

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

Simone Leigh

November 8 to December 21, 2024

Opening: Thursday, November 7, 6:00 to 8:00 PM

Matthew Marks is pleased to announce **Simone Leigh**, the next exhibition in his galleries at 522 & 526 West 22nd Street. The exhibition, her first with the gallery, includes eleven new sculptures in ceramic and bronze.

Over the past twenty years, Simone Leigh has created a multi-faceted body of work dedicated to her ongoing exploration of Black female-identified subjectivity. Leigh is best known for her sculptures that incorporate forms associated with African diasporic traditions. In the artist's own words, "It makes something new. Sometimes, it collapses time. Sometimes, it makes similarities that may have happened over a millennium more obvious."

Each of Leigh's new sculptures presents an image of a partially abstracted female body. By "abstracting the figure," Leigh explains, "I imagine a kind of experience, a state of being, rather than one person." *Artemis* (2022–24) is a life-size sculpture of a headless woman with a skirt comprised of breast-like forms. The surface of the sculpture is covered with intricate lace drapery made from porcelain. Another new sculpture is a larger-than-life-size bust of a woman, also headless, and completely covered in hundreds of miniature, hand-rolled porcelain rosettes. The highly detailed surfaces of these works reference the repetition of handwork and unacknowledged acts of labor and care traditionally associated with women's work.

Okwui (2024) is an eleven-foot-long bronze sculpture of a reclining woman with an elongated skirt made from cast raffia. Many of Leigh's sculptures investigate the body as vessel, merging the female figure with vernacular African architectural forms. Reflecting on the place of history and allusion in her work, Leigh has said, "I used to think of my work as autoethnographic, but there are moments where you have to explore fiction and narrative in order to connect the dots when there has been so much left out of the archive."

Simone Leigh was born in Chicago in 1967 and first began exhibiting her work in the early-2000s. She has had one-person museum exhibitions at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Tate Modern, London, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, among others. In 2022, Leigh was awarded the Golden Lion at the 59th Venice Biennale where she represented the United States. Her exhibition in the United States Pavilion in Venice was subsequently shown at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC. A version of this exhibition is currently on view at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the California African American Museum, Los Angeles through January 20, 2025.

Simone Leigh is on view at 522 & 526 West 22nd Street from November 8 to December 21, 2024, Tuesday through Saturday, from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

For additional information please call 212-243-0200 or email inquiries@matthewmarks.com.