

# ★ SON OF a ★ CHAMPION

*O'Neil Lawrence*



**MUTUAL GALLERY • JUNE 26TH - JULY 20, 2012**





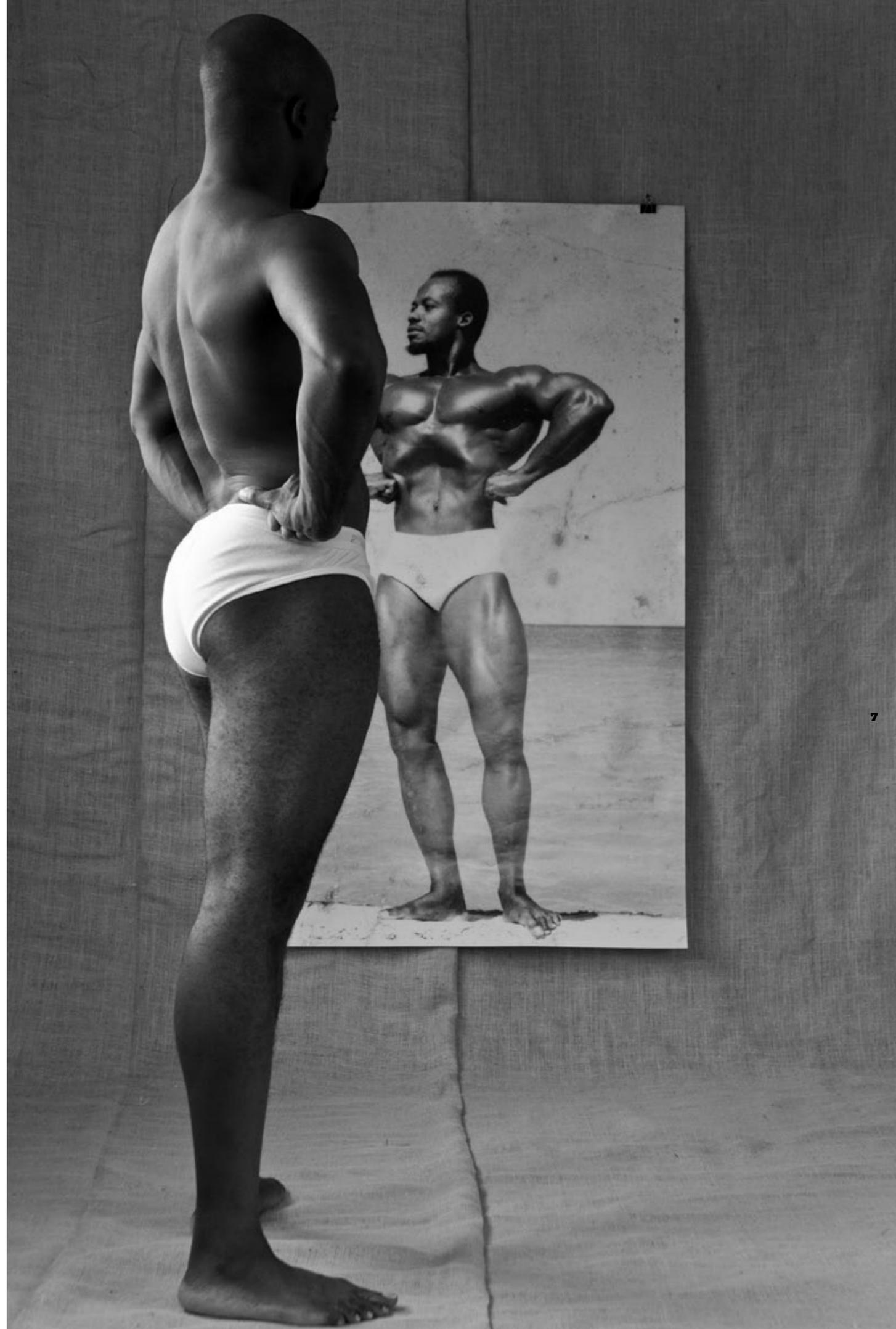
## SON OF A CHAMPION

As a child, I became curious about the meaning of my Christian name and though I searched and searched, I could never find it anywhere. It was my mother who was responsible for christening me 'O'Neil,' she absolutely loved the name when she first heard it but as circumstance would have it so did quite a few other new mothers the same year I was born. Rather than have her son be lost amongst the sea of variations: Oneal, Oniel and of course the most popular Oneil, she decided to use the spelling usually associated with the surname. Because of this I never did find my name in any of the baby name books but I did find Neil which means 'champion' and the 'O' with an apostrophe, I also found out, means 'son of' so by default my name means Son of a Champion.

