

Mickalene Thomas

the desire of the other

November 18, 2016—January 7, 2017

407 Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Hong Kong

@mickalenethomas | #thedesireoftheother | #lehmannmaupin

Opening Reception: November 18, 2016, 6-8 PM



Clarivel with Black Blouse and White Ribbon, 2016, rhinestones and acrylic on wood panel, 60 x 48 in., 152.4 x 121.9 cm. © Mickalene Thomas / Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong.

Hong Kong, October 25, 2016—Lehmann Maupin is pleased to present *the desire of the other*, an exhibition of new work by **Mickalene Thomas**. An internationally recognized artist based in New York, Thomas is best known for her large-scale paintings combining art historical, political, and pop cultural references to explore the contemporary female form. Blurring the distinction between object and subject, concrete and abstract, real and imaginary, Thomas introduces complex notions of femininity, sexuality, class, and power. Through an exploration of artifice, she also challenges common definitions of beauty and historical and artistic representations of women. For her first exhibition in China, Thomas will present a series of recent paintings and works on paper that highlight her varied use of media, including oil and acrylic paint, enamel, silkscreen, rhinestones, and collage. The artist will be present for an opening reception at the gallery on Friday, November 18, from 6-8 PM.

Thomas often draws inspiration from multiple artistic periods and cultural influences found throughout Western art history, particularly the early modernists such as Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Pablo

Picasso, Henri Matisse, Edouard Manet, and Romare Bearden. She models her figures on the classic poses and abstract settings popularized by these modern “masters” as a way to reclaim agency for women who have been presented as objects to be desired or subjugated. Though Thomas draws from a number of time periods and genres, her use of pattern and domestic spaces often references periods throughout the 1960s-’80s. This was a time of immense social and political conflict, change, and transformation—the civil rights movement, the Black is Beautiful movement, and the second wave of feminism—during which many women, particularly African-Americans, rejected and redefined traditional standards of beauty.

In *the desire of the other*, Thomas presents both figurative and abstract portraits of women. The works feature her muses in three-quarter portraits and a single large-scale reclined figure. Each one examines how identity, gender, and sense of self are informed by the ways women are represented in art and popular culture. The rhinestones—the artist’s signature material and a symbol of femininity—give an added layer of meaning and a metaphor of artifice, as well as an art historical nod to the 19th century technique of Pointillism, in which small distinct dots of color were used to create an image. Thomas uses rhinestones as a way to shade and accentuate specific elements of each painting—often her subject’s lips, nails, and hair—while subtly confronting our assumptions about what is feminine and what defines women.

In addition to these more traditional works, Thomas has recently embarked on a series of fully abstracted portraits composed entirely of shape, color, and line, with little reference to a gendered or racial body. The works are reduced to geometric forms and bright pops of color that signify lips, noses, eyes, and other facial features appearing to float in space. They recall 20th-century Cubist work by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, who split from the figurative traditions in art making by using collage to fracture the picture plane and create abstract depictions of reality. Collage is a crucial component of Thomas’ practice—she uses it to continue expanding the possibilities of representation while renegotiating the objectification of women.

The **Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles** is currently presenting *Mickalene Thomas: Do I Look Like a Lady?*, a solo exhibition of a recent video installation and silkscreen paintings, running through February 6, 2017.

About the artist

Mickalene Thomas (b. 1971, Camden, NJ; lives and works in New York) earned an MFA in painting at the Yale University School of Art, New Haven, CT in 2002 and a BFA in painting at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn in 2000. From 2000-03, the artist participated in a residency at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, and in 2011, a residency at the Versailles Foundation Munn Artists Program, Giverny, France. Solo exhibitions of her work have been organized at the Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO (2016); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2016); Aperture Foundation, New York (2016); George Eastman House, Rochester, NY (2014); Brooklyn Museum, New York (2012-13); Santa Monica Museum of Art (2012); Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2012); Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2011); and La Conservera Contemporary Art Centre, Ceuti, Spain (2009). Select group exhibitions featuring her work have included *SHE: International Women Artists*, Long Museum, Shanghai (2016); *No Man’s Land: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection*, Rubell Family Collection, Miami (2015); *Americans Now*, National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C. (2010); *30 Americans*, first exhibited at the Corcoran Gallery, Washington, DC (2011), and which later traveled to numerous museums in the United States. Her work 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; 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.

About Lehmann Maupin

Founded in 1996 by partners Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin, Lehmann Maupin has fostered the careers of a diverse group of internationally renowned artists, both emerging and established, working in multiple disciplines

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and across varied media. With three locations—two in New York and one in Hong Kong—the gallery represents artists from the United States, Europe, Asia, South America, Africa, and the Middle East. Known for championing artists who create groundbreaking and challenging forms of visual expression, Lehmann Maupin presents work highlighting personal investigations and individual narratives through conceptual approaches that often address such issues as gender, class, religion, history, politics, and globalism.

Current & Upcoming Exhibitions

Liu Wei, through December 17, 2016, New York, West 22nd Street & Chrystie Street

Lee Bul, January 12—February 11, 2017, New York, West 22nd Street

Kader Attia, January 13—March 5, 2017, New York, Chrystie Street

Liza Lou, January 19—March 11, 2017, Hong Kong, Pedder Building

For more information on Mickalene Thomas or other Lehmann Maupin artists, please contact Marta de Movellan or Kathryn McKinney at +1 212 255 2923, or visit lehmannmaupin.com.

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