

Press Release

Thomas J Price. Thoughts Unseen

Hauser & Wirth Somerset

2 October 2021 – 3 January 2022

Opening Reception: Friday 1 October 2021



Thomas J Price's multidisciplinary practice confronts preconceived public attitudes towards representation and identity. Price challenges power structures that govern our society whilst examining learnt behaviour that guides our unconscious. His inaugural exhibition with Hauser & Wirth in Somerset, presents two decades of conceptual enquiry spanning film, early sculpture, and the artist's largest figurative bronze to date. His personal approach readdresses historic narratives and inverts our sense of familiarity, distilling signifiers of status to question the mechanisms in place that reinforce our cultural values.

Using methods of presentation, material and scale, Price explores expectations and assumptions, simultaneously drawing the viewer in whilst considering the space we create between ourselves and the work itself. Upon entering the first gallery, visitors will encounter 'Reaching Out' (2020), the artist's widely celebrated public sculpture situated on The Line, London and The Donum Estate, California, installed within a gallery context for the first time. The larger-than-life figurative work will stand alongside a new towering 12ft bronze, 'All In' (2021), each capturing 'in-between' moments of everyday contemporary subjects. Manifested from composite images, the fictional characters function as psychological portraits that despite their scale appear unassuming and instantly recognisable. The works focus our attention on the systemic marginalisation within public monuments, constructed through the artist's hybrid approach of traditional sculpting and intuitive digital technology.

This referencing of art history continues in Price's long-established preoccupation with ancient Greek, Roman and Egyptian traditions of monumental sculpture, alongside an intrinsic understanding of the symbolic power and hierarchy of materials. In 'Numen (Shifting Votive 1, 2, 3)' (2016) Price combines classical lost-wax casting with aluminium, a material more commonly associated with modern engineering, to present a series of emblematic heads raised to eye-level on marble columns. Dispersed throughout the two galleries, the works embody archetypal objects of worship in a modern age, whilst uncovering the haptic depths of Price's expanding range

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of mediums. Similarly, 'Icon Series' (2017) adopts gilding, a technique which dates to Ancient Egypt and amplifies a sense of luxury and splendour, alongside 3D printing. Placed on quartzite plinths the sculptures exude a powerful cultural resonance, challenging our awareness of current iconography and unmediated immortalisation of triumphant figures. Price's Icons gaze beyond the viewer consumed in their own thoughts and emotional worlds, reframing the image and associations of Black men in contemporary society today.

Whilst the majority of Price's oeuvre relates more closely to the male figure, 'Lay It Down (On The Edge of Beauty)' (2018) marks a poignant shift towards female identity and a shared Black experience. Placed within the entrance to the second gallery, the work extends Price's line of enquiry into deities, illuminating universal threads within popular culture, media and fashion that relate to aspects and signifiers of Black womanhood. Spotlighting the stigma associated with hairstyles and formal conventions of beauty, as well as the lack of acknowledgment when they are reappropriated outside of their true origin.



Harnessing the narrative power of performance, film and animation has been a consistent element throughout the artist's career to date. 'Man 10' (2011), a stop-motion animation, demonstrates an early desire to respond to the history of racialisation and magnifies the complexities of deep social tensions. Drawing upon his own lived experience and commonplace observations, Price elevates our awareness of physiognomies and unconscious forms of communication. 'From the Ground Up' (2016), a 26-minute dual monitor film work, repeats the meticulous action of slowly lacing, polishing and cleaning footwear, framed by a stark white background. The multi-faceted self portrait of the artist speaks as much about his own identity as it does the material culture and value we place on objects and social cues more broadly.



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This theme is extended in new modes of display within both 'Power Object (Section 1, No.1)' (2018) and 'Sonic Work (Collective Palette #01)' (2020/21), installed centrally within the second gallery. The two distinctly abstract bronze works share an aesthetic of 20th century modern masters, critiquing an art historical canon that has contributed to the objectification and misinterpretation of Black male identity. With 'Power Object (Section 1, No.1)' the title itself manipulates the dichotomy between our conditioned perception of power alongside the racial disparity of Britain's stop and search policy, 'Section 1, No.1'.

About the artist

Thomas J Price has rapidly become one of the most important British contemporary artists of his generation, subverting stereotypical representations of figures we value in society and traditional power structures. After studying at Chelsea College of Art, he completed his MA at the Royal College of Art in 2006 and began further interrogating the language of monumentalism to question the status inherent in public sculptures. Price has exhibited widely in the UK and internationally, including solo exhibitions at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, West Bretton (2014), National Portrait Gallery, London (2016) and The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto (2019).

In 2021, Price was commissioned by Hackney Council to create the first permanent public sculptures to celebrate the contribution of the Windrush generation and their descendants in the UK, to be unveiled in June 2022. In addition, he has been shortlisted for the national Windrush monument commission at London Waterloo station, organised by UP Projects and the Windrush Commemoration Committee. Price joined Hauser & Wirth Somerset as artist-in-residence from July-October 2021 ahead of his inaugural solo exhibition with the gallery. His work is currently on view internationally at Sculpture Millwaukee, WI until 15 December 2021; The Line, London, UK; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON and Donum Estate, Sonoma, CA.

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Gallery hours:
Tuesday – Sunday
10 am – 4 pm (October)
11 am – 4 pm (November onwards)

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Thomas J Price
Reaching Out
2020
Silicon bronze
285 x 90 x 86 cm / 112 1/4 x 35 3/8 x 33 7/8 in
9 ft
Installation view: The Donum Estate, Sonoma, CA
Photographer: Robert Berg

Thomas J Price
Lay It Down (On The Edge Of Beauty)
2018
Bronze with automotive spray paint
61 x 35 x 40 cm / 24 x 13 3/4 x 15 3/4 in

Thomas J Price
Untitled (Icon) Series
2017
24ct gold leafed aluminium composite, Italian
slate base on quartzite plinth
Dimensions variable

Thomas J Price
From the Ground Up
2016
Dual monitor video
Duration: 26:52 min (loop)

Thomas J Price
Power Object (Section 1, No.1)
2018
Aluminium bronze with marble base
67 x 44 x 40 cm / 26 3/8 x 17 3/8 x 15 3/4 in
Photo: Damian Griffiths