

Fisher Landau Center for Art  
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Long Island City, New York 11101  
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[www.flcart.org/press](http://www.flcart.org/press)  
Thursday-Monday 12-5pm / Complimentary Admission.

LORNA SIMPSON: *Hypothetical?* (1992).  
On view February 9th-August 7th, 2017

Fisher Landau Center for Art is excited to announce the presentation of *Hypothetical?* Lorna Simpson's sound installation including text, a photograph and mouthpieces from wind instruments. First shown in 1993 at the Whitney Biennial, the artwork was purchased directly from the exhibition and has not been on view since her retrospective traveled throughout the United States from 2006-07, organized by the American Federation of Arts.

As David Kiehl wrote in his 2010 catalogue essay for *LEGACY: The Emily Fisher Landau Collection* : "...It takes its title from a framed newspaper excerpt regarding a question posed to Tom Bradley, the African American mayor of Los Angeles, in the wake of the city's riots following the April, 1992 acquittal of the LAPD officers charged with beating African American motorist Rodney King. Asked if whether he would now be afraid to be a black man in Los Angeles if he were not the mayor, Mr. Bradley paused, then said: "No, I would not be scared. I would be angry." *Hypothetical* emerged as a pivotal moment in Simpson's artwork, creating a physical space where the viewers become active participants. This signaled a major shift from her two-dimensional photo pieces incorporating text, to her first forays into installation based environments. The aural component of *Hypothetical* is inspired by the constraints of spoken language: silent mouthpieces from wind instruments are installed directly into the wall as sculptural forms, accompanied by hidden speakers projecting the muted sound of labored breathing as if struggling to reach a cohesive melody.

Along one wall of the Center's first floor gallery are several of Simpson's "phototext" pieces made between 1990-91 including *Outline* and *Queensize*, which directly precede *Hypothetical?* This combination of imagery and language serves to question the role that photography had played up until that point in time. The camera ceased to be a documentary device, becoming a means of investigative observation that combined seeing and reading. Regarding *Queensize* Simpson recalled "...It occurred to me that the modern fascination with African masks involved the front of a mask and its formal, geometric qualities. But the idea of contemplating the mask from behind brings the viewer closer to the cultural involvement that the mask represents. It speaks of a participatory ritual or performance." (*LEGACY: The Emily Fisher Landau Collection*, Whitney Museum of American Art, published by Yale University Press, 2010).

Housed in a former parachute harness factory, Fisher Landau Center for Art was designed by Max Gordon in association with Bill Katz and is devoted to the exhibition and study of the contemporary art collection of Emily Fisher Landau. The core of the 1500 work collection spans 1960 to the present containing key works by individuals who have shaped the most significant art over the last 50 years. Emily Fisher Landau's insightful selection of works by contemporary masters, many of which she purchased from the artists at the outset of their careers is reflected in exhibitions presented at Fisher Landau Center for Art. Her ongoing commitment to emerging artists extends to the annual presentation of the Columbia University School of Visual Arts MFA Thesis Exhibition from 2008-2016. In May of 2010, Mrs. Landau made a historic pledge of over 400 artworks by nearly 100 artists to the Whitney Museum of American Art, with a curated selection touring the United States through 2014.

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