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Deana Lawson Wins Guggenheim's Hugo Boss Prize

Ms. Lawson, whose images combine regal poses with everyday scenes, is the first artist working in photography to win.

By Robin Pogrebin | October 22



Deana Lawson, 41, uses the body and domestic environments to explore themes of family, identity and community. Deana Lawson, via Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York

Deana Lawson, whose images of African-Americans embody both the majestic and the quotidian, has become the first artist working in photography to be awarded the Guggenheim Museum's Hugo Boss Prize.

"Her contribution to the medium and the larger cultural landscape is indelible," said Richard Armstrong, the Guggenheim's director.

Organized with the fashion company to recognize achievement in contemporary art, the prize comes with a \$100,000 honorarium as well as a solo exhibition next year.

Combining elements of documentary, portraiture and stagecraft, Ms. Lawson, 41, uses the body and domestic environments to explore themes of family, identity and community.

"The furniture may be covered in plastic and the wall paint peeling," the photography critic Arthur Lubow wrote in *The New York Times* in 2018. "But when the photographer Deana Lawson poses her African-American subjects in humble rooms, she sees the survivors of a history of slavery and colonization who stand proudly amid the shards of vanished empires."

Born in Rochester, N.Y., Ms. Lawson has a solo show opening on Oct. 27, 2021, at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston that will include a selection of her photographs from 2004 to the present.

In light of the pandemic, for the first time since the prize was established in 1996, each of the remaining shortlisted artists will receive an honorarium of \$10,000. They are: Nairy Baghramian of Isfahan, Iran; Kevin Beasley of Lynchburg, Va.; Elias Sime of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Cecilia Vicuña of Santiago, Chile; and Adrián Villar Rojas of Rosario, Argentina.