

HAYWARD GALLERY

Press Release

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Contact: Barry O'Reilly, Interim Press Manager (Visual Arts), barry.oreilly@southbankcentre.co.uk
Megan Edwards, Press Officer (Visual Arts), megan.edwards@southbankcentre.co.uk

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Mickalene Thomas: All About Love

11 February - 5 May 2025



IMAGE CREDITS IN NOTES TO EDITORS

The Hayward Gallery will present *Mickalene Thomas: All About Love* as the pioneering artist's first solo presentation in a UK public art gallery from 11 February to 5 May 2025. Thomas is a trailblazer of portraiture and collage, widely renowned for her large-scale paintings of Black women posed against boldly patterned backgrounds embellished with rhinestones. As an artist who fearlessly transcends

creative boundaries, her artworks have also adorned album covers (Solange's EP *True*, 2013) and emblazoned fashion runways (Dior, 2023).

Thomas has redefined beauty and identity through her vibrant and dynamic compositions. Her work, characterised by a unique blend of colour, pattern, and subject matter, challenges societal norms and provides a powerful counter-narrative to mainstream depictions of beauty and identity.

The exhibition's title, *All About Love*, reflects the artist's expansive and empowering definition of the term love - encompassing family love, self-love and romantic love. On this, Thomas says: 'my gaze is the gaze of a Black woman unapologetically loving other Black women'. Throughout her work, Thomas draws on the tenets of Black feminist theory in writing by authors and academics such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Collins and bell hooks, to whose internationally acclaimed 2000 book *All About Love: New Visions* the exhibition title pays homage.

All About Love will showcase Thomas's extensive practice across painting, collage, print, photography, video and immersive installations. Visitors will be introduced to Thomas's unique visual language developed in work across the last two decades. They will experience her myriad influences, ranging from 19th-century European 'masters' like Courbet, Ingres, Manet and Monet, to the fashion and interior design of 1970s America to present day social political events.

At the heart of the exhibition are Thomas's spectacular mixed-media paintings - grandly scaled and embellished with rhinestones in the artist's signature style - depicting Black women from the artist's circle of friends, family, lovers and models. These works centre on repose, rest and leisure which, in Thomas's handling, are shown to be radical acts. The exhibition will also showcase Thomas's distinctive tableaux installations which transport viewers into domestic settings of the artist's 1970s and 1980s childhood, creating an affecting homage to the artist's mother, her first and most abiding muse.

Thomas creates celebratory and affirming images of Black women, whilst critically examining the history of Black and female representation within the Western art canon. The exhibition will show how Thomas has redefined contemporary portraiture, using pattern, colour and glittering ornamentation to imbue her sitters with beauty, glamour and style. In this way, *All About Love* will expand audiences' understanding of what turns a portrait into a vivid, profound and powerful work of art.

Mickalene Thomas, says: *"I am incredibly grateful and excited to present All About Love in the cultural epicentre of the UK art community - the Hayward Gallery, which will be a key milestone in my career as an artist. This presentation uniquely navigates the nuances of my work while cohesively investigating notions and topics at the core of my artistic practice."*

Rachel Thomas, Roden Chief Curator at the Hayward Gallery, says: *"The Hayward Gallery is delighted to lead the first major UK solo exhibition of pioneering artist Mickalene Thomas. The exhibition will explore how Thomas's art articulates a complex and empowering vision of womanhood while subverting common notions of beauty, sexuality, fame and more. We are excited to join forces with other leading organisations to bring the exhibition to audiences internationally, sparking new thinking and dialogue in London and beyond."*

Ralph Rugoff, Director of the Hayward Gallery, says: *"The Hayward Gallery has a long tradition of introducing the work of major painters of our time, and it is thrilling to be able to add Mickalene Thomas' compelling and powerful portraits to this history. In pairing Mickalene's exhibition with Linder: Danger Came Smiling, the Hayward Gallery is dedicating this season to two masters of contemporary portraiture whose work springs from collage and the provocative, multi-leveled thinking*

about identity that it makes possible. All About Love reflects the Southbank Centre's commitment to champion unique and remarkable artists from around the world."