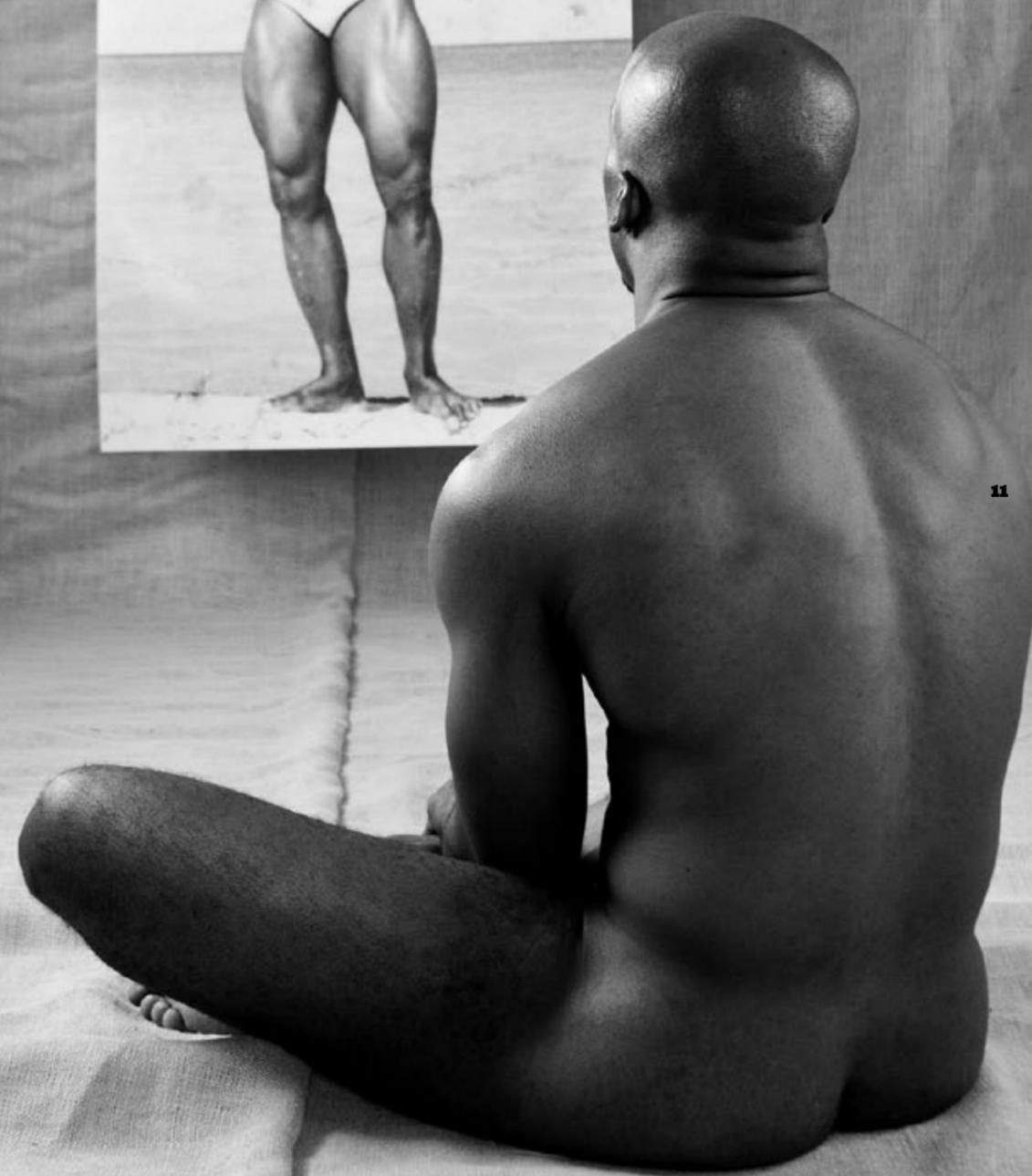
As a teenager, I felt burdened by the name and its implications and I strove for a long time to make my own identity. It seemed I was destined to be defined by someone else: my father, a man who had already made his mark as a talented sculptor and a successful businessman. He was also a competitive bodybuilder and held the title **Mr Jamaica 1966**. Of course, like most teenagers, and some young adults, I rebelled against his values and that led, at times, to a tumultuous relationship. But as I matured I realised that whether or not I adhered to his values he was always my own personal starting point and it was in finally accepting this that I was able to begin to define myself. Growing up the son of a

