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In The Flesh

Mickalene Thomas

ARTIST MICKALENE THOMAS HAS SPENT YEARS PAINTING A COTERIE OF BLACK HEROINES IN SIGNATURE POP-BRIGHT. GRAPHIC STYLE. NOW HER WORK IS COMING TO LIFE. INSPIRED EQUALLY BY BALTHUS AND TONI BASIL

In this photograph, I am standing in front of a couple of Tom Wesselmann paintings wearing a Jose Duran original ensemble. Seven models from my *Oh Mickey* performance surround me. We are prepared for our project for the Kreemart and the American Patrons of Tate, who have combined to support a unique art event at the Haunch of Venison Gallery in New York City. The *Oh Mickey* piece is based on my video and painting installation *Oh Mickey!* (2008), which was inspired by a Balthus painting called *La Toilette*. In the Balthus, a young girl is wearing lube socks and red slippers, standing alone in an intimate interior space. In my piece, I have a model standing in one of my installations completely nude, except for tube socks and red heels, singing Toni Basil's "Mickey" song. With this work, I am playing with the complex relationship between the artist and the muse, exposing the neurosis of the artist's ego. For the Kreemart performance, I worked with seven women wearing white tube socks and shiny red high heels while serving cake. The only way to get a piece of cake from them is to repeat the secret pass word, "Oh Mickey, you're so fine, you're so fine you blow my mind, oh Mickey, oh Mickey!"

-Mickalene Thomas