SESSION 29 · UNIT 4 — MY WORK · May 04, 2027

Carrie Mae Weems

1953–present · American

Photography as autobiography, history, and confrontation



Kitchen Table Series · 1990

"It feels as though it's a documentary, a set of images, but really it's simply highly constructed."

— Carrie Mae Weems, Aperture, on the Kitchen Table Series

KEY WORKS

- The Kitchen Table Series, 1990 — 20 photographs and text
- From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried, 1995 — appropriated images with text
- Colored People, 1989–90 — portraits with tinted gels
- Roaming, 2006 — the artist in European cities

CONTEXT

Weems is one of the most important artists working with photography today. The Kitchen Table Series — made in her own kitchen, with herself as the central subject — is a narrative of Black womanhood, love, power, and domestic life told through 20 photographs and accompanying texts. From Here I Saw What Happened appropriated 19th-century photographs of enslaved and colonized people and overlaid them with text that speaks in the voice of the depicted — claiming back the image, demanding to be seen as a subject rather than an object.

WHY THIS PHOTOGRAPHER

Weems is the bridge into Unit 4 because her practice is fundamentally about having something to say and finding the form that says it. The Kitchen Table Series was conceived as a complete project before the first photograph was made. That kind of pre-visualization is exactly what Unit 4 asks of students.

WEEMS: KEY WORKS



Colored People, 1989–90



Roaming — A Broad and Expansive Sky, 2006

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Kitchen Table Series was made in Weems's own kitchen, with herself as subject. What does self-implication do to a body of work?
2. She made the Kitchen Table Series as a complete conceived project. What is the concept behind your body of work? What are you trying to say?

MORE IMAGES



From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried · 1995



Colored People (variant)



Roaming — Ancient Rome



Roaming — Palatino Hill



Roaming — When and Where I Enter