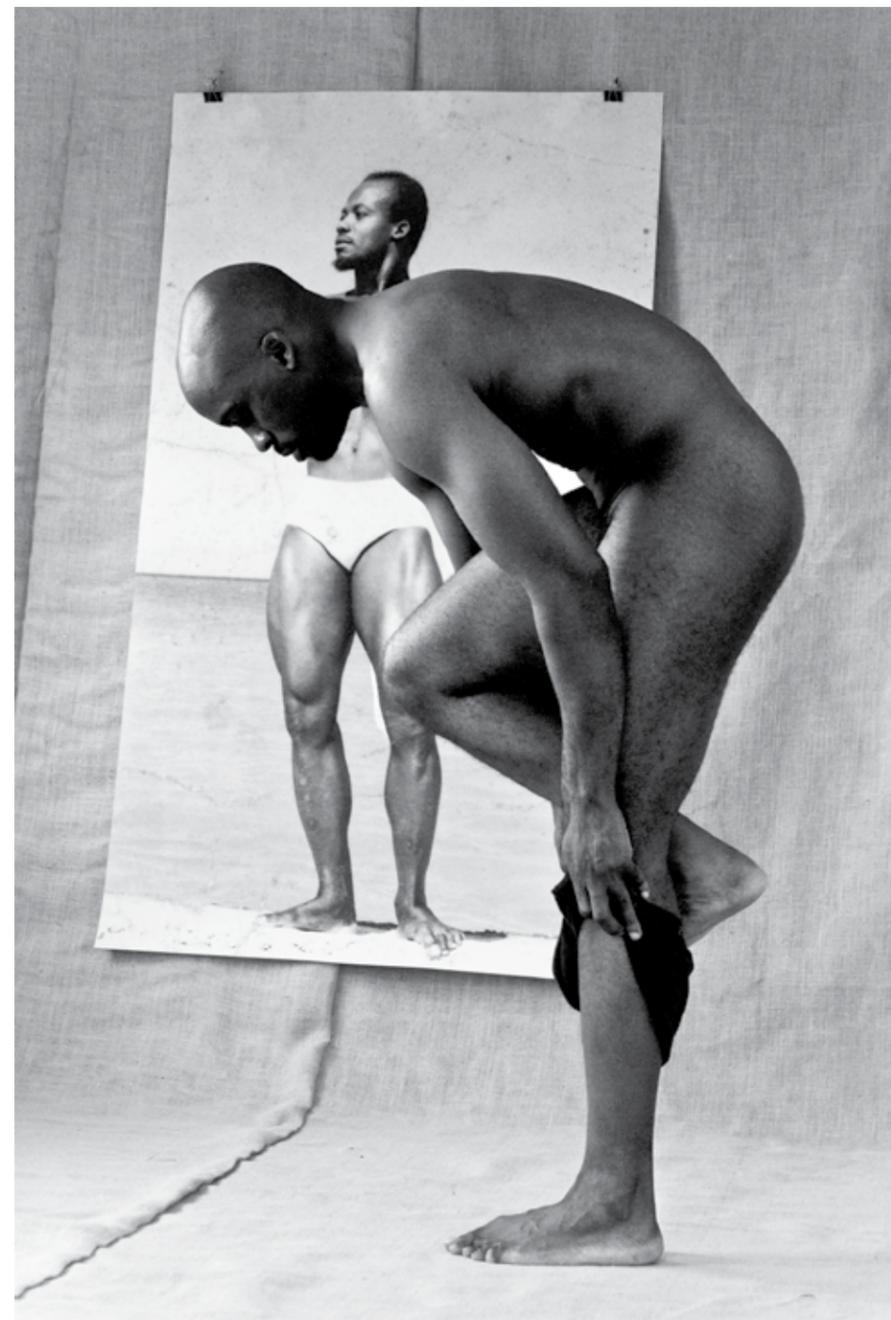
competitive bodybuilder, I spent time in gyms from a very young age and as such, prevailing concepts of masculinity and the ideal male body were solidified in my mind from early on. The photograph of my father, which appears in each of the works in this present exhibition, was taken after he won the Mr Jamaica competition and embodies these ideals of masculinity and male beauty. Looking back at the photograph now, I have come to realise how this monumentalised figure of my champion bodybuilder father has influenced my work as an artist, which is focused on the male body. My father's image is firmly imprinted in my mind and has deeply affected my shifting perceptions of my own body and, by implication, of my own masculinity and sense of self. At first, I perceived this "measuring up" as a problem but I have come to recognize that it is an integral part of who I am and I have it centre stage in the work in this exhibition. This exhibition is a tribute to the complex relationship I have with my father, and his photograph, and the ways in which this has defined me.









