

## **Stark Culture December 2011**

### **Art Basel: Mickalene Thomas**

By Aimstar Media

This year, at Art Basel Miami Beach, the Lehmann Maupin Gallery will present a selection of works by beloved artists such as Erwin Wurm, Billy Childish, Teresita Fernández, Juergen Teller, and one of our favorites, Mickalene Thomas. To be held December 1st-4th, the event remains one that should not be missed, if only just to see the few works by Thomas that will be on display.

Mickalene Thomas' work is phenomenal. A striking *coup de chapeau* to the days of the '70s Blaxploitation era that we think have long passed us by, except when looking through Thomas' work, those moments seem to have never left. In her very unique collagist approach, Thomas dabbles with enamel, rhinestones, acrylic—her trademark secret weapons, which give never-ending life to her superhero-like muses, Black women. Boasting in color, each piece of Thomas' is vivid and relevant, a work that is described in her artist statement as "a complex vision of what it means to be a woman and expand common definitions of beauty."

What better time then now? Can't Black women be seen as sensual and beautiful, as in the ways that the masters captured their porcelain subjects way back when? As Jay-Z recently said on *Watch the Throne's* "That's My Bitch": "*Why are all the pretty icons always all White? Put some colored girls up in the MOMA...*" rather than just as provocative sirens that strike a pose for anyone looking? Far from misogynistic or exploitive, Thomas is doing diva's work. It's no wonder that her portrait of Michelle Obama, the first for the First Lady of the US, was hung in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC. Or that she was an artist in residence at Yale/Norfolk, The Studio Museum in Harlem, as well as in The Versailles Foundation Munn Artists Program in Giverny, France not too long ago. Not bad for a Jersey girl.

*A few works by Mickalene Thomas will be on display at the Lehmann Maupin at Art Basel Miami Beach Exhibition, to be held at the Miami Beach Convention Center, Booth K15, 1901 Convention Center Dr. • Miami Beach, FL 33139.*