

Moody Center for the Arts announces fall exhibition

***Mickalene Thomas: Waiting on a Prime-Time Star* to open September 28, 2017**



Mickalene Thomas, *Shinique: Now I Know*, 2015. Mixed media rhinestone, acrylic, and oil on wood panel. 96 x 120 inches. Courtesy the artist.

HOUSTON, TX [July 18, 2017] — Alison Weaver, the Suzanne Deal Booth Executive Director of the Moody Center for the Arts, announced today that the Moody will launch its fall program with *Mickalene Thomas: Waiting on a Prime-Time Star*, opening September 28, 2017. The exhibition will feature paintings, photographs, collages, prints, and mixed-media works that explore the artist's complex vision of female sexuality, identity, and power. Thomas's portraits examine how women are represented in art and popular culture and confront our assumptions about what defines beauty.

Thomas's work draws on her close study of art history and the classical genres of portraiture. Inspired by diverse sources from Romane Bearden, Édouard Manet, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, and Henri Matisse to contemporary film, fashion, and popular culture, Thomas challenges notions of femininity from a contemporary perspective. By modeling her figures and interiors on classically modern works, she claims agency for women who have historically been subjugated.

The Moody's Central Gallery will feature a room-sized tableau designed by Thomas as an immersive environment. At the center of the tableau is Thomas's documentary film, *Happy Birthday to a Beautiful Woman* (2012), a 23-minute exploration of the life and longings of her mother and muse, Sandra Bush. A former fashion model whose life echoes the aspirations and struggles of a generation of women, Bush is the inspiration of much of Thomas's work. This video exemplifies the artist's ongoing engagement with portraiture as a key to personal and cultural identity.

Alison Weaver said, "We are delighted to feature this exhibition which highlights the Moody's interest in interdisciplinary conversations. From the role of women in society to the history of portraiture and classical themes in art history, to issues of race, gender, sexuality, and power, the ideas underlying Thomas's practice provide a compelling platform for discussion that we will pursue throughout the duration of the exhibition."

Mickalene Thomas will participate in the Moody's Artists in Dialogue series on Thursday, September 28, 6:00 – 7:00 pm; tickets available online. The talk is followed by the opening reception, which is free and open to the public, from 7:00 – 9:00 pm. *Mickalene Thomas: Waiting on a Prime-Time Star* will remain on view at the Moody through January 13, 2018.

About the artist

Mickalene Thomas (lives and works in Brooklyn, NY) makes paintings, collages, photography, video, and installations that draw on art history and popular culture to create a contemporary vision of female sexuality, beauty, and power. Blurring the distinction between object and subject, concrete and abstract, real and imaginary, Thomas constructs complex portraits, landscapes, and interiors in order to examine how identity, gender, and sense-of-self are informed by the ways women (and "feminine" spaces) are represented in art and popular culture.

Thomas received a B.F.A. from the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY in 2000 and an M.F.A. from Yale University School of Art, New Haven, CT in 2002. Solo exhibitions of her work have been organized at The Dayton Art Institute, OH (forthcoming, 2018); Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, WA (forthcoming, 2018); Pomona College Museum of Art, Claremont, CA (forthcoming, 2018); Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, GA (forthcoming, 2017); Newcomb Art Museum, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA (2017); Spelman College Museum of Fine Arts, Atlanta, GA (2017); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2016); Aspen Art Museum, CO (2016); Aperture Foundation, New York (2016); George Eastman House, Rochester, NY (2014); Brooklyn Museum, New York (2012-13); Santa Monica Museum of Art (2012); and Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2012). Select group exhibitions featuring her work include *SHE: International Women Artists*, Long Museum, Shanghai (2016); and *30 Americans*, Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C. (2011), which has traveled extensively around the United States (2011-2017, ongoing). Thomas's work is in numerous international public and private collections including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Art Institute of Chicago; MoMA PS1, New York; Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Yale University Art Collection, New Haven, CT; and Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo.

Thomas has been awarded multiple prizes and grants, including the USA Francie Bishop Good & David Horvitz Fellow (2015); Anonymous Was A Woman Award (2013); Brooklyn Museum Asher B. Durand Award (2012); and the Timerhi Award for Leadership in the Arts (2010).

About the Moody Center for the Arts

Inaugurated in February 2017, the Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University is a state-of-the-art, non-collecting institution dedicated to transdisciplinary collaboration among the arts, sciences, and humanities. The 50,000-square foot facility, designed by acclaimed Los Angeles-based architect Michael Maltzan, serves as an experimental platform for creating and presenting works in all disciplines, a flexible teaching space to encourage new modes of making and a forum for creative partnerships with visiting national and international artists. The Moody is free and open to the public year-round.

Website: moody.rice.edu
Social Media: @theMoodyArts | #atTheMoody
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Address: Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University
6100 Main Street, MS-480, Houston, TX 77005
(University Entrance 8, at University Boulevard and Stockton Street)

Hours & Admission:

The exhibition spaces are open to the public and free of charge Tuesday through Saturday from 10am to 5pm, and closed Sundays, Mondays, and holidays. Events and programs are open to the public through an advance reservation system. For schedule, tickets and prices, visit moody.rice.edu.

Directions & Parking:

The Moody Center for the Arts is located on the campus of Rice University, and is best reached by using Campus Entrance 8 at the intersection of University Boulevard and Stockton Street. As you enter campus, the building is on the right, just past the Media Center. There is a dedicated parking lot adjacent to the building. Payment for the Moody Lot is by credit card only. For campus maps, visit www.rice.edu/maps.

About Rice University

Located on a 300-acre forested campus in central Houston, Rice University is a comprehensive research university that is consistently ranked among the nation's top 20 universities by U.S. News & World Report. With 3,910 undergraduates and 2,809 graduate students, Rice is home to highly respected schools of Architecture, Business, Continuing Studies, Engineering, Humanities, Music, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences as well as the Baker Institute for Public Policy. The new Moody Center for the Arts celebrates Rice's commitment to creativity and the arts as a key part of its educational mission and establishes a new arts district on Rice's campus, joining the distinguished Shepherd School of Music and the permanent James Turrell *Twilight Epiphany* Skyspace. For more information, visit www.rice.edu.

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