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25 Most Collectible Midcareer Artists: Simone Leigh

BY JDA GAYLE, ART+AUCTION | SEPTEMBER 17, 2015



In its September issue, Art+Auction compiled a list of the 25 most collectible midcareer artists working today. This month, ARTINFO will publish one installment from the feature per day. Click [here](#) to read Art+Auction editor-in-chief Eric Bryant's introduction to the list. To see all the installments published so far, click [here](#).

Simone Leigh | b. 1968 | United States

Objects by this Brooklyn-based artist, who dexterously manipulates clay to the likeness of cowrie shells and roses, reveal the West African and Native American

ceramic traditions of her training, while her concepts imbue their materiality with explorations of what it means to be a black female.

In that way, explains Museum of Art and Design director Glenn Adamson, “she’s one of a whole generation rethinking the medium of ceramics, putting it into a cross-disciplinary context. It’s a challenge to specialized museums and collectors; she’s encouraging us to rethink our categories.” Adds New York gallerist Jack Tilton, “Afro-feminism [and] womanhood are central to her work, but people respond to the repetition, the labor. They appeal to collectors of Picasso, Richter, and Polke and contemporary collections.” Smaller works, like ceramic heads and rose-covered cowries, range from \$8,000 to \$30,000; larger installations are \$100,000 to \$200,000.

Leigh’s use of craft and fine art—including performance as well as sculpture and installation—to interrogate stereotypes of the black female body have landed her works in several public and private collections, including the Studio Museum in Harlem and the Pizzuti Collection in Columbus, Ohio. “More than anyone I can think of, she is someone who’s getting people to think about craft in radical and different ways, infusing that with contemporary concepts related to race and gender and labor,” says Joey Yates, associate curator at the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft, where Leigh’s solo exhibition “Crop Rotation” was on view this spring. Yates continues: “In the past three years she’s been rising—everyone wants to work with her. It’s a zeitgeist moment.”

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