

Michelle Obama's portraitist exhibits at Tulane

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Mickalene Thomas, *Tamika sur une chaise longue avec Monet*, 2012, rhinestones, acrylic, oil, and enamel on wood panel, 108 x 144 in. Courtesy of the artist, Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong, and Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Collection of Walda and Sydney Besthoff.

Mickalene Thomas, one of the country's most celebrated contemporary artists will soon have her first solo exhibition in New Orleans at the Newcomb Art Museum on the uptown campus of Tulane University.

Opening Wednesday, Jan. 18, *Mickalene Thomas: Waiting on a Prime-Time Star* brings together more than 40 of the artist's works.

Thomas is known for lush rhinestone-encrusted paintings that combine references to iconic artworks from the Western canon and 1970s' pop culture. Her vibrant compositions present powerful images of women and women of color, especially.

In 2008, she was selected by the White House to create the first individual portrait of First Lady Michelle Obama and in 2012, she designed the cover art for Solange's EP "True." Her *Le Déjeuner Sur L'Herbe: Trois Noir Femmes*—a reinterpretation of Édouard Manet's 1863 *Luncheon on the Grass*—has even appeared on FOX's award-winning television drama "Empire."

She received an MFA from Yale University and was trained as a painter, but works confidently across other media. Newcomb's exhibition will highlight this multi-disciplinary practice with examples of Thomas' photography, collage, sculpture, painting and film.

"The artist's use of diverse media will resonate with all audiences but with Tulanians, in particular," said museum director Monica Ramirez-Montagut. "The university has steadfastly advocated for intellectual exploration across discipline boundaries—the very approach Mickalene employs in her work."

One piece in the show has added significance for the campus community. *Tamika sur une chaise longue avec Monet* is on loan from Walda and Sydney Besthoff of New Orleans — a family that has enjoyed a nearly century-long relationship with Tulane.

Thomas' work is in the permanent collections of New York's The Museum of Modern Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Whitney Museum of American Art among many others.

The exhibit, on view through April 9, 2017, opens Jan. 18 with two free events that are open to the public in the Woldenberg Art Center.

At 6:30 p.m., Thomas will speak about her work with Tulane art historian Dr. Mia Bagneris. A public reception begins at 7:30 p.m.

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