



FOXY LADY

Mickalene Thomas' artwork sparkles. Not just because it's visually arresting imagery that addresses the beauty and identity

of African-American women like nothing else. But also because she adorns her elaborate paintings with rhinestones and works with acrylic and enamel. Thomas uses a variety of mediums (painting, photography, sculpture and collage) to construct a kaleidoscopic narrative. "I like to play with art history and reinterpret it in my own way," she says.

The evocative imagery of 1970s Blaxploitation prevalent in much of Thomas' work – many of her subjects are styled retro, in provocative poses – is a "collaboration between the artist and muse," she says, resulting in a rich artistic experience for the viewer.

Thomas was recently commissioned by The Museum Of Modern Art (MoMa) in New York City to create a work of art. A contemporary take on Edouard Manet's 19th century original, *Le Déjeuner Sur L'herbe: Les Trois Femmes Noires* (2010) is being exhibited in two stages. At first a large format photograph appeared in the window on 53rd Street, and now it's been replaced by a painting, on show until December.

Inspired by her extensive study of art history as well as influential female figures from her childhood, Thomas wants to continue to "open the door for conversation." Her expanding oeuvre will engage new mediums such as video and printmaking in order to further the visual conversation. Currently based in New York, Thomas is completing new paintings for her solo exhibition this spring at Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects.

□ www.mickaleneThomas.com

SITTING PRETTY: LES TROIS FEMMES NOIRES AND, TOP RIGHT, MANET'S ORIGINAL

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