All About Love is the first major international tour of Thomas's work. Co-organized by the Hayward Gallery, London, and The Broad, Los Angeles, and in partnership with the Barnes, Philadelphia, and Les Abattoirs, Musée–Frac Occitanie Toulouse, *All About Love* is being shown as a series of independent presentations. This showing at the Hayward Gallery will be the first European stop in the series before a showing at les Abattoirs (13 June - 9 November 2025).

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue featuring an interview with the artist by Hayward Gallery Roden Chief Curator, Rachel Thomas, and is followed by essays from Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Darnell L. Moore, Claudia Rankine, Ed Schad, Renée Mussai and Christine Y. Kim, which cover Thomas's distinct visual vocabulary, drawing on themes of intergenerational female empowerment, autobiography, memory and tenets of Black feminist theory.

This exhibition supports the Southbank Centre's commitment as an engine of creative practice to producing new productions and exhibitions. It is curated by Hayward Gallery Roden Chief Curator, Rachel Thomas, Assistant Curator, Thomas Sutton, and Curatorial Assistant, Anusha Mistry.

This exhibition will be presented alongside ***Linder: Danger Came Smiling***. Please find more information on this exhibition [here](#).

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Image Credits (top left to bottom)

- Mickalene Thomas, *A Little Taste Outside of Love*, 2007. © Mickalene Thomas.
- Mickalene Thomas, *Afro Goddess Looking Forward*, 2015. © Mickalene Thomas.
- Mickalene Thomas, *Sleep: Deux Femmes Noires*, 2012. © Mickalene Thomas.

About Mickalene Thomas

Mickalene Thomas is an award-winning multidisciplinary artist whose work has yielded instantly recognizable and widely celebrated aesthetic languages within contemporary visual culture. She is known for her elaborate portraits of Black women composed of rhinestones, acrylic, and enamel. Not only do her masterful mixed-media paintings, photographs, films and installations command space, they occupy eloquently while dissecting the intersecting complexities of black and female identity within the Western canon.

Outside of her core practice, Thomas is a Tony Award nominated co-producer, curator, educator, and mentor to many emerging artists. Apart from her own monumental solo shows, she simultaneously curates exhibitions at galleries and museums and collaborates with corporations and luxury brands. In 2023, she became the first Black femme artist to have a scholarship in her name at the Yale School of Art. She has also been the recipient of numerous prizes, grants, and honours including Gordon Parks Foundation (2024), LA LGBT's 2024 Vanguard Award, the Creative Capital Wild Futures: Art, Culture, Impact Award (2024); Hirshhorn Artist x Artist New York Gala honoree (2023); the Pratt Institute Legends Award (2022); Rema Hort Mann Foundation 25th Anniversary honoree (2022); Artistic Impact Award, Newark Museum (2022); Glass House 15th Anniversary Artist of the Year (2022); Yale

School of Art Presidential Visiting Fellow in Fine Arts (2020); Legend in Residence Award, Bronx Museum (2020); Pauli Murray College Associate Fellow at Yale University (2020); Appraisers Association of America, Award for Excellence in the Arts, (2019); Meyerhoff-Becker Biennial Commission at Baltimore Museum of Art (2019). In 2018, she received an Honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts from the New York Academy of Art and, in 2015, she was a United States Artists Francie Bishop Good & David Horvitz Fellow. Thomas is also the Co-Founder of SOULAS House, a cultural hub and retreat for Black women, Co-Founder in Sock Factory Arts, the Co-Founder of Pratt>FORWARD and founder of Art>FORWARD Artist in the Market incubator for post-graduate students.

Work by Thomas is in the collections of numerous institutions including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Brooklyn Museum; Studio Museum of Harlem, New York; International Center of Photography, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.; National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington D.C.; Art Institute of Chicago; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles among others. Thomas serves on the Board of the Trustees for the Brooklyn Museum, A.I.M. by Kyle Abraham, the Romare Bearden Foundation, and The Last Resort.

