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"I'm Not the Woman You Think I Am": Reinventing the Black Female Image in Photography

Justice Macklin
Illinois Wesleyan University

Kristine Nielsen, Faculty Advisor
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Oral Presentation O11.2

**“I’M NOT THE WOMAN YOU THINK I AM”:
REINVENTING THE BLACK FEMALE IMAGE
IN PHOTOGRAPHY**

Justice Macklin and Kristine Nielsen*
School of Art, Illinois Wesleyan University

Historically, non-black artists have represented the African/-American female in a way that focuses on her physical and cultural differences to build a stereotypical view of the black woman. Leading black female photographers Carrie Mae Weems, Lorna Simpson, and Mickalene Thomas all create photographs that offer updated models of representation. These portraits deny the use of the black female image simply as an object onto which one can project one’s own ideas. Each artist portrays the model from a more subjective view, focusing on her desires, opinions, and fears. These motives relate directly to the artist’s sense of what it means to be a black woman in contemporary society. In examining these photographic works, I compare their objectives with feminist social movements occurring today to reassert the necessity of a black feminist practice in engaging the fight for beauty.