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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

West Coast Debut of *Posing Beauty in African American Culture*

Los Angeles, CA. – The USC Fisher Museum of Art presents the west coast debut of [*Posing Beauty in African American Culture*](#), a stunning exhibition of photographs that explores the ways in which African American beauty has been represented in both historical and contemporary contexts, opening Wednesday, September 7, 2011 and running through Saturday, December 3, 2011.

“What does it mean to be 'beautiful'? There is no one answer,” responds curator Deborah Willis, Chair of the Department of Photography & Imaging at New York University, Tisch School of the Arts. “Yet for the past century, photographers and their subjects have been challenging our answers to this question, and the results are revelatory.”

This sprawling survey of images of African Americans was gathered from a diverse array of media including photography, video, fashion, and advertising. The over 80 plus works of art in *Posing Beauty in African American Culture* explore and challenge the understanding of beauty by framing notions of aesthetics, race, class, and gender within not just art, but also within popular culture and political contexts. *Posing Beauty* questions these representations of beauty: are they racialized? Are they laden with multiple meanings?

Posing Beauty in African American Culture is organized and presented in three thematic sections. In the first, “Constructing a Pose,” whether wearing a new Easter suit or a new hairstyle, smiling at the camera or looking determinedly elsewhere, the photographs in this section illustrate the impact posed images of beauty have had on the Modernist movement.

The seductive and exuberant photographs in “Body and Image” question our contemporary understanding of beauty, and our ideas about desire, which have been constructed and framed through the body.

Finally, the resplendent photographs in “Modeling Beauty and Beauty Contests” move from the carefully coifed portraits of the 1890s and early 1900s to the slick, buoyant photographs of the 1960s and 1970s “Black is Beautiful” movement and beyond to illustrate the national debate on black beauty.

The opening reception for *Posing Beauty in African American Culture* will be held on October 4th, and coincide with the program “Posing Beauty, Posing Questions” a panel discussion moderated by Deborah Willis, curator of *Posing Beauty*.

This exhibition is organized by [Curatorial Assistance](#), Pasadena, CA.

About USC Fisher Museum of Art

The USC Fisher Museum of Art (formerly the Fisher Gallery) was founded in 1939 and is an accredited museum of the American Association of Museums. It functions as a center of intellectual inquiry and aesthetic enjoyment in support of USC's goals of research, teaching, artistic creation, and service to society. The Fisher Museum bears special responsibility to link the art in its permanent collection and the art it presents in its temporary exhibitions to all of USC's present and future audiences: to its students, faculty, staff, alumni, as well as to the surrounding communities. Fisher Museum offers an array of programming, including lectures, artists' talks, Yoga, film screenings, concerts, and poetry readings to enhance and support its exhibitions. Fisher Museum is also proud to be the home and working laboratory for the USC International Museum Institute, a think-tank for museum professionals and a division of the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences.

Museum Hours and Admission:

Open for viewing during the USC academic calendar year; Tuesday through Friday, noon to 5; Saturday, noon to 4; closed Sundays and Mondays.

Admission to the exhibition and all related events are always free. For more information please call (213) 740-4561 or log onto our website at <http://fisher.usc.edu>.

Image: Ken Ramsay, *Susan Taylor, as Model*, C. 1970s

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FALL 2011 PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

The USC Fisher Museum of Art is pleased to present our special programming and events to enhance the experience of your visit to the museum. Admission to the exhibition and all related events is free.

[Words in Public Spaces: An Evening with Jenny Holzer](#)

A Visions and Voices Signature Event

Tuesday, September 20, 2011, 7:00pm

Jenny Holzer is one of the country's most celebrated contemporary artists. Her installation, Blacklist, located in front of the USC Fisher Museum, encourages discussion of the First Amendment and the blacklist era. Holzer will be joined by law professor and USC Provost Elizabeth Garrett for a provocative conversation exploring public art and American democracy.

[Bliss: A Play by Velina Hasu Houston](#)

A Visions and Voices Event

Monday, October 3, 2011, 7:00pm

Bliss is an original play by Velina Hasu Houston that explores concepts of beauty, gender and identity in contemporary society. The play tells the story of an Afro-German woman who has struggled with her looks and identity. When her uncertain choices lead her to an unconscionably violent act, she is forced to deal with who she is and how she looks like.

[Posing Beauty Posing Questions](#)

A Visions and Voices Event

Tuesday, October 4, 2011, 5:00pm

Grand Ballroom, Ronald Tutor Campus Center

A lively conversation will examine and challenge conventional perspectives on identity, beauty, cosmopolitanism and community in Africa and the African diaspora. The distinguished panel will feature curator Deborah Willis, artist Carrie Mae Weems, curator Franklin Sirmans and history professor Robin D. G. Kelley.

[Families with Fisher@USC](#)

Saturday, October 15, 2011, 12-2pm

Families are invited to our special Family Day filled with art activities, music and refreshments. All ages are welcome!

[The Image of Masculinity](#)

Talks with Fisher@USC

Wednesday, October 19, 2011, 5-6:30pm

Join our moderator, Francille Wilson, as our distinguished panel will discuss the impact of visual media culture on the image of masculinity in African American culture.

[Contesting Beauty](#)

Talks with Fisher@USC

Wednesday, November 16, 5-6:30pm

Join our moderator, Francille Wilson, as our distinguished panel will discuss the history and impact of African American beauty contests and pageants as they produce the image of the idealized woman in society.

[Behind-the-Scenes at the USC Fisher Museum of Art](#)

[Trojan Family Weekend](#)

Friday, October 28, 2011, 12-2pm

Join us for a special demonstration from a guest conservator showcasing the restoration of an artwork from the permanent collection.

All events and programs take place at the USC Fisher Museum of Art, Harris Hall, unless otherwise noted.