In May 2024, the touring exhibition *Mickalene Thomas: All About Love* opened at The Broad. Co-organised by the Hayward Gallery, London and The Broad and in partnership with the Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia and les Abbatoirs, Musée – Frac Occitanie Toulouse. *Mickalene Thomas: All About Love* is the first major international tour of Thomas' work. The show marked its debut at The Broad with over 80 works by the artist over the last 20 years.

About the Hayward Gallery

The Hayward Gallery, part of the Southbank Centre, has a long history of presenting work by the world's most adventurous and innovative artists including major solo shows by both emerging and established artists and dynamic group exhibitions. Opened by Queen Elizabeth II in July 1968, the gallery is one of the few remaining buildings of its style. The Brutalist building was designed by a group of young architects, including Dennis Crompton, Warren Chalk and Ron Herron and is named after Sir Isaac Hayward, a former leader of the London County Council.

About the Roden Chief Curator

The role of Chief Curator of the Hayward Gallery, held by Rachel Thomas, is generously supported by Stuart and Bianca Roden.

About the Southbank Centre

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest multi-arts centre and engages the most diverse audiences of any performing arts organisation in the UK. Our biggest venue, the Royal Festival Hall (2,700 seats) is the lasting legacy of the 1951 Festival of Britain and the ambition and values of that project – that arts, ideas, innovation and culture can heal communities and should be available and accessible to everyone – are still our guiding principles today. The Southbank Centre is uniquely able to offer a wide-ranging, inclusive and world-class artistic programme spanning contemporary visual arts, music, dance, performance, literature, comedy and spoken word across the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, the Hayward Gallery and our free spaces. We are also home to the National Poetry Library, the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP) and six resident orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Philharmonia Orchestra).

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About The Broad

The Broad is a contemporary art museum founded in 2015 by philanthropists Eli and Edythe Broad on Grand Avenue in downtown Los Angeles. The museum offers free general admission and presents an active program of rotating temporary exhibitions and innovative audience engagement, all within a landmark building designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro in collaboration with Gensler. The Broad is home to the Broad collection, which is one of the world's leading collections of postwar and contemporary art. The 120,000-square-foot building features two floors of gallery space and is the headquarters of The Broad Art Foundation's worldwide lending library, which has been loaning collection works to museums around the world since 1984.

About the Barnes Foundation

The Barnes Foundation is a nonprofit cultural and educational institution that shares its unparalleled art collection with the public, organises special exhibitions, and presents programming that fosters new ways of thinking about human creativity. The Barnes collection is displayed in ensembles that integrate art and objects from across cultures and time periods, overturning traditional hierarchies and revealing universal elements of human expression. Home to one of the world's finest collections of impressionist, post-impressionist, and modern paintings—including the largest groups of paintings by Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Paul Cézanne in existence—the Barnes brings together renowned canvases by Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Amedeo Modigliani, and Vincent van Gogh, alongside African, Asian, ancient, mediaeval, and Native American art as well as metalwork, furniture, and decorative art.

About Les Abattoirs

Les Abattoirs, Musée – Frac Occitanie Toulouse opened in 2000 in a nineteenth-century heritage building renovated for the purpose of holding modern and contemporary art exhibitions and presenting creations by artists.

Les Abattoirs is a unique institution created through the merger of the Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de la Ville de Toulouse and the Fonds régional d'art contemporain (FRAC), bringing together permanent collections, exhibitions, a media library, a visitor's hall, workshops, an auditorium, a bookshop, and a restaurant in one location. Its collections, as well as works by various artists, are circulated within the Occitanie region, in direct association with the territory's stakeholders.

With an ambitious exhibition programme on its Toulouse site and out in the region, the presence of major and emerging artists in its programming, and the rich diversity of its activities that are aimed at a wide audience, Les Abattoirs remains more than ever a key player in the cultural, artistic, economic, and social life of the Ville de Toulouse and the Occitanie region and continues to affirm its value on the national and international stage with strong partnerships.

Les Abattoirs is listed as a "Musée de France".

THE BROAD



THE BARNES FOUNDATION

les Abattoirs
Musée - Frac Occitanie Toulouse



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