



**ICA ANNOUNCES SIMONE LEIGH AS U.S. REPRESENTATIVE AT THE 59<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL ART EXHIBITION OF LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2022**



**(Boston, MA—October 14, 2020)** The Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston (ICA), in cooperation with the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, is pleased to announce that Simone Leigh will represent the United States at the 59<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia in 2022. Leigh’s unique sculptural work explores and elevates ideas about history, race, gender, labor, and monuments, creating and reclaiming powerful narratives of Black women. She will create a new series of sculptures for the U.S. Pavilion in Venice, Italy, on view April 23–November 27, 2022.

The 2022 U.S. Pavilion is co-commissioned by Jill Medvedow, Ellen Matilda Poss Director, and Eva Respini, Barbara Lee Chief Curator at the ICA. The museum is organizing Leigh’s first survey exhibition—which will include works from the forthcoming Biennale—and a major monograph to be presented in Boston in 2023.

“Over the course of two decades, Simone Leigh has created an indelible body of work that centers the experiences and histories of Black women and at such a crucial moment in history, I

can think of no better artist to represent the United States,” said Medvedow. “The scale and magnificence of Leigh’s art demands visibility and power; it is probing, timely, and urgent. We are proud and honored to share this work with audiences from around the globe at the next Biennale in Venice.”

Leigh’s new body of work for the Biennale will include a monumental bronze sculpture for the U.S. Pavilion’s outdoor forecourt. The Pavilion’s five galleries will house interrelated works in ceramic, bronze, and raffia, populating the gallery space with figurative representations for the first time in many years. Central to the project is a partnership with the Atlanta University Center Art History + Curatorial Studies Collective, an innovative program based in the Department of Art & Visual Culture at Spelman College, which prepares future curators, art historians, and museum professionals. Nikki Greene, Assistant Professor of the Arts of Africa and the African Diaspora at Wellesley College and Paul Ha, Director of the MIT List Visual Arts Center are advisors to the project.

“Simone Leigh is one of the most gifted and respected artists working today. For the U.S. Pavilion, Leigh will create a series of new sculptures and installations that address what the artist calls an ‘incomplete archive’ of Black feminist thought, with works inspired by leading Black intellectuals. Her work insists on the centrality of Black female forms within the cultural sphere, and serves as a beacon in our moment,” said Respini.

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Simone Leigh**

Simone Leigh’s (b. 1967, Chicago, IL) works in sculpture, video, and installation—all are informed by her ongoing exploration of the experiences of Black femmes. Her work traverses across time, geography, and cultures, and her objects often employ materials and forms traditionally associated with African art and vernacular traditions across the African Diaspora.

Leigh’s monumental sculpture *Brick House* is currently installed on the High Line Plinth, New York. She received the prestigious Hugo Boss Prize in 2018 and has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2019); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2016); Studio Museum in Harlem in Marcus Garvey Park, New York (2016); Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas (with Chitra Ganesh, 2016); New Museum, New York (2016); Creative Time and Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn (2014); and The Kitchen, New York (2014). She has been included in group exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2019); 10th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2018); New Museum, New York (2017); MoMA PS1 (2015); and Dak’Art 11th Biennale of Contemporary African Art, Dakar, Senegal (2014). Her work is in the collections of The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Art Institute of Chicago; and the ICA/Boston, among others.

### **Jill Medvedow, Ellen Matilda Poss Director, ICA/Boston Co-Commissioner**

Throughout her career, Medvedow has championed the intersection of contemporary art and civic life. At the ICA, she led the museum’s transformation from a small, non-collecting institution into a major presence in the contemporary art world and on Boston’s waterfront. She

is responsible for building the first new art museum in Boston in nearly a century, beginning a focused permanent collection, launching a nationally recognized teen arts education program, providing artistic leadership to pioneering exhibitions and performances, and exponentially increasing the museum's audiences and impact. In 2018, Medvedow led the significant expansion of the ICA with the opening of the Watershed, a reclaimed industrial space in East Boston for large-scale artistic commissions and community engagement.

**Eva Respini, Barbara Lee Chief Curator, ICA/Boston  
Co-Commissioner**

For two decades, Respini has been curating groundbreaking and ambitious exhibitions and has consistently worked with a diverse roster of artists exploring themes around representation and history, political agency, and material culture. Respini curated the critically acclaimed thematic exhibitions *When Home Won't Let You Stay: Migration through Contemporary Art* (2019) and *Art in the Age of the Internet, 1989 to Today* (2018); and organized ambitious solo presentations with artists such as Firelei Báez (2021); John Akomfrah (2019); Huma Bhabha (2019); and William Forsythe (2018). Her other notable exhibitions include the retrospectives of Cindy Sherman (2012) and Walid Raad (2015) at the Museum of Modern Art. Well respected in the art field, she teaches curatorial studies at Harvard University, and publishes widely. Respini is currently working with Leigh on her first museum survey exhibition, scheduled for 2023 at the ICA.

**ABOUT THE ICA**

Since its founding in 1936, the ICA has shared the pleasures of reflection, inspiration, imagination, and provocation that contemporary art offers with its audiences. A museum at the intersection of contemporary art and civic life, the ICA has advanced a bold vision for amplifying the artist's voice and expanding the museum's role as educator, incubator, and convener. Its exhibitions, performances, and educational programs provide access to the breadth and diversity of contemporary art, artists, and the creative process, inviting audiences of all ages and backgrounds to participate in the excitement of new art and ideas. The ICA is located at 25 Harbor Shore Drive, Boston, MA, 02210. The Watershed is located at 256 Marginal Street, East Boston, MA 02128. For more information, call 617-478-3100 or visit our website at [icaboston.org](http://icaboston.org). Follow the ICA at [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

**ABOUT LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA**

Established in 1895, the International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia is considered the most prestigious contemporary art exhibition in the world, introducing hundreds of thousands of visitors to exciting new art every two years. The 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia (April 23–November 27, 2022) is directed by Cecilia Alemani.

**ABOUT THE U.S. PAVILION**

The United States Pavilion, a building in the neoclassical style in the Giardini della Biennale, Venice, opened on May 4, 1930. Since 1986, the U.S. Pavilion has been owned by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation and managed by the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, which works closely with the U.S. Department of State and exhibition curators to install and maintain all official U.S. exhibitions presented in the Pavilion. Every two years, museum curators from across the country detail their visions for the U.S. Pavilion in proposals that are reviewed by the National Endowment for the Arts's Federal Advisory Committee on International Exhibitions (FACIE), a group comprising curators, museum directors, and artists, who then submit their recommendations to the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and

Cultural Affairs. Past exhibitions can be viewed on the Peggy Guggenheim Collection's website at <https://www.guggenheim-venice.it/>

## **ABOUT THE BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

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Additional images and portraits of the artist and co-commissioners are available upon request.

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**Image:** *Jug*. 2019 Bronze Edition 1 of 3 214.6 x 126 x 123.8 cm / 84 1/2 x 49 5/8 x 48 3/4 inches © Simone Leigh © 2019 The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. Courtesy of the artist and The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. Photo: David Heald