

## News Release

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## New Series of Photographs by Laurie Simmons Premieres at the Jewish Museum on March 13

### Images Explore Self-Expression in a Social Media-Driven World Through Online “Doll Girls” Community

New York, NY – The Jewish Museum presents a series of recent, large-scale photographs by artist Laurie Simmons, on view from March 13 to August 16, 2015. The six new works in *Laurie Simmons: How We See* draw upon the “Doll Girls” community, people who alter themselves to look like Barbie, baby dolls, and Japanese anime characters through make-up, dress, and even cosmetic surgery. Evoking the tradition of the high-school portrait – when teenagers present their idealized selves to the camera – Simmons photographed fashion models seated in front of a curtain, cropped from the shoulders down. Prismatic lighting and small, surprising details in the models’ clothing give these otherwise banal images a psychedelic effect, which is exaggerated by each girl’s preternaturally large, sparkling eyes. They stare out at the viewer with an uncanny, alien gaze, created by lavishly painting eyes onto the models’ closed eyelids—a technique used by the “Doll Girls” themselves.

*How We See* draws an arc between portraits traded among classmates and the persona-play that “Doll Girls” rapidly execute on smartphones, where continuous feeds of Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter allow alternate versions of the self to appear, morph, and disappear. Simmons has a longstanding interest in masking and disguises, and in these works probes the ever-widening gap between real life and the eerie artificiality enabled by social media. In *How We See*, Simmons explores contemporary notions of beauty, identity, and persona—investigating how individuality can be assembled through the distorted lens of idealized beauty.

Long before digital technologies were commonplace in daily life, Simmons immersed herself in imaginary, constructed worlds, from dollhouses in *Early Color Interiors* (1978 – 79), ventriloquist’s dummies in *Clothes Make the Man* (1990 – 92), and more recently Japanese cosplay in *Kigurumi* (2014). A constant thread through the artist’s work from 1978 to the present is an examination of self-perception. How we see ourselves, Simmons suggests, is best revealed through approximations, surrogates, and stand-ins. *Laurie Simmons: How We See* is the artist’s first solo museum exhibition in New York City.

Laurie Simmons (born Far Rockaway, New York, 1949) is a photographer and filmmaker. She received her bachelor’s degree in fine arts from the Tyler School of Art at Temple University in 1971. Solo exhibitions of her work have been held at the Neues Museum, Nuremberg (2014); the Print Gallery at the New York Public Library (2010); the Baltimore Museum of Art (1997); the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (1987); and P.S. 1, New York (1979). Her work has also been shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among other venues. She lives and works in New York.

*Laurie Simmons: How We See* is organized by Assistant Curator Kelly Taxter.

The Jewish Museum  
1109 Fifth Avenue  
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TheJewishMuseum.org

Under the auspices of  
The Jewish Theological Seminary

Jewish Museum

Clothing by Rachel Antonoff and make-up by Landy Dean and James Kaliardos.

### **Support**

*Laurie Simmons: How We See* is made possible by the Melva Bucksbaum Fund for Contemporary Art. Additional generous support is provided by Toby Devan Lewis, The Alice M. and Thomas J. Tisch Foundation, Ann and Mel Schaffer, and Vera Schapps.

### **About the Jewish Museum**

Located on Museum Mile at Fifth Avenue and 92nd Street, the Jewish Museum is one of the world's preeminent institutions devoted to exploring art and Jewish culture from ancient to contemporary, offering intellectually engaging and educational exhibitions and programs for people of all ages and backgrounds. The Museum was established in 1904, when Judge Mayer Sulzberger donated 26 ceremonial objects to The Jewish Theological Seminary as the core of a museum collection. Today, the Museum maintains a collection of over 30,000 works of art, artifacts, and broadcast media reflecting global Jewish identity, and presents a diverse schedule of internationally acclaimed temporary exhibitions.

The Jewish Museum is located at 1109 Fifth Avenue at 92nd Street, New York City. Museum hours are Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, 11am to 5:45pm; Thursday, 11am to 8pm; and Friday, 11am to 4pm. Museum admission is \$15.00 for adults, \$12.00 for senior citizens, \$7.50 for students, free for visitors 18 and under and Jewish Museum members. Admission is Pay What You Wish on Thursdays from 5pm to 8pm and free on Saturdays. For information on the Jewish Museum, the public may call 212.423.3200 or visit the website at [www.thejewishmuseum.org](http://www.thejewishmuseum.org).

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