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The Newark Museum of Art Unveils New Portrait of Tracey Norman by Artist Mickalene Thomas, Commissioned for the Museum's Collection



Mickalene Thomas, *Isn't She Lovely, Tracey Norman*, 2022. Rhinestones, acrylic, and oil paint on canvas mounted on wood panel, 78 x 96 in. (198.12 x 243.84 cm) Purchase 2022 Collections Exchange Fund, Mr. and Mrs. William V. Griffin Fund, and Helen McMahon Brady Cutting Fund 2022.6 © Mickalene Thomas and the Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York

NEWARK, NJ – December 14, 2022 – The Newark Museum of Art is honored to announce its newest commission with contemporary visual artist Mickalene Thomas, whose large-scale portrait, *Isn't She Lovely, Tracey Norman*, will be unveiled on December 15. This major painting will be the second artwork by Thomas to enter the Museum's collection after *Landscape With Camouflage* in 2012.

"We're thrilled to announce this new commission by internationally celebrated—and New Jersey-born and raised—artist, Mickalene Thomas," said Linda Harrison, Director and CEO. "More than two years in the making, this vibrant, full-length painting honors supermodel and Newark native Tracey 'Africa' Norman. We were delighted to honor Mickalene this past May with the Artistic Impact Award, presented at our annual Art Ball."

One of the most influential and recognizable artists of her generation, Thomas has shaped a bold, new aesthetic since launching her career two decades ago. Best known for her larger-than-life, mixed-media paintings of African American women, Thomas confronts race, gender, and sexuality with works of compelling beauty. Collectively her wide-ranging production challenges how women are represented in art and other media by drawing on the traditions of landscape, genre painting, Black power, fashion, and interior design.

"I have committed myself to creating the space for Black women to reclaim art historical notions of beauty and power throughout my practice," said Mickalene Thomas. "As the first Black trans woman to gain prominence in the fashion industry, Tracey Norman is an inspiration to me, and I'm honored to have the opportunity to create this work for The Newark Museum of Art and contribute to the legacy of Black women in art. Furthermore, this piece is especially meaningful because of my special connection to The Newark Museum of Art. I visited regularly throughout my formative years with my family and the mark was immeasurable and indelible."

Thomas's artworks have been featured globally across renowned institutions, such as the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Baltimore Museum of Art, and also currently at Musée de l'Orangerie in Paris in the exhibition *Mickalene Thomas: Avec Monet*, which includes three large-scale collages, one monumental painting, and an immersive site-specific installation featuring her 2016 video/sculpture *Me As Muse*.

Her subjects feature women across pop culture and art worlds. Whether internationally famous or unknown, posed in photographs or in mixed-media paintings, Thomas's sitters are situated within meticulously constructed interiors. Poised and at ease, making direct eye contact with the viewer, her subjects calmly and emphatically offer lessons in self-possession. Thomas's heroization of the common woman is underscored with titles that invoke forward momentum. In effect, with this repeated imagery of empowerment and vernacular culture, Thomas creates a visual world that reinforces the links between herself, her sitters, and viewers.

“Thomas’s monumental *Isn’t She Lovely?* Tracey Norman will grace our *Seeing America - Expanding Pop Gallery*, ” said Catherine Evans, the Museum’s Deputy Director, Collections & Curatorial Strategies. “Her empowering imagery offers the local community, as well as the Museum’s international audience, an opportunity to witness the legacy of one of the most visionary artists of this generation.”

About The Newark Museum of Art

Founded in 1909, The Newark Museum of Art (NMOA) is the largest museum in New Jersey and ranks twelfth nationally in collection size, with more than 130,000 artworks and significant holdings of science and natural history. The NMOA is committed to the values of Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion by responding to the evolving needs and interests of diverse audiences through participation, visitor experiences, and community engagement.

From the ancient world to contemporary art, the Museum boasts a renowned collection of exceptional quality and depth, spanning concentrations in the Arts of Global Africa; Arts of Global Asia, featuring a Tibetan Buddhist altar; Arts of the Americas; American Art, with a particular strength in Native American art; Decorative Arts; Arts of the Ancient Mediterranean; and Science.

With a focus on welcoming everyone with inclusive experiences that spark curiosity and foster community, NMOA offers groundbreaking exhibitions, engaging programming, a research library with 60,000 volumes, paid internships, and impactful local and global partnerships. A four-acre campus includes the Ballantine House (1885), a National Historic Landmark; the Ward Carriage House (1860); the Old Stone School House (1784); the Alice Ransom Dreyfuss Memorial Garden; and Horizon Plaza. Under the leadership of Director and CEO Linda C. Harrison, NMOA has launched an era of transformation to create an engaged citizenry by reimagining the role of the art museum in the 21st century.

About Mickalene Thomas

Thomas received a B.F.A. from the Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY in 2000 and an M.F.A. from Yale University School of Art, New Haven, CT in 2002. Solo exhibitions of her work have most recently been organized at the Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris, France (2022); The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD (2022); Lévy Gorvy, New York, London, Paris, Hong Kong (2021); Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris, France (2021); Baldwin Gallery, Aspen, CO (2019); The Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach, FL (2019); Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, LA (2019); Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON (2018); The Dayton Art Institute, OH (2018); Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH (2018); Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, WA (2018); and Pomona College Museum of Art (2018). Thomas’s artwork is in numerous international public and private collections, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Newark Museum of Art, NJ; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Art Institute of Chicago; MoMA PS1, New York; Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Yale University Art Collection, New Haven, CT; and Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo.