

# PHOTO, MEDIA AND DIGITAL ART

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Photo Magazine. Visual, Audio and Surround Art Galleries.  
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**PREFIX.**

For Immediate Release (March 17, 2005)

## Prefix offers first opportunity to view Lorna Simpson's **31** in Canada.

Beginning March 17, Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art is privileged to be one of the select North American venues to present Lorna's Simpson rarely exhibited video installation, *31 (2002)*, originally commissioned for Documenta 11. In this technically ambitious work, Simpson, a key figure in contemporary African-American visual culture, extends her interest in notions of the body, the play of interpersonal relations, and the nuances of racial and sexual identity, across a stunning formation of thirty-one simultaneously illuminated screens. The exhibition is curated by Betty Julian and presented in association with the 18th annual Images Festival (April 7-16, 2005).

Since the 1980s, Lorna Simpson has created provocative works in the areas of photography, installation, and film. Beginning with her early photoworks, Simpson has recurrently played with ambiguity, sensuality and resistance in her images, while skillfully revealing the element of artifice at play in visual representation. Through the practice of both showing and hiding, Simpson opens up a space for a complex and conflicted articulation of subjectivity, revealing a world in which no one is actually who they appear to be at first sight.

The concept of absence-presence is a constituent feature of *31*, which samples episodes in the quotidian life of an anonymous figure. Selecting the cycle of a calendar month as a conceptual model, Simpson's thirty-one screens detail interlocking narratives which chart encounters both routine and unexpected. The nature of her study exposes the controlled parameters of social space that govern our daily lives. While Simpson's focus on the everyday may be seen to court the current social curiosity towards the life of others evident in the proliferation of the reality TV genre, Simpson's use of familiar cinematic devices is remarkable for the manner in which it succeeds in confounding viewers' expectations of the image. In *31*, Simpson succeeds in redeploying voyeurism in a manner that intrigues our senses but excludes gratuitous satisfaction. Regardless of the proximity of our gaze, we never seem to be able to see the subject closely enough.

Presentation Partner:



IMAGES FESTIVAL

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A reception will be held on Saturday, April 9 from 2 to 5 PM at 401 Richmond Street West, Suite 124, Toronto. The artist will be present. Admission is free. The exhibition continues until April 30. Lorna Simpson will also participate in a panel discussion presented by Visible City, Prefix and the Images Festival and held on Sunday, April 10 at 2 PM at the Drake Hotel, 1150 Queen Street West, Toronto.

Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art is a non-profit organization based in Toronto. Prefix's mandate is to promote the appreciation and understanding of contemporary photographic, media and digital arts through exhibitions, publications and related activities.

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