



Untitled #92 (cowrie), salt fired porcelain, 6 x 16 x 9 in

MEDIA ALERT:

**Simone Leigh: Code Switch
February 6 – March 29, 2014**

Gallery Reception: Thursday, February 6, 2014, 6-8 pm
Gallery Wendi Norris
161 Jessie Street, San Francisco, CA 94105

SAN FRANCISCO, CA.

Gallery Wendi Norris is pleased to announce the West Coast debut of acclaimed New York-based artist Simone Leigh. This solo exhibition will feature ten new works, including sculptures, installation, and a collaborative video, and will give Bay Area audiences a substantial introduction to Leigh's artistic practice,

which explores black female subjectivity through her interest in African art, ethnographic research, feminism, and performance.

Much like Surrealist masters of the 20th Century, Leigh imbues these organic forms with layers of poetic resonance and meaning, evoking references to human sexuality, racial politics, and dynamic cultural histories. Inspired by ethnographic objects, human anatomy, and depictions of African Americans from American history, Leigh exposes stereotypes about black and female bodies as artificial cultural constructs by transforming them into bold and provocative works of art.

Queen Bee (2008-2013), a chandelier that evolves with each successive installation will feature giant porcelain cowrie shells cast from watermelons, in a brand new, site-specific configuration. Remarkable for its playful, surprising approach to delicate and complex subject matter, it will showcase Leigh's extraordinary ability to make familiar materials both strange and beautiful. Her ceramic head sculptures also address ideas of beauty and the power invested in representation, combining traditional symbols and iconic forms to parody stereotypes and pay homage to the resiliency of the human spirit. Widely praised in the press, her use of repeated shapes, such as rosebuds or shells, recall the works of Eva Hesse, and the materiality and the thematic content of her work has also drawn comparisons to early Judy Chicago. Similarly, *Breakdown* a video made in collaboration with Liz Magic Laser, features a haunting and absurdly funny performance by opera singer Alicia Hall Moran that employs everyday language in a meditation on loaded cultural expectations of the concept of "drama".

Leigh will be presenting her work as part of the artist lecture series at San Francisco Art Institute on Wednesday, February 5, 2014 from 7:30-9:00 PM.

About the Artist

Simone Leigh's object-based artistic practice explores themes of black female subjectivity. After her show at Gallery Wendi Norris she has a solo exhibition, *What's Her Face*, scheduled at the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center for spring 2014. She is a Creative Capital Grantee and a recipient of the LMCC Michael Richards award. She was the recipient of the 2011 Joan Mitchell Foundation grant for sculpture; the artist-in-residence program at the Studio Museum in Harlem from 2010-11; the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Workspace program; the Bronx Museum's Artist in the Marketplace program; the Art Matters research grant; and the New York Foundation for The Arts Fellowship for Sculpture. Recent solo presentations include the exhibition, *You Don't Know Where Her Mouth Has Been* and at The Kitchen, New York, NY, *Topsy Turvy*, an installation at The Fowler Museum. Leigh's work has been exhibited internationally at the Contemporary Art Museum in Houston; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Kunsthalle Wien in Vienna; L'appartement 22 in Rabat, Morocco; The Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh; and the AVA Gallery in Cape Town, South Africa. Her work has been featured in *Modern Painters*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Small Axe* and *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, and *EBONY Magazine*. She received a BA in Art and Philosophy from Earlham College, and has lectured at New York University, Rhode Island School of Design, Parsons, Rutgers University, and the Tyler School of Art, among others.

About the Gallery

Gallery Wendi Norris presents a compelling contemporary and modern program with a strong emphasis on the global market. Since 2003, we have collaborated with over one hundred of the top museums around the world, placing works in their collections and collaborating on solo and group exhibitions. Though, by design, the range of works we show is diverse, a common thread runs through them all: a focus on the human ability to create psychological and spiritual meaning through form and content. Both the artworks and the artists themselves are emblematic of this aesthetic ambition and our trans-cultural nature. Through our expertise in the modern art world, with an unparalleled network in Surrealism, and through our considered selection of some of today's most dynamic artists, we work with a range of private clients, museums, public art projects and not-for-profit art organizations.

For additional information and images please contact the gallery (415) 346-7812 or email molly@gallerywendinorris.com.