



Semaphore Hannah Price

About the Artist

A photographic artist and filmmaker, Hannah Price (b. 1986) is primarily interested in documenting relationships, race and gender politics, social perception, and misperception.

Price graduated from the Yale School of Art with an MFA in 2014, receiving the Richard Benson Prize for excellence in photography. Over the past six years, Price's photographs have been displayed in several cities across the United States, with many residing in the permanent collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Semaphore

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Hannah Price's exhibition, *Semaphore*, roots itself in a tricky word, one which connotes signaling, or a way of sending a message. Price's practice is itself concerned with how we, as people, communicate. Her photographs and video work document relationships, race and gender politics, social perception, and social misperception. Through portraiture, video interviews and text pieces, *Semaphore* looks to the overt and subtle ways identity is signaled. It encourages us to seek out these signals and messages, but crucially, to do so without first adjusting for our own points of perspective.

In each of the exhibition's portraits, subjects don neutral garb, and stand in unassuming locations. Price's deftness with a camera, her predilection for creating elegant, richly toned black-and-white portraits, is mesmerizing. The beauty of these images requires longer looking. Yet, when we look at a photo like *Jamal*, what do we do first? Do we marvel at the kisses of sunlight glancing off his temple and chest? Perhaps. But first, maybe even unconsciously, we may size ourselves up against this person. We take in his skin color, gender, age and physique, and feel it reverberate off of ourselves. When encountering this image, we admit its existence according to our own systems of thought and our own beliefs. We create this person anew—for ourselves.

While viewing *Ines Fixated*, we make assumptions about the model's objective beauty. Her slender frame, long dark hair and languid pose exude a kind of privilege we allocate for those people, or things, we call beautiful. In *Kayla and Zane*, the female model becomes only a mother, the younger boy, a child. Price's portraits do not intend to introduce us to her subjects. They exist in seemingly random, everyday spaces and carry no identifying markers of where they've come from. Instead of offering recognition, they ask us to take on the job of working through what constitutes our differences—or similarities—from the person in the photograph.

"What is the only thing that matters?" In a video work for this exhibition, *Who Are You?*, Price's subjects briefly come to life. The artist sits outside a pizza delivery joint, crouching along the curb between two men. Holding a microphone, she offers it to one of them and poses this loaded question effortlessly, almost

innocuously. The response comes quickly, earnestly: “Satisfying God... being good to my family and my friends. Other than this, I really don’t care about anything else.”

In *Who Are You?*, Price asks her interviewees, subjects ranging from a young white woman, to the two younger pizza delivery guys, to a grizzled older man, more probing questions: “What is strange?”, “What does it mean to be Black?”, “What does it mean to be White?” As Price asks these intimate and open-ended questions, we watch a familiar and supremely human behavior play out. Her subjects sometimes seem to act out, or perform actions of connectivity, answering with platitudes or socially acceptable responses. Other times, they waver, or let a personal anecdote slip, and suddenly the feeling of the encounter changes. Ultimately, *Who Are You?* feels less interested in deciphering the answers Price’s subjects give her, and more so in accommodating an experience that parses out what differs between self-presentation and being present.

Scattered throughout *Semaphore* are text pieces. *Back In Time* requires the viewer to scan their eyes up and down the length of the wall—a gesture reminiscent of appraising another person. *Similar/Dissimilar* winds the two words around one another in a spiral, over and over until they become nearly indecipherable. *FIXATE* shows the word crisscrossing and creeping up from the floor, creating a



Semaphore

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fence-like structure that appears to bar us entry. Combined with the more traditional presentation of photographs and video interviews, the presence of these text-based artworks is initially disarming. Yet, again, Price gives us these precisely-shaped words to illuminate an aspect of how we process another human being's presence.

A few of the photographs in *Semaphore* don't include people. After spending time gazing at such carefully considered portraits, it's difficult to figure out what to make of an image like *Shade*. As with much of her exhibition, Price asks for patience in this picture of a backyard on a summer day. Looking at the tree branch's shadow extending over the grassy yard, we almost ache to project something onto this space that would help us to grasp at a better understanding. Does the shadow resemble something, or mean something greater than a simple absence of light? Maybe. Maybe not. This quiet composition points to our urge to fill space, to better understand on our own terms before proceeding forward. It's difficult to exist easily in the photographer's moment of making, without first knowing how it came to be.

Semaphore asks us many questions, without lingering over explanations. When Price asks us from her low vantage point on the curb, "What is the only thing that matters?" there is a moment after the question has been asked, and before any response has been given. Finding a way to sit in that moment, unencumbered by even ourselves, might be an answer.



Images from left to right, *Shade*, 2018 Archival Inkjet Print, *Jamal*, 2018 Archival Inkjet Print, *Ines*, 2018, Archival Inkjet Print. Cover image *Kayla and Zane*, 2018 Archival Inkjet Print. All Images by Hannah Price, courtesy of the artist.

	Hannah Price	<i>Grave</i>	2013 Archival Inkjet Print 30×37 inches, Edition of 3	\$2,400
	Hannah Price	<i>Jamal</i>	2018 Archival Inkjet Print 30×24 inches, Edition of 3	\$2,400
	Hannah Price	<i>Jose</i>	2018 Archival Inkjet Print 36×30 inches, Edition of 2	\$2,400
	Hannah Price	<i>Shade</i>	2013 Archival Inkjet Print 24×30 inches, Edition of 3	\$2,000
	Hannah Price	<i>Victor</i>	2018 Archival Inkjet Print 36×30 inches, Edition of 3	\$2,400
	Hannah Price	<i>Sarah's Feet</i>	2013 Archival Inkjet Print 25×21 inches, Edition of 3	\$2,000
	Hannah Price	<i>Jing</i>	2015 Archival Inkjet Print 32×39 inches, Edition of 3	\$2,400
	Hannah Price	<i>Dad</i>	2013 Archival Inkjet Print 36×44 inches, Edition of 2	\$2,400
	Hannah Price	<i>Ines</i>	2018 Archival Inkjet Print 40×48 inches, Edition of 2	\$2,800
	Hannah Price	<i>Kayla and Zane</i>	2018 Archival Inkjet Print 30×36 inches, Edition of 3	\$2,400
	Hannah Price	<i>Ingrid</i>	2018 Archival Inkjet Print 25x 21 inches, Edition of 3	\$2,000
	Hannah Price	<i>Ines Fixated</i>	2018 Archival Inkjet Print 31×38 inches, Edition of 3	\$2,400

	Hannah Price	<i>Simon</i>	2018 Archival Inkjet Print 26×30 inches, Edition of 3	\$2,000
	Hannah Price	<i>Oxford Street</i>	2018 Archival Inkjet Print 30×37 inches, Edition of 3	\$2,400
	Hannah Price	<i>I'm In My 70's</i>	2018 Archival Inkjet Print 24×20 inches, Edition of 2	\$2,000
	Hannah Price	<i>Back in Time</i>	2018 Cut Vinyl	NFS
	Hannah Price	<i>Fixate</i>	2018 Cut Vinyl	NFS
	Hannah Price	<i>Descending</i>	2018 Cut Vinyl	NFS
	Hannah Price	<i>Who Are You (Interviews)?</i>	2018 Video, Color, Sound 7:35	NFS

**Silver Eye Center for Photography
Aaronel deRoy Gruber & Irving Gruber Gallery
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Pittsburgh, PA 15224**

- 1 About the Artist**
- 2 About the Exhibition**
- 5 Price Guide**

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