**Image Listing:**

**Cover:** Detail Son of a Champion #8, 2012.  
**Back Cover:** Son of a Champion #15, 2012. **Inside Cover:** Son of a Champion #1, 2012. **Pg 1:** Son of a Champion #2, 2012. **Pg 2:** Son of a Champion #3, 2012. **Pg 3:** Son of a Champion #4, 2012. **Pg 4:** Son of a Champion #5, 2012. **Pg 5:** Son of a Champion #6, 2012. **Pg 6:** Single channel Video, Son of a Champion, 2012, TRT 00 Mins. **Pg 7:** Son of a Champion #7, 2012. **Pg 8:** Son of a Champion #9, 2012. **Pg 10:** Son of a Champion #11, 2012. **Pg 11:** Son of a Champion #12, 2012. **Pg 12:** Son of a Champion #13, 2012. **Pg 13:** Son of a Champion #14 2012.

**BIOGRAPHY**

O'NEIL LAWRENCE was born in 1977 in Kingston, Jamaica. He received a BA in English Literature and Sociology from the University of the West Indies (Mona) and a Diploma in Visual Communication from the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts. He is currently an M.Phil. student in Cultural Studies at the University of the West Indies (Mona). He has been exhibiting since 2004 his recent exhibitions include *Rockstone and Bootheel*, Real Art Ways, Hartford Connecticut 2009; *Shot in Kingston*, Alice Yard, Port of Spain 2010, travelling exhibition *Roots and Wings*, Brighton U.K., Barbados 2012 and *The Self Portrait*, Kunsthaeuschen, Switzerland 2012. He is also the current the SuperPlus Under 40 Artist of the Year, Mutual Gallery, Kingston and works as the Assistant Curator at the National Gallery of Jamaica.

**SON OF A CHAMPION  
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