



## **BMA TO UNVEIL MICKALENE THOMAS'S LARGEST COMMISSION TO DATE IN NOVEMBER 2019, COMPLETELY TRANSFORMING THE MUSEUM'S EAST LOBBY**

*Installation to Mark Inaugural Presentation of Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker Biennial Commission  
BMA Also Announces Appointment of First Meyerhoff-Becker Curatorial Fellow*

BALTIMORE, MD (August 15, 2019)—On November 24, The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) will open *Mickalene Thomas: A Moment's Pleasure*, a large-scale, site-specific installation that will transform nearly every aspect of the museum's two-floor East Lobby. Envisioned as a living room for Baltimore, the installation will see Thomas re-fit the space with new wallpapers, furniture, and other interior design elements. Within this environment, Thomas will present a selection of her paintings, prints, and collages, while exterior artworks will signal the shift in the aesthetic and communal experience. The installation marks the inaugural presentation of the Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker Biennial Commission, which was established last autumn to provide contemporary artists with a platform within the BMA to realize ambitious new projects and to engage with the community through one of the most accessible areas of the museum. On view until May 2021, *Mickalene Thomas: A Moment's Pleasure* is the most expansive commission undertaken by both the artist and the institution.

Thomas is globally recognized for her visually and conceptually layered compositions, created through an array of media, from acrylics, enamels, and rhinestones to richly composed photographs to mixed-media installations. Her portraits, landscapes, and interior views—whether produced in two or three dimensions—meld the visual vocabularies of art history and popular culture to examine issues of identity, gender, sexuality, and power. While her work deals in particular with the historic, social, and political constructs that shape our understanding of femininity and womanhood, her practice also delves into important moments of societal upheaval, especially those in the U.S. between the 1970s and 1980s. It is this sensibility of place and context that Thomas is bringing to her recreation of the BMA's East Lobby, reshaping it into a space that speaks to aspects of Baltimore's history and architecture and that draws in the community through its vivacious use of different aesthetic modes and styles.

"The Biennial Commission was created to address, in part, the ongoing work of making the museum experience more inviting to a broader range audiences while continuing to present art of exceptional quality," said Christopher Bedford, BMA Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. "This is a vision to which the BMA is committed, and Mickalene's upcoming installation is going to be a resounding and powerful step towards its fulfillment. Her art connects with people through both its aesthetic richness and its conceptual understanding of the many complexities of identity and community. We are incredibly excited to open Mickalene's ambitious reinstallation of the East Lobby and remain grateful to Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker for their support in making the commission program possible."

The BMA also announced today the appointment of Cynthia Hodge-Thorne as the inaugural recipient of the Meyerhoff-Becker Curatorial Fellowship—the concurrent curatorial component of the Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker Biennial Commission. In her role, Hodge-Thorne will work with Thomas to realize her creative vision and the accompanying public programming. She will also have the opportunity to work directly with director Christopher Bedford, as well as with Asma Naeem, The Eddie C. and C. Sylvia Brown Chief Curator, and other senior leadership at the BMA to support the execution of Thomas's installation and other projects within the contemporary department. "We are delighted to have Cynthia join our team and to provide a platform for the next generation of curators to gain meaningful experience, especially with an artist of Mickalene's experience and stature," Bedford added.

Hodge-Thorne earned her Master of Arts in Art History from American University in 2019, after graduating from Howard University in 2017 with a Bachelor of Arts in Art History. Since 2017, Cynthia has worked as a fellow with the Alper Initiative for Washington Art at American University's Katzen Museum. She has a wide range of additional experience from institutions such as the Washington Project for the Arts, DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, and Howard University.

### **Mickalene Thomas**

Internationally recognized artist Mickalene Thomas (American, born 1971) creates paintings, collages, photography, video, and installations that examine identity, gender, power structures, and the sense of self. Her work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions, including at the Bass Museum of Art, Miami (2019); Contemporary Art Center, New Orleans, LA (2019); Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2018); Wexner Center for the Arts, OH (2018); Newcomb Art Museum, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA (2017); Moody Center for the Arts at Rice University, Houston, TX (2017); Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Atlanta, GA (2017); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2016); Aspen Art Museum, CO (2016); Aperture Foundation, New York (2016); George Eastman Museum, Rochester, NY (2014); and the Brooklyn Museum, New York (2012–13); among numerous others. Her work is also held in the collections of the BMA, Art Institute of Chicago, Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Thomas has been awarded numerous 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). Thomas received a B.F.A. from the Pratt Institute and an M.F.A. from the Yale School of Art.

### **Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker**

Baltimore philanthropists Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker are committed to reshaping the city's institutions around access and inclusivity in education and art. In addition to the Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker Biennial Commission at the BMA, the couple has supported programs such as the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's OrchKids program, the Meyerhoff Scholars Program at University of Maryland Baltimore County, the Peabody Institute Diversity Fund at the Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University, Teach For America-Baltimore, Baltimore School for the Arts, and Thread.

### **THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART**

Founded in 1914, The Baltimore Museum of Art is a major cultural destination recognized for engaging diverse audiences through dynamic exhibitions and innovative educational and community outreach programs. The BMA's internationally renowned collection of 95,000 objects encompasses more than 1,200 works by Henri Matisse anchored by the famed Cone Collection of modern art, as well as one of the nation's finest holdings of prints, drawings, and photographs. The galleries showcase an exceptional collection of art from Africa; important works by established and emerging contemporary artists; outstanding European and American paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts; significant artworks from China; ancient Antioch mosaics; and exquisite textiles from around the world. The 210,000- square-foot museum is also distinguished by a grand historic building designed in the 1920s by renowned American architect John Russell Pope and two beautifully landscaped gardens featuring an array of 20th-century sculpture. The BMA is located in Charles Village, three miles north of the Inner Harbor, and is adjacent to the main campus of Johns Hopkins University. General admission to the BMA is free so that everyone can enjoy the power of art.

**VISITOR INFORMATION**

General admission to the BMA is free. Special exhibitions may be ticketed. The BMA is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. The museum is closed Monday, Tuesday, New Year’s Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The BMA is located at 10 Art Museum Drive, three miles north of Baltimore’s Inner Harbor. For general museum information, call 443-573-1700 or visit [artbma.org](http://artbma.org).

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**For media in Baltimore:**

Anne Mannix Brown / Sarah Pedroni  
The Baltimore Museum of Art  
443-573-1870  
[abrown@artbma.org](mailto:abrown@artbma.org) / [spedroni@artbma.org](mailto:spedroni@artbma.org)

**For media outside of Baltimore:**

Sascha Freudenheim/Alina Sumajin  
PAVE Communications & Consulting  
917-544-6057 / 646-369-2050  
[sascha@paveconsult.com](mailto:sascha@paveconsult.com) / [alina@paveconsult.com](mailto:alina@paveconsult.com)