



THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Monday, September 24, 2018

**THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, LOS ANGELES (MOCA), PRESENTS  
*ZOE LEONARD: SURVEY***

**November 11, 2018–March 25, 2019  
The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA**



**LOS ANGELES**—The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA), presents *Zoe Leonard: Survey*, a major mid-career retrospective of the work of Zoe Leonard (b. 1961, Liberty, New York), one of the foremost artists of her generation. The exhibition is the first to assess the extraordinary range of the artist's achievements over more than three decades of her career to date. *Zoe Leonard: Survey* is organized by MOCA Senior Curator Bennett Simpson and Assistant

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Curator Rebecca Matalon, and it makes its West Coast debut at The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA from November 11, 2018-March 25, 2019, following its spring presentation at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Leonard has made photographs, sculptures, and installations that are celebrated for their lyrical observations of daily life, as well as for their rigorous, questioning attention to the politics and conditions of image-making and display. Her work is wide-ranging in both form and subject matter, addressing themes including gender and sexuality, loss and mourning, migration, displacement, the history of photography, and the urban landscape. Using repetition, subtle changes of perspective, and shifts of scale, Leonard reframes images and objects in ways that challenge the viewer to follow her path of inquiry and reexamine the familiar from every possible angle.

"Leonard is one of the most sensitive and perceptive observers. But her work is far from objective or documentary—it is full of her piercing and profound vision as it asks us to bear witness to the details of daily life that often remain overlooked and unseen," says Simpson.

*Zoe Leonard: Survey* brings together approximately one hundred key works from across Leonard's career, dating from the mid-1980s until today. Among the installations to be presented is *Tree* (1997), a landmark work of the 1990s, on view in Los Angeles for the first time. Composed of a tree carved into pieces and reassembled using metal plates, bolts, and wires, the work is a melancholic and meditative questioning of the intersection of nature and culture, while it also suggests themes of displacement, fragmentation, and reconstruction. In addition, the exhibition includes *1961* (2002-), vintage blue suitcases arranged in a single row. One of several sculptures Leonard made in the early 2000s, the work is unique in its additive nature. Leonard, who was born in 1961, adds a suitcase to this sculpture for each year of her life.

Much of Leonard's work reflects on the framing, classifying, and ordering of vision. As she herself once commented, "Rather than any one subject or genre (landscape, portrait, still life, etc.), I was, and remain, interested in engaging a simultaneous questioning of both subject and vantage point, the relation between viewer and world—in short, subjectivity and how it informs our experience of the world."

To this end, Leonard's work remains equally attuned to formal and conceptual questions of photography and image-making. Through texture, scale, seriality, and sequencing, she draws attention to the photograph as both an image and an object, offering up an expansive and nuanced understanding of photography wherein framing and subject are intricately entwined. In the *Suns* series from 2011, Leonard defiantly turns her camera towards the sky, creating abstract and disorienting images in which the sun serves as both light source and subject. The works point towards Leonard's longstanding practice of subverting traditional conventions of photography and her continuous questioning of how and what we see.

The exhibition will highlight important works of photography from throughout Leonard's career, including early aerial landscapes, images of subsistence hunting, and her signal work *The Fae Richards Photo Archive* (1993-96). Made for filmmaker Cheryl Dunye's film *The Watermelon Woman* (1996), the eighty-three photographs of *The Fae Richards Photo Archive* chronicle the fictional life of a queer Black singer and actress in the early twentieth century. Each photograph was staged for historical accuracy, printed to simulate the techniques of the era, and treated to give the appearance of age. The work will be shown alongside photographs from the 1990s that address gender and sexuality within museum displays. The exhibition will also include Leonard's most recent body of photography and sculpture focusing on vernacular image culture and its relationship to identity and migration. Included in this group will be a new sculpture, *How to Take Good Pictures*, composed of more than one thousand copies of a Kodak manual in print between 1912 and 1995.

