



THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, July 20, 2016

**THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, LOS ANGELES (MOCA), PRESENTS
*MICKALENE THOMAS: DO I LOOK LIKE A LADY?***

NEW AND RECENT WORK BY NEW YORK-BASED ARTIST MICKALENE THOMAS

**October 16, 2016–February 6, 2017
MOCA Grand Avenue**



LOS ANGELES — The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA), presents *Mickalene Thomas: Do I Look Like a Lady?*, an exhibition of new and recent work by New York-based artist Mickalene Thomas. For this exhibition, Thomas has created a group of silkscreened portraits to be featured alongside an installation inspired by 1970s domestic interiors, and a two-channel video that weaves together a chorus of black female performers, past and present, including standup comedians Jackie “Moms” Mabley and Wanda Sykes, and pop-culture icons Eartha Kitt and Whitney Houston. An incisive, moving, and at times riotous portrait of the multiplicities of womanhood, *Mickalene Thomas: Do I Look Like a Lady?* builds upon Thomas’s ongoing reconsideration of black female identity, presentation, and representation through a queer lens. This exhibition is organized by MOCA Curatorial Assistant Rebecca Matalon, with Executive Assistant to the Chief Curator Hana Cohn.

Over the last decade, Thomas has produced sumptuous, ecstatic, and excessively tactile paintings, photographs, collages, films, and installations. The surfaces of her unabashedly decorative and vibrantly colored paintings of interiors and landscapes are often overlaid with rhinestones, applied as contour or in lavish, all-over fields. Thomas plays with perspective, layering fractured geometric shapes that reference the early cubist compositions of Romare Bearden. In her signature painted and photographic portraits of family, friends, lovers, and pop-culture icons, Thomas draws on and deconstructs 19th- and 20th-century traditions of portraiture, replacing the ubiquitous white female nude with voluptuous African American women. Rather than being objects of a spectator’s gaze, Thomas’s women look back. They are self-possessed, socially and sexually empowered. Often draped in richly hued swaths of fabric, they pose with arms and legs extended atop sofas embellished with layers of animal prints, oversized flowers, and checkerboard patterns. Thomas’s eroticism emerges via the décor of these lush scenes, set in densely furnished livingrooms accented with patchwork fabrics, wood paneling, kitsch wallpaper, and animal skin rugs to recall 1970s domestic interiors. More recently, she has begun transforming these backdrops into immersive installations, creating three-dimensional tableaux that humorously riff on the museological tradition of the period room. Rich with allusion, Thomas’s

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environments also build upon and expand her interest in how private domestic spaces function as sites of self-fashioning and display, and how class and taste are embedded in the objects we choose to surround ourselves with.

Mickalene Thomas was born in Camden, New Jersey, in 1971. She received her BFA from the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn in 2000 and her MFA in Painting from Yale University in 2002. She has held a number of prestigious residencies, including the Studio Museum in Harlem (2002–03) and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (2013). Her vast body of work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2011); the Santa Monica Museum of Art (2012); the Brooklyn Museum (2012–13); the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2012–13); and, most recently, the Aperture Foundation, New York (2015–16) and the Aspen Art Museum (2016). Thomas has produced site-specific projects for the U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal (2016); the Queens Museum, New York (2015); Volkshaus at Art Basel, Basel, Switzerland (2013); Barclays Center, New York (2012); and MoMA P.S. 1, New York (2010). Her work is included in the permanent collections of The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Brooklyn Museum; the Art Institute of Chicago; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, among others.

Mickalene Thomas: Do I Look Like a Lady? is organized by MOCA Curatorial Assistant Rebecca Matalon, with Executive Assistant to the Chief Curator Hana Cohn.

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Exhibitions at MOCA are supported by the MOCA Fund for Exhibitions, with lead annual support provided by Delta Air Lines, Shari Glazer, Hästens, and Sydney Holland, founder of the Sydney D. Holland Foundation. Generous funding is also provided by Jerri and Dr. Steven Nagelberg, and Thao Nguyen and Andreas Krainer.

Image credit: Mickalene Thomas, still from *Do I Look Like a Lady? (Comedians and Singers)*, 2016, two-channel video projection, color, sound, 12:34 minutes, dimensions variable, courtesy of the artist; Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong; and Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

RELATED PROGRAMS

MEMBERS' OPENING: MICKALENE THOMAS: *DO I LOOK LIKE A LADY?*

Saturday, October 15, 7–9pm

MOCA Grand Avenue

INFO 213/621-1794 or membership@moca.org

FREE for MOCA members; no reservations necessary

MICKALENE THOMAS AND REBECCA MATALON IN CONVERSATION

Sunday, October 16, 2016, 12:30pm

MOCA Grand Avenue

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IN GALLERY POETRY READING: HARMONY HOLIDAY

Sunday, October 30, 3pm

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ARTISTS ON ARTISTS: LAUREN HALSEY

Sunday, November 20, 3pm

MOCA Grand Avenue

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FREE with museum admission

Please check moca.org for updates on related programs.

THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, LOS ANGELES (MOCA)

About MOCA: Founded in 1979, MOCA's vision is to be the defining museum of contemporary art. In a relatively short period of time, MOCA has achieved astonishing growth with three Los Angeles locations of architectural renown; a world-class permanent collection of more than 6,800 objects, international in scope and among the finest in the world; hallmark education programs that are widely emulated; award-winning publications that present original scholarship; groundbreaking monographic, touring, and thematic exhibitions of international repute that survey the art of our time; and cutting-edge engagement with modes of new media production. MOCA is a not-for-profit institution that relies on a variety of funding sources for its activities.

Hours: MOCA Grand Avenue (located at 250 South Grand Avenue in Downtown Los Angeles) is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 11am to 6pm; Thursday from 11am to 8pm; Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 5pm; and closed on Tuesday. The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA (located at 152 North Central Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90012) has the same hours as MOCA Grand Avenue during exhibitions. Please call ahead or go to moca.org for the exhibition schedule for The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA. MOCA Pacific Design Center (located at 8687 Melrose Avenue, West Hollywood, CA 90069) is open Tuesday through Friday from 11am to 5pm; Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 6pm; and closed on Monday. The MOCA Store at MOCA Grand Avenue (located at 250 South Grand Avenue) is open Monday through Wednesday and Friday from 10:30am to 5:30pm; Thursday from 10:30am to 8:30pm; and Saturday and Sunday from 10:30am to 6:30pm.

Museum Admission: General admission is free for all MOCA members. General admission is also free for everyone at MOCA Grand Avenue and The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA on Thursdays from 5pm to 8pm, courtesy of Wells Fargo. General admission is always free at MOCA Pacific Design Center. General admission at MOCA Grand Avenue and The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA is \$12 for adults; \$7 for students with I.D. and seniors (65+); and free for children under 12.

More Information: For 24-hour information on current exhibitions, education programs, and special events, call 213/626-6222 or access MOCA online at moca.org.

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