

# CORCORAN

GALLERY OF ART • COLLEGE of ART + DESIGN

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### CORCORAN PRESENTS *30 AMERICANS* October 1, 2011–February 12, 2012



Artists from the exhibition in front of Glenn Ligon's *America*, 2008, courtesy Rubell Family Collection, Miami.

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**—This fall, the **Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design** will present *30 Americans*, a wide-ranging survey of works by many of the most important African American contemporary artists of the last three decades. By bringing seminal artistic figures together with younger and emerging artists, the exhibition explores artistic influence across generations and sheds light on issues of racial, sexual and historical identity. Often provocative and challenging, *30 Americans* at the Corcoran explores ideas central to the American experience.

Artists in *30 Americans* include Nina Chanel Abney, John Bankston, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Mark Bradford, Iona Rozeal Brown, Nick Cave, Robert Colescott, Noah Davis, Leonardo Drew, Renée Green, David Hammons, Barkley L. Hendricks, Rashid Johnson, Glenn Ligon, Kalup Linzy, Kerry James Marshall, Rodney McMillian, Wangechi Mutu, William Pope.L, Gary Simmons, Xaviera Simmons, Lorna Simpson, Shinique Smith, Jeff Sonhouse, Henry Taylor, Hank Willis Thomas, Mickalene Thomas, Kara Walker, Carrie Mae Weems, Kehinde Wiley, and Purvis Young.

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“30 Americans explores how each artist reckons with the notion of identity in America, navigating such concerns as the struggle for civil rights, sexuality, popular culture, and media imagery,” said Sarah Newman, curator of contemporary art at the Corcoran and curator of the presentation at the Corcoran. “By focusing on the way that individuals carve out their own place in the world, it speaks to the American experience more generally.”

First shown at the Rubell Family Collection in Miami, Florida, *30 Americans* has been reconceived for its presentation in Washington. At the Corcoran, the exhibition is organized around ideas of identity as well as artistic community and legacy, highlighting relationships between artists across generations. The exhibition explores the ways in

which a foundational figure’s ideas and formal innovations ripple through contemporary practice: Robert Colescott’s investigations of the narratives of art and history in relation to African-American culture echo through the grand portraits of Kehinde Wiley and the cut-paper silhouettes of Kara Walker; the innovations of Jean-Michel Basquiat’s graffiti-based paintings of the urban environment find current form in the work of Mark Bradford and Shinique Smith; while David Hammons’s wry investigations of language, meaning, and race provide a starting point for the conceptualism of Glenn Ligon and Lorna Simpson.

“The Rubells built their collection by speaking with artists and finding out who they were looking at—it is very much an artist-based gathering of works and we wanted to give form to that,” said Newman. “The exhibition explores the various relationships—formal, thematic, political, and personal—that artists have with one another, and how those relationships emerge across distance and time.”

*30 Americans* consists of 76 paintings, sculptures, drawings, photographs, and videos, and includes works of art such as Washington, D.C. native Iona Rozeal Brown’s *Sacrifice*



*#2: It Has to Last* (after Yoshitoshi’s “*Drowsy: the appearance of a harlot of the Meiji era*”), 2007, Leonardo Drew’s massive cotton and wax sculpture *Untitled #25*, 1992, several of Nick Cave’s exuberant Soundsuits, (2006–2008), and Mickalene Thomas’s *Baby I Am Ready Now*, 2007.

The work in *30 Americans* belongs to Miami-based collectors Don and Mera Rubell. “As the show evolved, we decided to call it *30 Americans*. ‘Americans,’ rather than ‘African Americans’ or ‘Black Americans’ because nationality is a statement of fact, while racial identity is a question each artist answers in his or her own way, or not at all.

And the number 30 because we acknowledge, even as it is happening, that this show does not include everyone who could be in it. The truth is, because we do collect right up to the last minute before a show, there are actually 31 artists in *30 Americans*.”

The Corcoran Gallery of Art was formed in 1869 for the purpose of “Encouraging American Genius.” Today, this principle shapes the institution—a museum and college—as a center for study and dialogue about social and political issues as raised and explored through contemporary art.

“The Corcoran stands as an institution for creating, displaying, and learning about art, which is to say to learn about our world,” said Philip Brookman, chief curator and head of research at the Corcoran Gallery of Art. “As an independent and influential arts institution, we are committed now more than ever to exhibitions that are progressive and that encourage debate and discussion.”