Zoe Leonard has exhibited extensively since the 1980s. Recent solo exhibitions include *Analogue* at The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2015); *100 North Nevill Street* at the Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas (2013-14); and *Observation*

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*Point* at Camden Arts Centre, London (2012). A retrospective of Leonard's photographs was organized by the Fotomuseum Winterthur (2007) and traveled to the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2008); Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna (2009); and the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich (2009). Other solo exhibitions include *You see I am here after all*, Dia:Beacon, New York (2008); *Derrotero*, Dia at The Hispanic Society of America, New York (2008); *Analogue*, the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio (2007); *Strange Fruit*, Philadelphia Museum of Art (1998); Kunsthalle Basel (1997); Secession, Vienna (1997); and the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago (1993). Leonard's works have been included in numerous group exhibitions including Documenta 9 (1992); Documenta 12 (2007); and the 1993, 1997, and 2014 Whitney Biennials.

**About the Catalogue:**

The exhibition catalogue, *Zoe Leonard: Survey*, by Bennett Simpson, features contributions by Douglas Crimp, Elisabeth Lebovici, Fred Moten, Elisabeth Sherman, and Lanka Tattersall. Essays in the book range from the critical to the poetic and include in-depth examinations of key works not presented in the exhibition, such as Leonard's contribution to Documenta 9 (1992) and her camera obscura installations. The book is designed by Joseph Logan, edited by Karen Kelly and Barbara Schroeder, and published by Prestel.

*Zoe Leonard: Survey* is organized by Bennett Simpson, Senior Curator, and Rebecca Matalon, Assistant Curator, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Lead support is provided by The Aileen Getty Foundation and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

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Additional support is provided by the Galerie Gisela Capitain, Pasadena Art Alliance, 2017 Drawings & Photography Committee, Anthony Meier Fine Arts, San Francisco, Galleria Raffaella Cortese, and Karyn Kohl.

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Free weekend admission to *Laura Owens* and *Zoe Leonard: Survey* is made possible by Sadie Coles HQ, Gavin Brown's enterprise, Galerie Gisela Capitain, and Hauser & Wirth.

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Image credit: Zoe Leonard, *How to Make Good Pictures* (detail), 2016, 429 books, 25 1/4 x 6 1/8 x 248 3/4 in. (64.1 x 15.6 x 631.8 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne. Photo by Simon Vogel.

**RELATED PROGRAMS**

**Members' Opening: *Zoe Leonard: Survey***

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 7–9pm**

**THE GEFFEN CONTEMPORARY AT MOCA**

**INFO 213/621-1794 or [membership@moca.org](mailto:membership@moca.org)**

**FREE for MOCA members; no reservations necessary**

Please check [moca.org](http://moca.org) for updates on related programs.

## THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, LOS ANGELES (MOCA)

**About MOCA:** Founded in 1979, MOCA's vision is to be the defining museum of contemporary art. In a relatively short period of time, MOCA has achieved astonishing growth with three Los Angeles locations of architectural renown; a world-class permanent collection of more than seven thousand objects, international in scope and among the finest in the world; hallmark education programs that are widely emulated; award-winning publications that present original scholarship; groundbreaking monographic, touring, and thematic exhibitions of international repute that survey the art of our time; and cutting-edge engagement with modes of new media production. MOCA is a not-for-profit institution that relies on a variety of funding sources for its activities.

**Hours:** MOCA Grand Avenue (located at 250 South Grand Avenue in Downtown Los Angeles) is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 11am to 6pm; Thursday from 11am to 8pm; Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 5pm; and closed on Tuesday. The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA (located at 152 North Central Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90012) has the same hours as MOCA Grand Avenue during exhibitions. Please call ahead or go to [moca.org](http://moca.org) for the exhibition schedule for The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA. MOCA Pacific Design Center (located at 8687 Melrose Avenue, West Hollywood, CA 90069) is open Tuesday through Friday from 11am to 5pm; Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 6pm; and closed on Monday. The MOCA Store at MOCA Grand Avenue (located at 250 South Grand Avenue) is open Monday through Wednesday and Friday from 10:30am to 5:30pm; Thursday from 10:30am to 8:30pm; and Saturday and Sunday from 10:30am to 6:30pm.

**Museum Admission:** General admission is free for all MOCA members. General admission is also free for everyone at MOCA Grand Avenue and The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA on Thursdays from 5pm to 8pm, courtesy of Wells Fargo. General admission is always free at MOCA Pacific Design Center. General admission at MOCA Grand Avenue and The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA is \$15 for adults; \$8 for students with I.D.; \$10 for seniors (65+); and free for children under 12 and jurors with I.D.

**More Information:** For 24-hour information on current exhibitions, education programs, and special events, call 213/626-6222 or access MOCA online at [moca.org](http://moca.org).

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