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Southeast Debut of New Work by Deborah Roberts at the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art Opens January 2018

Deborah Roberts: The Evolution of Mimi
January 25 – May 19, 2018



ATLANTA (November 29, 2017) – Deborah Roberts creates visually arresting collages that encourage important conversations about girlhood, vulnerability, body image, popular culture, self-image, and the dysfunctional legacy of colorism. Combining found photographs, painting, and drawing, she examines the weight that society places on Black girls. “Deborah Roberts: The Evolution of Mimi,” an original exhibition organized by the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, features more than 50 collages, paintings, and hand-painted serigraphs.

On view January 25 – May 19, 2018, the exhibition includes collages, for which Roberts has gained notoriety, that demonstrate how she grapples with the depiction of beauty and the development of self-image in Black women. It also features her hand-painted serigraphs of names that stereotypically sound like those of Black girls, challenging viewers to think deeply about how their own perceptions are guided by societal expectations and preconceived notions. It also features a group of early paintings and works on paper that serve as a catalyst for her current work. Incorporating

art history, popular culture, Black culture, and American history, Roberts creates bold provocative works that confront and captivate.

In 2011, Roberts started a series of collages entitled “The Miseducation of Mimi,” that was informed by a blend of the albums, “The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill” (1998) and “The Emancipation of Mimi” (2005) by Lauryn Hill and Mariah Carey, respectively. The ongoing series highlighted how both highly visible women, through their lyrics and music videos, presented themselves as simultaneously invincible and vulnerable.

“Deborah Roberts’ multilayered collages resist singular readings and present complicated notions of Blackness,” said Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, Ph.D., director of the Museum and the curator of the exhibition. “The Museum is proud to present this work, with its emphasis on fragmenting and reassembling, for the first time in the Southeast. Roberts’ thought-provoking collages align perfectly with the Museum’s mission to inspire the Spelman College community and the general public through art by women of the African Diaspora and promises to intrigue and incite important conversations.”



“Deborah Roberts: The Evolution of Mimi,” positions the last five years of Roberts’ career as a springboard from which to examine her more recent work. “When I started the ‘Miseducation of Mimi’ series, I was beginning to explore issues that plague young Black girls and eventually Black women, such as perceptions about their beauty and their lack of innocence in a world where whiteness is the norm,” said Roberts. “The ideas I developed through the Mimi series paved the way for the work I’m doing today.”

Generous support for “Deborah Roberts: The Evolution of Mimi” is provided by Wish, Inc., and the LUBO Fund with additional support provided by Fulton County Arts & Culture.

Opening Reception

On Thursday, January 25, at 6:30 p.m., the Museum will host a conversation between Deborah Roberts and exhibition curator and Museum Director Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, Ph.D. A reception follows. Admission is free.

About Deborah Roberts

Deborah Roberts is from Austin, Texas, where she continues to live and work. She earned her MFA as a Syracuse University Research Fellow at Syracuse University. Roberts was a recipient of the Pollock-Krasner Grant in 2016. Her work is currently featured in “Fictions” at The Studio Museum of Harlem and in “in-gé-nue,” her first solo exhibition at Fort Gansevoort in New York through December 23, 2017. Her work will be featured in a solo booth at UNTITLED Miami Beach with Fort Gansevoort in December 2017. Deborah Roberts is represented by Fort Gansevoort, New York.

About Spelman College Museum of Fine Art

The Spelman College Museum of Fine Art inspires and enriches the lives of the Spelman College community and the general public primarily through art by women of the African Diaspora. In “Six Reasons to Love Atlanta,” CNN.com praised the Museum for its “fantastically curated exhibitions” that focus on art by and about women of the African Diaspora. Since the Museum opened in 1996, it has established an impressive track record for organizing first-rate, mission-specific, art exhibitions that expand art offerings in Atlanta and the southeast region. Milestones include being selected as the first institution from the United States that jointly (along with the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston) represented the United States at the 2012 Havana Biennial in Havana, Cuba. The Museum is poised to continue its trajectory of pursuing ambitious relevant projects that have a lasting impact. In 2015, with support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Museum, in collaboration with the Department of Art & Visual Culture, launched a Curatorial Studies Program, a pilot initiative to prepare and develop the next generation of curators. For more information, visit museum.spelman.edu.

About Spelman College

Founded in 1881, Spelman College is a highly selective, liberal arts college widely recognized as the global leader in the education of women of African descent. Located in Atlanta, the College’s picturesque campus is home to 2,100 students. Outstanding alumnae include Children’s Defense Fund Founder Marian Wright Edelman; Starbucks COO Rosalind Brewer, Broadway producer Alia Jones, former Acting Surgeon General and Spelman’s first alumna President Audrey Forbes Manley, Harvard professor Evelyn Hammonds, author Pearl Cleage; and actress LaTanya Richardson Jackson. For more information, visit www.spelman.edu.