Washington’s largest nonfederal art museum, the Corcoran has from its beginnings been a contemporary art museum and, with the addition of the school in 1890, a center for creating, collecting, and showcasing contemporary art. Founded by William Wilson Corcoran, the Gallery’s historic collection reflects Corcoran’s early interest in collecting American art. Some of the artists in *30 Americans* are today also represented in the Corcoran’s collection, including Nina Chanel Abney, Robert Colescott, Glenn Ligon, Kerry James Marshall, Lorna Simpson, Kara Walker, and Carrie Mae Weems.



The Corcoran demonstrates its longstanding history and support of contemporary artists by presenting *30 Americans*, and by organizing its *NOW at the Corcoran* series, a special exhibition program dedicated to displaying work by emerging and mid-career artists, and *NEXT at the Corcoran: BFA Class of 2011*, an exhibition of student work from the Corcoran College of Art + Design.

A number of programs and events (see *Public Programs Press Release*)—including a special Meet the Artists series, documentary film screenings and an evening with Don and Mera Rubell—will take place throughout the run of the exhibition. For more information, and for a special “30 Day Countdown to *30 Americans*” featuring exclusive videos, images and interactive content, please visit [www.corcoran.org/30americans](http://www.corcoran.org/30americans).

## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

*30 Americans* is organized by the Rubell Family Collection, Miami. The presenting sponsor at the Corcoran Gallery of Art is Altria Group. Additional support has been provided by Morgan Stanley Smith Barney and the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, an agency supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

## **ABOUT THE RUBELL FAMILY COLLECTION**

Don and Mera Rubell started The Rubell Family Collection (RFC) in New York when they were first married, in 1964. Since 1993, the Collection has been displayed in Miami at its current, 45,000 square-foot location inside a former Drug Enforcement Agency confiscated goods facility. RFC first opened to the public in 1994, and in 1998 the non-profit Contemporary Arts Foundation (CAF) was created to expand the Collection's public mission inside the paradigm of a contemporary art museum. Learn more at <http://www.rfc.museum/>.

## **PUBLICATION**

A fully illustrated catalogue, *30 Americans* (232 pages; \$39.95), will accompany the exhibition. Published by the Rubell Family Collection, the hardcover book includes essays from Glenn Ligon, Franklin Sirmans, Michele Wallace, and Robert Hobbs. To purchase, visit the Corcoran Shop online at [www.corcoran.org/shop](http://www.corcoran.org/shop).

## **PRESS PREVIEW**

Media are invited to a press preview for *30 Americans* on **September 28 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.** at the Corcoran, 500 Seventeenth St. N.W., Washington, DC. RSVP to [pr@corcoran.org](mailto:pr@corcoran.org) by September 23.

## **VISITOR INFORMATION**

The Corcoran's hours of operation are as follows: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; closed Monday and Tuesday. Admission to *30 Americans* is \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors (62+) and students (with valid ID), children 12 and under, military (with valid ID) and Corcoran Members enter for free. Tickets for *30 Americans* are on sale starting August 1, 2011. To purchase tickets, please visit [www.corcoran.org/30americans](http://www.corcoran.org/30americans). The Gallery will be open and FREE to the public on Monday, January 16, in celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

## **ABOUT THE CORCORAN**

**The Corcoran Gallery of Art**, a privately funded institution, was founded in 1869. It was America's first dedicated art museum and today is Washington's largest nonfederal museum of art. It is known internationally for its distinguished collection of historical and modern American art as well as contemporary art, photography, European painting, sculpture, and the decorative arts. In addition, a dynamic schedule of special exhibitions is complemented and enhanced by a range of educational programming, which together seek to enrich perspectives, support the local arts community, and encourage interpretation. **The Corcoran College of Art + Design** was founded in 1890 and stands as Washington's only four-year college of art and design, offering BFA degrees in Digital Media Design, Fine Art, Fine Art Photography, Graphic Design, Interior Design, and Photojournalism; a BA in Art Studies; a five-year Bachelor of Fine Arts/Master of Arts in Teaching (BFA/MAT); an AFA in Digital Media Design, Fine Art, Graphic Design, and Photography; and MA degrees in Art and the Book, Art Education, Exhibition Design, Interior Design, Master of Arts in Teaching, and New Media

Photojournalism. The College's Continuing Education program offers part-time credit and non-credit classes for children and adults and draws more than 2,500 participants each year. For more information about the **Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design**, visit [www.corcoran.org](http://www.corcoran.org).



Images:

Page two: Nick Cave, *Soundsuit*, 2008. Fabric, fiberglass, and metal, 102 x 36 x 28 inches. Rubell Family Collection, Miami.

Page three: Kehinde Wiley, *Sleep*, 2008. Oil on canvas, 132 x 300 inches. Rubell Family Collection, Miami.

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