



Renée Cox, *Origin* (1993), archival digital inkjet print on dibond, 4x7ft (each), edition 1/5+2AP

**Renée Cox: Roots Returned**  
featuring the diptych  
**Origin**

opens Saturday, September 28, 6-9PM  
through November 10, 2019

Originally conceived and executed as half a diptych, Renée Cox's large-scale photograph, *Yo Mama* (1993), was exhibited to great acclaim in Marcia Tucker's ground-breaking exhibition "Bad Girls" at the New Museum in the winter of 1994. As a recent graduate from SVA's MFA program still attending the Whitney ISP, and a former fashion photographer and mother of two, this was to be the 33-year-old Cox's first big break. Moving on quickly to other works both within her "Yo Mama" series and beyond, the pairing of the two large-scale photographic works, "Yo Mama" and her partner "David," were never publicly brought together. Cathouse Proper is proud to resume its "solo-solo show" program, featuring a single major work of art by a contemporary artist of note, with Renée Cox's monumental diptych, *Origin* (1993), opening Saturday, September 28th.

No doubt, *Yo Mama* on its own is a powerful image: a thoroughly contemporary rendition of a mother and child photographed in black and white with a life-sized buff and exposed Cox in high-heeled pumps shot from below assertively returning the gaze of the viewer while holding her mirthful, squirming son. Consequently, when *Yo Mama* was first shown in 1994, it not only put the New York art scene on the alert that here was an important new artist to watch, but also indicated a new disposition and direction to contemporary art. Along with the Whitney Biennial in spring of 1993, identity politics had been marshaled and the 80s' notion of appropriation had been finessed into a withering critique of white culture and its unacknowledged thefts and privileges.

With the addition of the second half of the diptych, *Origin* more than doubles in complexity. Coming from fashion, Cox knew the power of an outfit (or lack thereof); hence, with a spareness of props she manages to redirect the entire trajectory of the traditional Christian redemption story (original sin to birth of Christ), a tale she learned well as a Catholic brought up in Jamaica, and defended well in its reenvisioned form against the censorship of former Mayor Rudy Giuliani and The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights in their much publicized opposition to *Yo*

*Mama's Last Supper* in 2001. "David" stands against an infinitely dark space posed to mimic Michelangelo's towering marble. His chiseled, living body effortlessly occupies the Renaissance's Greek ideal. In his hand he holds a well-worn copy of Cheikh Anta Diop's revolutionary corrective to the West's willful misunderstanding of ancient Egyptian history, *The African Origin of Civilization*.

Renée Cox's *Origin* (1993), her first major work, emerges fresh and relevant to be seen for the first time in the still developing cultural milieu that it was instrumental in creating.

Select biography:

Renée Cox's work has been included in solo and group exhibitions at prominent institutions including Tate Liverpool (Liverpool, UK), The New Museum of Contemporary Art (New York, NY), Brooklyn Museum (Brooklyn, NY), Harvard University (Cambridge, MA), Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, NY) among others. She has been the recipient of the Artists Fellowship Award, New York Foundation for the Arts, The MacDowell Colony, (Petersborough, NY) and the Aaron Matalon Award, The National Gallery of Jamaica (Kingston, Jamaica) among others. She is currently an associate professor at Columbia University (New York, NY) and has lectured at Yale College of Art (New Haven, CT), New York University (New York, NY) and Parsons School of Design (New York, NY) to name a few. She lives and works in Manhattan and Amagansett with her husband, Nicolas Charteron and their dog, Dogon.

*Renée Cox: Roots Returned* has been organized in collaboration with Alaina Simone Inc.



for inquiries contact David Dixon  
david@cathouseproper.com  
646-729-4682

Cathouse Proper @ 524 Projects  
524 Court Street, 2nd floor (enter on Huntington St.)  
Brooklyn, NY 11231

Friday-Sunday, 12-6pm or by appointment

F/G to Smith-9th St.  
cathouseproper.com