

Learn with MoMA



Step 1 Look closely

1. What do you notice about this artwork?
2. What are some similarities and differences between the different images that make up this artwork?
3. Why might the artist have chosen to put these images together?

Step 2 Learn more

Wigs, by Lorna Simpson, is a collection of hair pieces, depicting everything from Afros and braided hair to blonde locks and doll wigs. Her work often investigates the history of African American hairstyles and conventions of beauty. From stigma against Black hairstyles to reclaiming natural hair as a sign of Black empowerment, hair has taken on a variety of social and political implications. Through the texts and images, Simpson invites the viewer to create narratives about who might wear these hairpieces.

She spent time in a mall in downtown Brooklyn where there were fifty stores with different kinds of wigs and hair, "So I spent a couple of afternoons going to each store and buying as many wigs that I thought were as interesting and kind of different from one another in terms of type. There is one wig that looks like a platinum blonde hairstyle from the fifties. Another wig that has braids that have been configured to fall in curly shapes. There are also two doll wigs that are fairly small in scale from the turn of the century."



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Image: Lorna Simpson. *Wigs*. 1994. Publisher: Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago. Printer: 21 Steps, Albuquerque. Purchased with funds given by Agnes Gund, Howard B. Johnson, and Emily Fisher Landau. © 2023 Lorna Simpson

Step 3 Activity: Responding to beauty standards

Suggested materials: magazines, newspapers, large piece of paper, scissors, glue, markers, oil pastels, or colored pencils

1. Look through magazines, newspapers, and other print media to find examples of ads or photos that represent a beauty standard that is common in society. Cut or tear out five to ten examples.
2. Consider how the examples you selected are related to each other and how they relate to you.
3. Working individually or with a small group, create a collage that incorporates these images. Use markers, oil pastels, or colored pencils to show the connections between your examples or to show your relationship with the beauty standards represented. You can add words or images to support your response.
4. Reflect on the images that you chose for your collage. How has your collage changed, reframed, critiqued, or supported the beauty standards represented in the ads and images?

Step 4 Share!

Share your collage with a family member and ask them how they relate to these images. Or you can email a photo to us at MoMA: schoolprograms@moma.org.