

MEDIA RELEASE

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The Studio Museum in Harlem Announces 2011–12 Artists in Residence and Welcomes New Assistant Curator



Njideka Akunyili, *Ife Nyado: The Thing Around Her Neck*, 2011. Courtesy the artist



Meleko Mokgosi, *Pax Afrikana: Full Belly (Part 4)*, 2011. Courtesy the artist



Xaviera Simmons, *Composition One for Score A*, 2010. Courtesy the artist

NEW YORK, NY, August 3, 2011— The Studio Museum in Harlem is proud to announce the 2011–12 artists in residence: **Njideka Akunyili**, **Meleko Mokgosi** and **Xaviera Simmons**, as well as the appointment of **Naima J. Keith** as Assistant Curator. Since its founding in 1968, the Studio Museum has held a strong commitment to nurturing and advancing the careers of both visual artists of African descent and curators and arts professionals committed to these artists.

Director and Chief Curator Thelma Golden states, “The Studio Museum’s residency program continues its ardent support of emerging artists. This year’s artists continue this long and storied tradition by adding their unique voices and vision to the 43-year history of this groundbreaking program.”

The Artists-in-Residence program was conceived at the time of the Museum’s opening and has supported over 100 graduates who have gone on to highly regarded careers. Every year, the Museum offers a twelve-month studio residency for three emerging artists. Each artist is granted a free non-living studio space on the Museum’s third floor, a \$20,000 fellowship, and a \$1,000 materials stipend. The program is designed to serve emerging artists of African and Latino descent locally, nationally and internationally, working across all media. At the end of the residency, an exhibition of the artists’ work is presented in the Museum’s galleries.

In addition to the physical and financial resources of the residency, a key program aspect is artists' access to Studio Museum staff and other scholars and art professionals, both formally and informally. Through Critical Dialogues, a program that couples each artist with a local curator or critic, artists develop strong relationships with leaders in their specific areas of interest. Meeting several times throughout the year, the artist-critic pair develops a dialogue about the artist's work and global contemporary art. The critics then contribute essays to the Artists-in-Residence exhibition brochure, providing new, in-depth insight on the artists' work to the public and the scholarly community.

About the Artists

Njideka Akunyili was born in Enugu, Nigeria, in 1983. She is 2011 MFA graduate of Yale University and received a BA from Swarthmore College (2004) and a post-baccalaureate certificate from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (2006). Her paintings, characterized by rigorous figuration, explore the artist's complex relationship to both Nigerian and Western culture. Her work has been featured in group exhibitions in New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and California and is in the collections of the Community College of Philadelphia, Swarthmore College, and the PAFA Print Department Archives.

Meleko Mokgosi was born in Gaborone, Botswana in 1981. His large-scale installations of paintings that relate to one another much like frames in a filmstrip investigate notions of cultural identification. Mokgosi received an MFA from University of California, Los Angeles (2011) and a BA from Williams College (2007). Mokgosi was also a participant in the 2007–08 Independent Study Program at the Whitney Museum of American Art. His works have been exhibited internationally in solo and group exhibitions at notable venues throughout the U.S. and in Botswana, China and England.

Xaviera Simmons was born in New York City in 1974. Her practice encompasses photographic, performance, installation and audio works, often blurring the line between media and even individual works. Simmons holds a BA in Photography from Bard College (2004) and participated in the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program and a two-year Actor Training Conservatory at the Maggie Flanigan Studio in New York. She has worked with the Studio Museum on several exhibitions and projects, including *junctions (transmissions to)*, part of the OFF SITE collaboration between the Museum and The Goethe Institute, New York; *30 Seconds off an Inch* (2009–10); and a commissioned project for the Winter/Spring 2010 issue of *Studio* magazine. Simmons's work has also been featured in solo and group exhibitions at institutions including the Museum of Art and Design, MoMA PS1, and the Queens Museum of Art.



Photo: Matt Sayles

About Naima J. Keith

Naima J. Keith comes to the Studio Museum from a position as Curatorial Fellow at Los Angeles's Hammer Museum, where, since 2008, she has worked closely with curator Kellie Jones on *Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles 1960–1980* (October 2, 2011–January 8, 2012). Keith received a BA from Spelman College in 2003 and an MA in art history at the University of California, Los Angeles, in 2005. Her essays have been featured in publications for The Studio Museum in Harlem and the University Art Museum, University of California, Santa Barbara. She began her curatorial career in 2003 as an intern at the Studio Museum, and has worked at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and LAXART, where she curated *Nicole Miller: The Conductor* (2009). She has taught at the University of Missouri, Loyola Marymount University, and the University of California, Santa Barbara.

About The Studio Museum in Harlem

Founded in 1968, The Studio Museum in Harlem is a contemporary art museum that focuses on the work of artists of African descent locally, nationally and globally, as well as work that has been inspired and influenced by African-American culture. The Museum is committed to serving as a unique resource in the local community, and in national and international arenas, by making artworks and exhibitions concrete and personal for each viewer.

Hours and Admission

The Studio Museum is open Thursday and Friday, noon-9pm; Saturday, 10am-6pm; Sunday, noon-6pm. The museum is closed to the public but available for school and group tours on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Museum admission is by suggested donation: \$7 for adults, \$3 for students (with valid id) and seniors. Free for children 12 and under. Sundays are free at the Studio Museum, thanks to generous support from Target. For more information visit studiomuseum.org. From Memorial Day, May 30, 2011 through Labor Day, September 5, 2011, the Studio Museum is offering free admission to all active duty military personnel and their families. For more information on the Blue Star Museums initiative, visit arts.gov/bluestarmuseums.

The Artists-in-Residence program is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts; New York State Council for the Arts, a state agency; Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation; Jerome Foundation; New York Community Trust and by endowments established by the Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Trust and Andrea Frank Foundation. **The Studio Museum in Harlem is supported, in part, with public funds provided by the following government agencies and elected representatives:** The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; Assemblyman Keith L. T. Wright, 70th A.D.; New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency; the National Endowment for the Arts; The City of New York; Council Member Inez E. Dickens, 9th C.D. and Speaker Christine Quinn and the New York City Council.