22, 2009 | 2:30pm**

*After Hot-En-Tot: A Conversation with artist Renée Cox and Lisa E. Farrington, Ph.D. Chair, Department of Art and Music, John Jay College, City University of New York. Organized in collaboration with the Spelman College Department of Art and the Women's Research and Resource Center*

**:: Thursday, October 22, 2009 | 7pm**

*Artist's Lecture: Renée Cox*

This program is free and seating is limited. Advance ticket reservations recommended and are available through the Woodruff Arts Center Box Office at 404.733.5000 and online at [www.high.org](http://www.high.org). Tickets to the Museum are sold separately.

*Location: Hill auditorium at the High Museum of Art. This event is organized in collaboration with Atlanta Celebrates Photography, the Spelman College Women's Research and Resource Center, and the High Museum.*

**:: Wednesday, November 4, 2009 | 4pm**

*Go Undercover: A Gallery Walk with bell hooks*

bell hooks is a noted scholar, champion of the arts, and author of many books including *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (2008), *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (1995), and *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (1992). Organized in collaboration with the Spelman College Department of Art and the Women's Research and Resource Center

**:: Tuesday, November 10, 2009 | 6:30pm**

*Deep Cover: An Interactive Gallery Walk with exhibition curators*

*Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, Ph.D. and Karen Comer Lowe*

**:: Thursday, December 10, 2009 | 6:30pm**

*Closing Reception*

For additional events, programs, and Museum information please visit [spelmannmuseum.org](http://spelmannmuseum.org).

To learn more about becoming a Friend of the Museum and upcoming Patron Events call 404.270.5606.

Major support for *Undercover: Performing and Transforming Black Female Identities* was provided by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners under the guidance of the Fulton County Arts Council.



COVER: Nandipha Mntambo, *Mlwa ne Nkunzi* (detail/left side of diptych), 2008, archival ink on cotton rag paper, 44 x 33 inches each. Courtesy the artist and Michael Stevenson Gallery, Cape Town.

### REGISTER TODAY!

The Museum will soon begin sending invitations, announcements, and updates via email. Please visit us online ([spelmanmuseum.org/register](http://spelmanmuseum.org/register)) so that we may include you in future mailings. Thank you for helping us save resources, time, and paper.

### Become a Friend of the Museum Today!

The Spelman College Museum of Fine Art is the only museum in the nation that emphasizes works by and about women of the African Diaspora. By joining this unique cultural institution, you will support the Museum's new acquisitions, special exhibitions, related programs, exclusive events, and outreach programs. Call 404.270.5606 for more information.

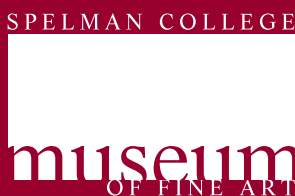
### DIRECTIONS TO THE SPELMAN COLLEGE MUSEUM OF FINE ART

#### From I-75/I-85 North

- Take 20 West (toward Birmingham) and exit at Lee Street
- Make a right on Lee Street
- Continue through traffic light (Westview Drive)
- Proceed half a block and you will see Spelman's parking deck (\$3) on the right
- Turn right into the first driveway and approach the main gate of Spelman College

#### From the Georgia Dome

- Travel south on Northside Drive for 1.5 miles
- Veer right onto Chapel Street
- Turn right onto Westview Drive
- Turn right at the first light, which is also Westview Drive
- Turn right into the first driveway and approach the main gate of Spelman College. The Parking deck (\$3) is on the right



*The Museum emphasizing art by and about women of the African Diaspora.*

SPELMAN COLLEGE MUSEUM OF FINE ART  
*in the Camille Olivia Hanks Cosby, Ed.D. Academic Center*

350 Spelman Lane, Box 1526 | Atlanta, GA 30314 | 404.270.5607  
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Hours: Tuesdays - Fridays, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Saturdays, noon - 4 p.m.  
Closed Sunday, Monday, holidays, and Spelman College breaks