

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

PARIS - BRUXELLES

Mickalene Thomas

je t'adore deux

October 19 — January 3, 2026

91, rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, Paris 8^e



NUS Exotiques #13, 2025
Rhinstones on dye sublimation prints on dibond
81.3 x 73.7 x 5.1 cm (29 x 25 x 2 in.)
©Mickalene Thomas
Courtesy of the artist, Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels, and Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is pleased to present *Je t'adore deux*, a new exhibition by Mickalene Thomas in Paris, highlighting the artist's growing institutional recognition in Europe. Following her acclaimed 2022-23 exhibition at the musée de l'Orangerie (Paris), Thomas is currently the subject of a major solo show at Les Abattoirs — Musée Frac Occitanie Toulouse, part of the international exhibition *Mickalene Thomas: All About Love*, which began at The Broad in Los Angeles, continued at the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia, and the Hayward Gallery in London before arriving in France. In 2025, Mickalene Thomas was named one of Time's 100 Most Influential People of 2025, highlighting the growing global impact of her work.

This new exhibition unveils eleven previously unseen works drawn from series inspired by *JET* and *Nus Exotiques*—publications known for their portrayals of 'exotic' nudes. Drawing from archival imagery, Thomas reassembles these sources into spectacular new collages, deploying formal richness to articulate a powerful critical discourse. For over two decades, Thomas has developed a bold, politically engaged practice shaped by the intersecting dynamics of gender, race, and power. A Yale School of Art graduate (2002) and former artist-in-residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem (2003), she is recognized as one of the most distinctive voices in contemporary American art. "I define my work as both a feminist and political act—because I am a Black, a woman and queer. You don't have to explicitly claim it, but for a woman, the very act of making art is inherently political and feminist."¹ Thomas asserts. Each image, each collage, each motif becomes a space for rewriting, reconfiguring, and reclaiming visual and cultural iconographies.

The *Jet* series—seven works created specifically for this exhibition—reimagines one of the most iconic features from *Jet* magazine, a cornerstone of Black American popular culture since 1951. A major weekly in the Black American press, it combined political and social news, portraiture, and cultural coverage. *Jet Beauties of the Week*, highlighted a young Black woman in a swimsuit each week, photographed according to codified poses. This recurring feature, later adapted into an annual *Jet calendar*, played a significant role in shaping collective imaginaries around Black beauty in the United States.

While *Jet* provided vital visibility for Black beauty, it also imposed restrictive aesthetic standards, favoring slender silhouettes, light skin, and straight hair. While such images could symbolize emancipation, they also reinforced a gaze shaped by dominant, gendered, and heteronormative norms. Thomas's contemporary reinterpretations, such as *Jet Calendar Back Cover 1977* (2025), subvert the original imagery by isolating and fragmenting figures, recomposing them within lush settings of retro wallpaper, rhinestones, textiles, and motifs from the Black domestic sphere. Blurred and pixelated passages evoke memory and introduce a critical distance, allowing Black female subjectivity to emerge as complex, active, and plural.

Thomas's work situates itself within an alternative history of collage, where fragmentation becomes a gesture of memory, repair, and care, building on the legacy of artists like Romare Bearden and Faith Ringgold. Rather than confronting stereotypes head-on,

¹ Mickalene Thomas, *Mickalene Thomas: All About Love*, Distributed Art Publishers / Hayward Publishing, 2024, p. 186; source of the quotation p. 237.

Thomas employs a nuanced strategy of *critical hospitality*, appropriating and reorienting visual codes to open new perspectives and readings. Her aim is not to celebrate the African American visual heritage, and to redefine it with subtlety and power.

The *NUS Exotiques* works extend this reflection to erotic representations of racialized female bodies, transforming them into icons of a renewed gaze, liberated from conventional objectification. Thomas often collaborates with models from her personal circle, grounding her images in relationships of trust and reciprocity. Even when working from archives, her approach aligns with relational aesthetics, foregrounding human connection over staged representation—a perspective resonant with bell hooks's vision of love as an active ethic: a means of making visible, of honoring the complexity of lived experiences, and of opening a space for autonomy².

Thomas's practice is fundamentally about metamorphosis—bodily, social, and visual. Her art of transformation becomes a symbolic weapon against dominant norms of gender and beauty. "There's a deep desire in people to alter themselves—but it's also an art of transformation. I'm fascinated by the artifice, by how we're able to reshape ourselves. There's something profoundly creative in that. There's a great desire for people to alter themselves, but it's also the art of transformation. The artifice interests me - how we're capable of altering ourselves. There's a creative element that's very intriguing,"³ she notes.

Through these new works, Mickalene Thomas intensifies her exploration of Black bodies, feminine beauty, and the power of images. Every medium and context becomes a site for creation and self-assertion. In an era of profound social and aesthetic transformation, her work stands as a manifesto for metamorphosis as an act of freedom. As Roxane Gay observes, Thomas's visually striking art captivates with its ambition, audacity, and its subjects "that stare into the lens—as they do at the viewer—and demand to be seen"⁴.

² bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions*, New York, Harper Collins, 2000, p. 87.
³ Mickalene Thomas, *Mickalene Thomas: All About Love*, Distributed Art Publishers / Hayward Publishing, 2024, p. 201; source of the quotation p. 237.
⁴ Roxane Gay, *Wild and Somewhat Disruptive*, in Mickalene Thomas, Phaidon Press, 2021, p. 8..

Born in 1971 in Camden, New Jersey (USA), Mickalene Thomas lives and works in New York (USA).

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. Since 2022, Mickalene Thomas has been the subject of several solo exhibitions in Europe, including *Mickalene Thomas: Avec Monet* at the musée de l'Orangerie in Paris, and a touring exhibition initiated at the Broad in Los Angeles (USA), and followed by the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia (USA), before coming to the Hayward Gallery in London (UK) and to Les Abattoirs in Toulouse (France).

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.

Beyond the studio, Thomas is a Tony-nominated co-producer, educator, mentor, and curator committed to fostering inclusivity in the arts. She actively supports emerging artists and curates exhibitions that amplify underrepresented voices. In 2023, she made history as the first Black queer femme artist to have a scholarship endowed in her name at Yale University.

Her influence continues to expand—earning recognition in 2025 as one of *TIME* 100's Most Influential People and receiving honors from Creative Capital, the Hirshhorn Museum, and the Queens Museum.

Mickalene Thomas has been represented by Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels, since 2014.

Paris Saint-Honoré	Paris Cloître Saint-Merri	Brussels
Mickalene Thomas <i>je t'adore deux</i> October 19 - January 3 rd , 2026	Fiona Rae <i>Ensemble</i> September 6 - October 25, 2025	Johanna Mirabel <i>I Wish</i> Septembre 4 - October 25, 2025
	Andres Serrano <i>A Personal Mythology</i> <i>Immersion and Bodily Fluids (1986–1990)</i> November 10, 2025 - January 24, 2026	Sacha Cambier de Montraval November 6 - January 10, 2026
	Paris Cloître Saint-Merri - Espace II	
	Patrick Faigenbaum November 10, 2025 - December 2025	

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

To stay informed about Galerie Nathalie Obadia:
Instagram (@galerieobadia), Facebook (@GalerieNathalieObadia), Twitter (@GalerieObadia) via le hashtag #galerieobadia