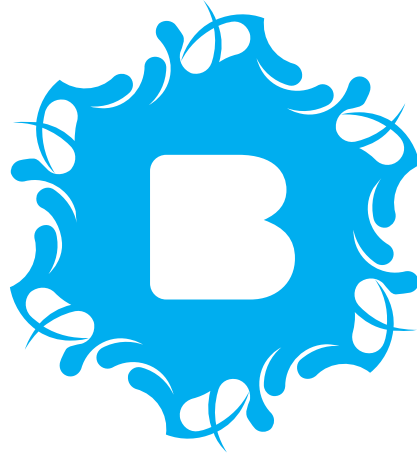


Press Release



May 2012

Brooklyn Museum to Present First Solo Museum Exhibition Of work by Brooklyn-based Artist Mickalene Thomas

The Brooklyn Museum will present the first solo museum exhibition by Brooklyn-based multimedia artist Mickalene Thomas, best known for her vibrant paintings of African American women against backdrops of decor recalled from her childhood. On view September 28, 2012, through January 20, 2013, *Mickalene Thomas: Origin of the Universe*, which highlights the artist's work from the past two years, will include some ninety-three pieces, among them a new body of work that explores landscapes and interiors. For the Brooklyn venue, Thomas has made new pieces, including a mural that will hang in the entrance gallery, as well as installations of furnished domestic interiors that evoke the settings in her paintings.

Thomas's work grows from a long study of art history, drawing inspiration from the classical genres of portraiture, landscape, and still life, as well as from contemporary popular culture, the imagery of which she uses to explore issues of identity and race, as well as beauty and the self. Her work, which synthesizes a wide range of artistic and cultural references into a unique vision of the world, presents a complex perspective on what it means to be a woman and expands common definitions of beauty.

Thomas's oeuvre investigates the body in relationship to the landscape and interior spaces through a pictorial style that reimagines past masterworks and transforms them in a modern-day idiom for the present. Her signature portraits of vibrant black women in photographs, paintings, and collages explore artifice, masking, and costuming. Her interiors draw on a range of historical periods, from the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century to the present.

Working with models drawn from her circle of friends and relatives, she outfits them with carefully selected wigs, costumes, and makeup, then poses them in looks inspired by black popular culture from the 1970s to the present. Although her referents are often the anonymous models depicted in works by such artists as Manet and Matisse, Thomas frequently identifies her own subjects in her titles.

Among the works included in the exhibition will be *Mama Bush III*, a portrait of the artist's mother influenced by Ingres's *Le Grand Odalisque*; *Le Dejeuner sur l'herbe: Les Trois Femmes Noires*, a rhinestone-studded, acrylic-and-enamel painting inspired by Manet's famous work, in which Thomas substitutes three black

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women evoking 1970s blaxploitation films for the Paris demimonde trio pictured in the Manet version; a collage, *Marie: Femme Noir nue Couchee*, that synthesizes a long pictorial history of subordination and obliteration; and her contemporary riff on Courbet's *The Origin of the World*.

Born in 1971, Mickalene Thomas is the recipient of a BFA from Pratt Institute and an MFA from Yale University. She has participated in residency programs at the Versailles Foundation Munn Artists Program, Giverny, France, and at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York. Her work has been shown in group exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit; The Renaissance Society, Chicago; and MoMA PS1, New York. Among the many public institutions whose collections include her work are the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Art Institute of Chicago; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Mickalene Thomas: Origin of the Universe has been organized by the Santa Monica Museum of Art and curator Lisa Melandri. The Brooklyn presentation is organized by Eugenie Tsai, John and Barbara Vogelstein Curator of Contemporary Art, Brooklyn Museum.

Generous support for this exhibition was provided by Forest City Ratner Companies and the Stephanie and Tim Ingrassia Contemporary Art Exhibition Fund.

The exhibition is accompanied by a full-color, illustrated catalogue.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Admission:

Contribution \$12; students with valid I.D. and older adults \$8. Free to Members and children under 12 accompanied by an adult. Group tours or visits must be arranged in advance by calling extension 234.

Museum Hours:

Wednesday and Friday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Thursday 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; first Saturday of each month, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

Directions:

Subway: Seventh Avenue express (2 or 3) to Eastern Parkway/Brooklyn Museum stop; Lexington Avenue express (4 or 5) to Nevins Street, cross platform and transfer to the 2 or 3. Bus: B41, B69, B48.

On-site parking available.