

## BMA UNVEILS MICKALENE THOMAS: A MOMENT'S PLEASURE

*Inaugural Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker Biennial Commission  
is a Living Room for Baltimore*

BALTIMORE, MD (November 21, 2019)—On November 24, The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) debuts *Mickalene Thomas: A Moment's Pleasure*, an immersive site-specific installation that transforms the museum's East Entrance and entire two-floor East Lobby. Inspired to create a living room for Baltimore, Thomas has installed a new façade on the exterior that resembles the city's traditional row houses and re-envisioned the interior with new wallpapers, furniture, carpeting, and other design elements, altering every surface of the space. The vivid geometric patterns, prints, and textures of the environment reference the aesthetics of the 1970s and 1980s, particularly the creativity of black culture in the U.S. during that period. *Mickalene Thomas: A Moment's Pleasure* marks the inaugural presentation of the Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker Biennial Commission, which was established in fall 2018 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. This installation is the most expansive commission undertaken by both the artist and the museum and also the first major presentation of the BMA's 2020 *Vision* initiative. It will remain on view through May 2, 2021.



As part of the commission, Thomas has also curated a presentation of works by artists with ties to Baltimore that is featured in the newly enclosed Terrace Gallery. Paintings, prints, drawings by artists Derrick Adams, Zoë Charlton, Theresa Chromati, uniik / Dominiqua Eldridge, Devin N. Morris, Clifford Owens, and D'Metrius John Rice are hung throughout the space, while a loop of video works by Abdu Ali and Karryl Eugene, Erick Antonio Benitez, Nicoletta Daríta de la Brown, Kotic Couture, Markele Cullins, Emily Eaglin, Hunter Hooligan, Devin N. Morris, Clifford Owens, and TT the Artist are projected on a screen. The Terrace Gallery will also host a series of events, such as film screenings, artist talks, performances, and workshops. The installation also includes costumes for BMA staff working in the lobby designed by Dominican-born fashion designer José Durán.

"Mickalene's ambitious reinstallation of the East Lobby offers a new and exciting aesthetic experience—one that engages the senses at every turn and offers the community a dynamic new space in which to connect with each other, the work, and the museum. It is transformative in its own right as an astounding work of art and in its revisioning of what museum can and should feel like to visitors," said Christopher Bedford, BMA Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. "The Meyerhoff-Becker Biennial Commission was created to address, in part, this very vision of making the museum experience more welcoming to a broader range of visitors through exceptional art. We are incredibly grateful to Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker for their support in making the commission program possible."

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 brings 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.

*Mickalene Thomas: A Moment's Pleasure* is curated by Christopher Bedford with Meyerhoff-Becker Curatorial Fellow Cynthia Hodge-Thorne and curatorial assistants Katie Cooke and Carlyn Thomas.

### **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.

### **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 1,000 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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**Image:** Installation view of Mickalene Thomas: A Moment's Pleasure at The Baltimore Museum of Art. Photo by Mitro Hood.