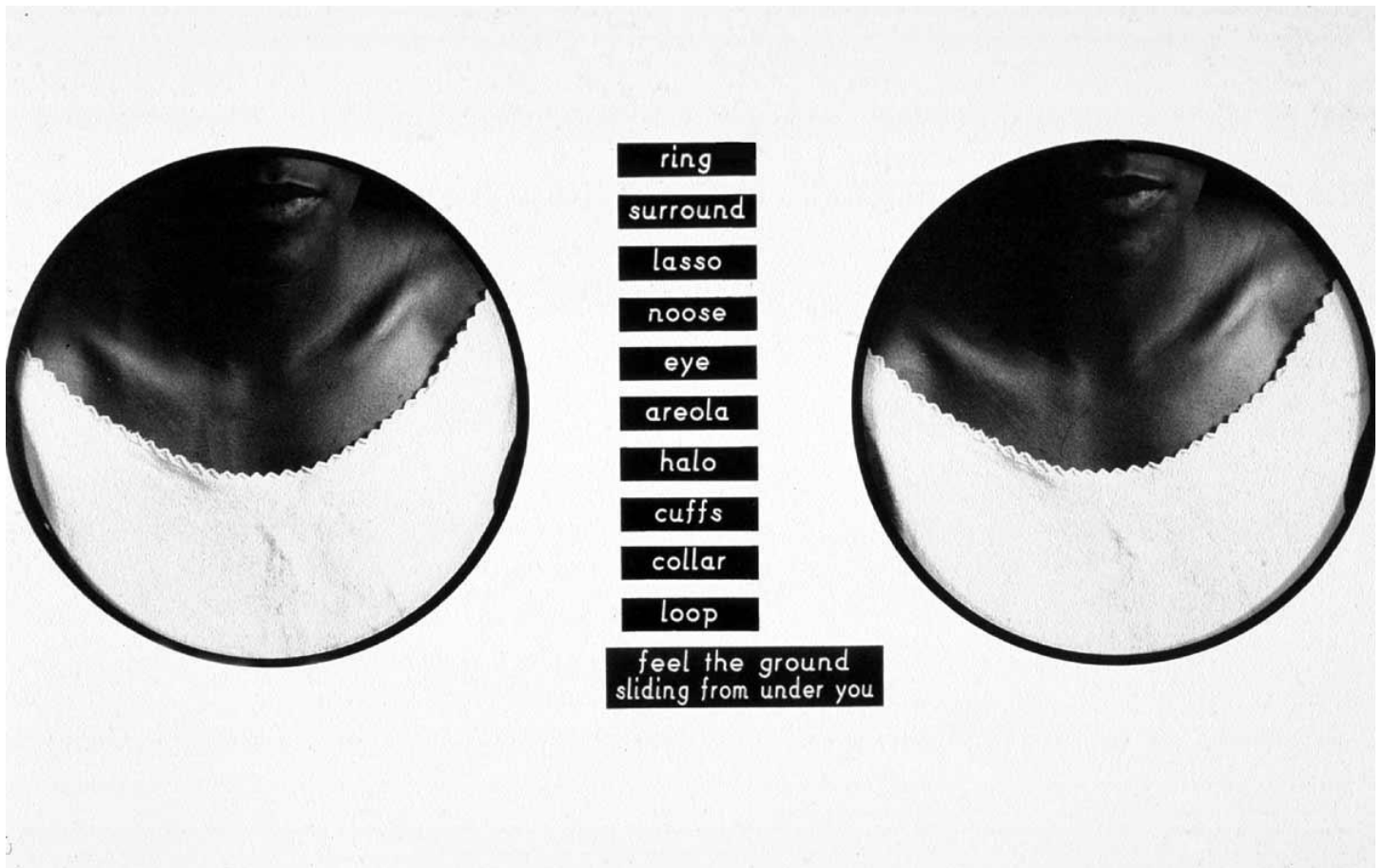


LORNA SIMPSON



In *Untitled (Two Necklines)*, identical photographs of an unidentified African-American woman, shown from mouth to breastbone, hang in circular frames, between them a list of words engraved on plaques. The double image suggests tranquility and composure: the woman's white shift is clean and simple, her mouth at ease, the curve of her breastbone elegantly arced. But the plaques feature words describing circularity and enclosure that are ominously electrified by text on the final plaque, which reads "feel the ground sliding from under you."

Such meticulous alignments of words and image fuel the subtle yet startling power of Lorna Simpson's work, which for more than two decades has probed the spectral issues of race, sex, and class. Like this one, her images are often truncated, replicated, and annotated with words that force the viewer to interpret. Here, the framed photographs and words inscribed on plaques are literally and metaphorically black and white, the background of the final plaque a haunting blood red. One is hard pressed to deny the implications of this personal yet dehumanized image and its attendant language of racial pathology.

Simpson's interest in the relationship between text and images began during her career as a documentary photographer. She received her BFA from the School of Visual Arts in New York and her MFA from the University of California at San Diego. She is recognized as one of America's ranking masters of potent, poetic work in photography and film. Remarkable in her originality is the way her works signal what is most personal about identity while simultaneously touching upon clichés and assumptions that can disfigure or destroy it.