

## **Mickalene Thomas**

### ***How to Organize a Room Around a Striking Piece of Art***

14 November 2012 - 5 January 2013  
540 West 26th Street & 201 Chrystie Street

Lehmann Maupin  
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New York, 13 November 2012—Lehmann Maupin Gallery is honored to present Mickalene Thomas: *How to Organize a Room Around A Striking Piece of Art*, a two-gallery exhibition on view from 14 November 2012 – 5 January 2013 at 540 West 26th Street and 201 Chrystie Street. The artist's third solo exhibition at Lehmann Maupin will be presented in two parts: the Lower East Side gallery will comprise new large-scale paintings depicting landscapes and interior scenes as well as a series of short films created during her recent travels in Europe. In Chelsea, Thomas's first documentary film "HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN" will be shown alongside photographs of her mother and long-time muse, Sandra Bush. Thomas will also re-create one of her tableau environments in the gallery, allowing viewers to fully immerse themselves in her world while watching the film.

Since 2010, when Thomas was commissioned by curator Klaus Biesenbach to create a large-scale mural for MoMA PS1 and a site-specific painting for MoMA's restaurant The Modern, the surrounding landscape has played an increasingly prominent role in her work. The series of new paintings on view at 201 Chrystie Street were inspired by various art historical sources ranging from 19th-century Hudson River School to Romare Bearden, Henri Matisse, and Édouard Manet. Thomas was specifically drawn to Claude Monet's infamous garden in Giverny, France, where she spent time while completing a residency at the Versailles Foundation Munn Artists Program. In her hands, Monet's lush gardens and family home are re-claimed and re-contextualized to form new, contemporary narratives.

At the same time, Thomas turned her attention indoors, sourcing images from the popular interior design anthology *The Practical Encyclopedia of Good Decorating and Home Improvement*. Published in the early 1970s, a decade that has largely influenced her visual aesthetic, *The Practical Encyclopedia of Good Decorating and Home Improvement* yielded stylish reproductions of brightly painted foyers, tiled kitchens, and wood-paneled living rooms which Thomas coupled and collaged with her own photographs, swathes of patterned textiles and blocks of pure color, and at times, glimpses of the landscape to render kaleidoscopic shifts in perspective. The landscape is also brought to life as a moving collage in five short films of Giverny that visitors to the exhibition are able to experience on Google's new Nexus 7 tablets.

At Lehmann Maupin's West 26th Street gallery, Thomas's thirty-minute documentary "Happy Birthday to a Beautiful Woman" is the centerpiece of an exhibition that takes as its theme the artist's mother, Sandra Bush. The film is an emotionally raw and loving portrait of Bush as she reflects on her life experiences, including her personal struggles and battle with chronic illness. "Happy Birthday to a Beautiful Woman" debuted at the Brooklyn Museum of Art on 28 September as part of Thomas's first solo museum exhibition in New York.

Mickalene Thomas: *Origin of the Universe* at the Brooklyn Museum is an expanded version of the exhibition presented by the Santa Monica Museum of Art this summer. This presentation highlights some 100 works, including paintings, photographs, collages, and videos created over the past decade, including four new large-scale paintings, which have never before been on view, and a site-specific mural that greets visitors to the exhibition. Thomas has also installed a set of domestic interiors that bring to life the settings in her paintings. *Origin of the Universe* will remain on view at the Brooklyn Museum through 20 January 2013.

The museum exhibition also coincided with the unveiling of a permanent, site-specific commission at Barclays Center in Boerum Hill, Brooklyn. Inspired by the neighborhood's bustling energy and distinct mix of urban architecture, Thomas's 120-foot-long mural combines photo collage and painting to depict some of the borough's most iconic landmarks. Angular views of the cityscape—including the Brooklyn Bridge, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Soldier's and Sailor's Memorial Arch at Grand Army Plaza, and the borough's fabled brownstones—are juxtaposed alongside geometric patterns reminiscent of 1970s textiles in this

vibrant ode to the community. The completed mural was officially unveiled to the public on 28 September during Jay Z's kickoff performance at Barclays Center.

Mickalene Thomas was born in Camden, New Jersey in 1971. She earned her MFA from Yale University and holds a BFA from Pratt Institute. In 2002-2003, she participated in the Artist-in-Residence program at the Studio Museum in Harlem, and most recently, was a resident at the Versailles Foundation Munn Artists Program in Giverny, France (2011). Thomas has been included in numerous exhibitions worldwide, including *30 Americans*, the Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C. (2011); *Mama Bush: One of a Kind Two*, the Hara Museum in Tokyo, Japan (2011); *Americans Now*, the National Portrait Gallery in Washington D.C. (2010); and *Something You Can Feel*, La Conservera Contemporary Art Centre in Ceuti, Spain (2009). Her work is part of dozens of significant public collections, including New York's Museum of Modern Art, MoMA PS1, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art, and Studio Museum of Harlem as well as the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Yale University Art Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Art Institute of Chicago, and Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Japan, among others. She has been awarded multiple prizes and grants, including the Brooklyn Museum Asher B. Durand Award (2012), Timerhi Award for Leadership in the Arts (2010), Joan Mitchell Grant and Pratt Institute Alumni Achievement Award (both 2009), and Rema Hort Mann Grant (2007).

Mickalene Thomas lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

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