



Lorna Simpson, *Haze*, 2019, ink and screenprint on gessoed fiberglass. © Lorna Simpson.
Courtesy the Artist and Hauser & Wirth. Photo: James Wang

LORNA SIMPSON | HAZE

Serlachius Museums | 13 May–8 October 2023

Press release 10 May 2023

Lorna Simpson makes her Nordic debut at the Serlachius Museums

The Serlachius Museums is proud to announce the May 13 opening of *Haze*, the Nordic debut of Lorna Simpson, an artist widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in US contemporary art today.

Lorna Simpson (b. 1960) is one of the most prominent figures of contemporary art in America. Simpson came to prominence in the 1980s through her pioneering approach to conceptual photography, which featured striking juxtapositions of text and staged images.

Layered and multivalent, Simpson's practice deploys metaphor, metonymy, and formal prowess to offer a potent response to American life today. In a career now spanning three decades, Simpson has continued to address the same themes. Her works challenge traditional notions of memory, identity, gender, race and history.

Simpson started out as a photographic artist, but she has boldly explored various media, her choice of technique being guided by the subject. This exhibition features a selection of mixed media paintings, sculptures and video art, rounded out with a series of completely new collages to be completed shortly before the opening.

The title of the exhibition, *Haze*, refers to the blurry view that we often have of past and present times. Our perception is often clouded by many kinds of prejudices. Simpson's art challenges us to critically examine our assumptions, but she refrains from offering clear-cut answers – instead, she leaves her work open to varied interpretations and associations.

Since the 2010s, Simpson has been making collages using old magazines as her source material. Magazines such as *Ebony* and *Jet* have been published for Black audiences since the 1940s and 1950s, offering Simpson a rich wellspring of imagery for studying and visualizing American history. *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines also form a central part of the exhibition of the Serlachius Museums.

Ice metaphors

Haze presents Simpson's most recent output, with a focus on her monumental *Ice Series*, which features mixed media paintings based on text fragments and photographs mined from archives. The Serlachius show marks the most comprehensive exhibition to date of her paintings spanning the period between 2017 and 2021.

Her blue-dominated paintings occupy a borderland somewhere between the abstract and the figurative, evoking melting glaciers in a manner that might be interpreted as a commentary on climate change. For Simpson, however, ice also symbolizes the increasingly gloomy, inhospitable atmosphere of American society. If we think of the old saying 'only the tip of the iceberg', Simpson's glaciers invite us to contemplate what has been excluded from the picture and relegated to invisibility.

Ice has been a recurring motif in Simpson's art of recent years, symbolizing both change and permanence. The word itself invokes the theme of equality. A person can be 'frozen out' of society and keeping someone 'on ice' can refer to imprisonment. In the United States, prison inmates are ineligible to vote, which means that detaining a person is essentially an act denying them the opportunity to have their voice heard in society.

The paintings in the exhibition revel in deep shades of blue, a colour that carries various symbolic meanings in many cultures. Blue is also associated with blues music or a depressed mood. In 2019, Simpson stated that the blue palette of her paintings illustrates nightfall and the darkening ethos of the Trump era in the United States.

The exhibition is a collaboration with the Kunstmuseum Thun, Switzerland. Its curator is Laura Kuurne, Head of Collections and Exhibitions at the Serlachius Museums.

Influential artist

Simpson was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1960. She studied art at the School of Visual Arts in New York and completed her master's degree at the University of California San Diego in 1985. Simpson has also organised extensive solo shows at important exhibition venues, such as at New York's Museum of Modern Art, MoMa, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, Jeu De Paume in Paris, and Haus der Kunst in Munich.

She has been invited to take part in major international exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale in Italy (1990 and 2015) and Documenta in Kassel, Germany (1987 and 2002). She was awarded the J. Paul Getty Medal in 2019.

Press releases and photographs: <https://serlachius.fi/en/for-media>

The Serlachius Museums are open:

in the winter season, 1 September–31 May, from Tuesday to Sunday, 11 am–6 pm.

in the summer season, 1 June–31 August, every day 10 am–6 pm

Visiting addresses:

Serlachius Museum Gösta, Joenniementie 47, Mänttä, Finland

Serlachius Museum Gustaf, R. Erik Serlachiuksen katu 2, Mänttä, Finland

Serlachius Museums in the social media: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#)