

MOCA presents *Mickalene Thomas: Do I Look Like a Lady?*, an exhibition of new and recent work by New York-based artist Mickalene Thomas. For this exhibition, Thomas has created a group of silkscreened portraits to be featured alongside an installation inspired by 1970s domestic interiors, and a two-channel video that weaves together a chorus of black female performers, past and present, including standup comedians Jackie “Moms” Mabley and Wanda Sykes, and pop-culture icons Eartha Kitt and Whitney Houston. An incisive, moving, and at times riotous portrait of the multiplicities of womanhood, *Do I Look Like a Lady?* builds upon Thomas’s ongoing reconsideration of black female identity, presentation, and representation through a queer lens. This exhibition is organized by MOCA Curatorial Assistant Rebecca Matalon, with Executive Assistant to the Chief Curator Hana Cohn.

Over the last decade, Thomas has produced sumptuous, ecstatic, and excessively tactile paintings, photographs, collages, films, and installations. The surfaces of her unabashedly decorative and vibrantly colored paintings of interiors and landscapes are often overlaid with rhinestones, applied as contour or in lavish, all-over fields. Thomas plays with perspective, layering fractured geometric shapes that reference the early cubist compositions of Romare Bearden. In her signature painted and photographic portraits of family, friends, lovers, and pop-culture icons, Thomas draws on and deconstructs 19th- and 20th-century traditions of portraiture, replacing the ubiquitous white female nude with voluptuous African American women. Rather than being objects of a spectator’s gaze, Thomas’s women look back. They are self-possessed, socially and sexually empowered. Often draped in richly hued swaths of fabric, they pose with arms and legs extended atop sofas embellished with layers of animal prints, oversized flowers, and checkerboard patterns. Thomas’s eroticism emerges via the décor of these lush scenes, set in densely furnished living rooms accented with patchwork fabrics, wood paneling, kitsch wallpaper, and animal skin rugs to recall 1970s domestic interiors. More recently, she has begun transforming these backdrops into immersive installations, creating three-dimensional tableaux that humorously riff on the museological tradition of the period room. Rich with allusion, Thomas’s environments also build upon and expand her interest in how private domestic spaces function as sites of self-fashioning and display, and how class and taste are embedded in the objects we choose to surround ourselves with.

*Mickalene Thomas: Do I Look Like a Lady?* is organized by MOCA Curatorial Assistant Rebecca Matalon, with Executive Assistant to the Chief Curator Hana Cohn.

*(This document was automatically generated by Contemporary Art Library.)*