

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA
PARIS

MICKALENE THOMAS

JET : BEAUTÉS DU MOIS

September 25 - November 16, 2019

3, rue du Cloître Saint-Merri
75004 Paris



Mickalene Thomas, *November 1971*, 2019
Rhinstones and acrylic on canvas mounted on wood panel and framed in ebonized mahogany
72 x 60 in., 182.9 x 152.4 cm (Framed: 74 x 62 in., 184.9 x 157.5 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels, and Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is very pleased to present *Mickalene Thomas: Jet: beautés du mois*. This is the gallery's third exhibition with the American artist, Mickalene Thomas, who is an essential figure in the art scene of the United States. Thomas' work has diversified the representation of African-American women in art and pop culture by exploring notions of femininity, beauty, and agency, as most notable in her portraits and domestic interiors staged in powerfully evocative ways.

Mickalene Thomas: Jet: beautés du mois will present a collection of recent paintings on wood panels and collages on paper, two mediums of choice for the artist. The works repurpose and reclaim images from the *Jet Magazine* pinup calendars, published from 1971-1977. Since its founding in 1952, *Jet Magazine* contained political and cultural coverage—covering the Civil Rights movement from its inception—in addition to beauty and fashion trends and entertainment news. Each issue included its now iconic “*Jet Beauties of the Week*,” which consisted of full-page features of African-American models. The *Jet Calendar* was advertised as the first “black is beautiful” calendar, shifting *Jet* away from presenting Eurocentric beauty standards. Most *Jet Beauties* were not professional models, but rather were students, housewives and “career women” who submitted their photographs for *Jet*'s consideration. In her new works, Thomas reimagines *Jet*'s representation of African-American women as objects of desire, composing figures within ornamental tableaux to exhibit black and female empowerment.

The subjects chosen by Thomas are cut out and then freely juxtaposed against an array of materials: silkscreen prints made in her New York studio, oil or acrylic paints, enamel, and rhinestones. The multiplicity of these sources and techniques result in a layered vivacity where vivid colors often appear in contrast to the faded and grainy photographs of the *Jet Beauties*, further accentuating the historical quality of the sourced material. In certain works, Thomas selectively pixelates specific components of the figure or background, building on the artist's signature collage motif to decode and reassemble complex socio-cultural structures.

In her broader practice, Thomas also works with photography, film, sculpture and installations, oftentimes designing immersive environments that seem to spring directly from her own pictorial compositions. Staging is essential in Thomas' art, particularly during photo shoots where she stages not only the set but more importantly the subjects, which, much like the *Jet Beauties*,

are oftentimes not professional models but striking individuals Thomas has encountered in her own life. Through these environments, the artist creates her own iconographic repertoire composed of 1970s and 1980s décor and a patchwork of prints, photographs, solid matte colors, and metallic or rhinestoned surfaces. The resulting work contains a visual dynamism reminiscent of synthetic cubism and the cut paper collages of Romare Bearden and Matisse.

Thomas also references a history of art that has consistently denied the influence of black models. Her artwork simultaneously pays homage to and yet critiques the traditions of famous avant-garde portraits of the 19th century that have chronicled the history of painting as well as the evolution of society itself. Her work takes on the erotic and scandalous potential of the *Odalisque* by Ingres, as well as *Olympia* or *The Luncheon on the Grass* by Manet, all while questioning notions of beauty throughout the course of history.

Thomas has several other forthcoming solo exhibitions in the United States, including *Mickalene Thomas: Femmes Noires*, Contemporary Art Center, New Orleans, LA (2019); *Mickalene Thomas: A Moment's Pleasure*, Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD (2019); and *Better Nights*, Bass Museum of Art, Miami, FL (2019). Through an exceptionally informed body of work that combines technical mastery with visual seduction, Mickalene Thomas has established herself within a lineage of great American artists as one of the most influential contemporary artists of her time.

Mickalene Thomas was born in 1971 in New Jersey; she lives and works in Brooklyn (New York).

A multidisciplinary artist among the most well-known within the contemporary art scene in the U.S., Mickalene Thomas has participated since 2003 in numerous national and international exhibitions. She is known for mixing references to art history, politics, and pop culture in order to create captivating paintings that are both figurative and non-figurative. Her work is rooted in a long study of art history and classical portraiture, into which she introduces a complex notion of femininity that questions beauty standards and aesthetic representation.

Her first major solo show took place in 2012 at the Brooklyn Museum in New York City and at the Santa Monica Museum of Art in California. In 2016, Mickalene Thomas had solo shows primarily in the U.S. in places like the Aspen Art Museum as well as the MOCA Grand in Los Angeles. The following year sent her work to the Contemporary Art Museum in Saint-Louis, Missouri among others, and in 2018 her work was exhibited at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus and the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle (USA). The artist also enjoys many recent successes marked by several solo exhibitions: "Mickalene Thomas: Black Women" will be presented at the Contemporary Art Center of New Orleans after the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto in late 2019 into 2020; the artist will also mount an exhibition at the Bass Museum in Miami starting in December.

She has also contributed to a large number of group exhibitions, including at the International Center of Photography in New York City, at the Museum of African Diaspora in San Francisco, at the San José Museum of Art, at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, and at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York City. Additionally, since 2018 her exhibition—"Posing Modernity: the Black Model from Manet to Matisse"—can be seen in numerous museums and art centers including the Gibbes Museum of Art (North Carolina), the Museum of Fine Arts of Salt Lake City (Utah), and the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery in New York City.

Her artwork is included in the permanent collection of numerous American museums, among others the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Saint Louis Art Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, the Seattle Art Museum, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Paris Bourg-Tibourg

Sarkis

October 4 - December 21, 2019

Fiona Rae

January 10, 2020 -

Paris Cloître Saint-Merri

Mickalene Thomas

September 25 - November 16, 2019

Joris Van de Moortel

November 28, 2019 - January 18, 2020

Bruxelles

Nú Barreto

September 5 - October 26, 2019

Andres Serrano

November 14, 2019 - January 5, 2020

For additional information, please contact : Eva Ben Dhiab
evab@nathalieobadia.com / + 33 (0) 1 53 01 99 76

To keep posted on Galerie Nathalie Obadia : Instagram (@galerieobadia), Facebook (@GalerieNathalieObadia),
Twitter (@GalerieObadia) via le hashtag #galerieobadia