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'Mickalene Thomas: Origin Of The Universe' Comes To Santa Monica Museum Of Art

By Huffington Post

Mickalene Thomas' works range from paintings of fractured interior spaces to thought-provoking riffs on famous works of art, yet her themes remain consistent.

In these pieces, we see black women and the spaces they inhabit, holding the power of Manet's "Olympia" mixed with a little "Foxy Brown" for good measure. There is strength in their gaze, indicating a deep interior, yet their appearances and accessories are crucial to their identities as well. How her women dress, what makeup they wear, even what patterns they stand before all contribute to how they are viewed.

The collection of domestic interiors with Matisse-like patterns and colors also shows how adornments can create an identity. Thomas works in collage, imitating the ways women draw inspiration from creating their own image and essence. In this way, the home becomes an extension of the self.

In Thomas' first solo museum show she also focuses on the female body as "the origin of the universe". One of her pieces with the same title plays off of Gustave Courbet's painting, "Origin of the World," which is a close-up view of a woman's genitals. Thomas ups the ante from "world" to "universe", presenting a black woman's naked body instead of a white woman's. The realist piece is redone with Thomas' rhinestoned touch.

Thomas continues to challenge existing notions of female identity with her upcoming exhibition. According to the museum, "Thomas will create an installation in SMMoA's Project Room 2, to reinvent Marcel Duchamp's 'Etant donnes', where the "peep show" reveals an unexpected surprise."

"Origin of the Universe" will show at the Santa Monica Museum of Art from April 14 – August 19. Get a preview of the powerful works below, and let us know your thoughts in the comments section.