Claremont, Calif. — The Pomona College Museum of Art presents the traveling exhibition “Muse: Mickalene Thomas Photographs” with “tête-à-tête” on view from Jan. 25 to May 13, 2018. A public reception will take place from 5-8 p.m. on Thursday, January 25.

Mickalene Thomas, known for her large-scale, multi-textured, and rhinestones-encrusted paintings of domestic interiors and portraits, has also identified the photographic image as a defining touchstone for her practice. Thomas first began to photograph herself, and her mother, as a student at Yale—a pivotal experience for her as an artist.

While working across multiple series, much of her photographic work functions as a personal act of deconstruction and reappropriation—both of images she has created
herself and images she has singled out as influence. With each series, she grapples with and asserts new definitions of beauty and inspiration. Thomas’ portraits draw equally from 1970s black-is-beautiful images of women, such as supermodel Beverly Johnson and actress Vonetta McGee, Édouard Manet’s odalisque figures, and the mise-en-scène studio portraiture of James Van Der Zee and Malick Sidibé, to mention a few. Perhaps of greatest importance, however, this collection of portraits and staged scenes reflects a very personal community of inspiration as well—a collection of muses that includes Thomas herself, her mother, and her friends and lovers, emphasizing the communal and social aspects of art-making and creativity that pervade her work.

The idea of communities of inspiration will be further carried out via “tête-à-tête,” an installation curated by Mickalene Thomas of work from photographers and key images which have inspired her. This will include those from older generations of artists, to those by more contemporary artists who are part of her generation or younger, and may in turn find inspiration in Thomas’ own practice. Artists in “tête-à-tête” include Derrick Adams, Renée Cox, LaToya Ruby Frazier, Lyle Ashton Harris, Deana Lawson, Zanele Muholi, Malick Sidibé, Xaviera Simmons, Hank Willis Thomas, and Carrie Mae Weems.

The accompanying publication *Muse: Mickalene Thomas Photographs* was released by Aperture in November 2015 and is available for purchase on Amazon.com. This volume is the first to gather together her various approaches to photography, including portraits, collages, Polaroids, and other processes.

The exhibition, “Muse: Mickalene Thomas Photographs,” is organized by Aperture Foundation, New York. Additional funding for this exhibition is provided by The Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Inc.

**About Mickalene Thomas**

Mickalene Thomas is a 2015 United States Artists Francie Bishop Good & David Horvitz Fellow and a distinguished visual artist, filmmaker, and curator whose work has been exhibited extensively both nationally and internationally. Thomas holds a Master of Fine Arts from Yale University and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Pratt Institute. She’s held solo museum exhibitions at the Brooklyn Museum, Santa Monica Museum of Art, George Eastman House, New York and L’Ecole des Beaux Arts, Monaco. Recent solo exhibitions include *Mickalene Thomas: Do I Look Like a Lady?* at MOCA Grand, Los Angeles; *Mickalene Thomas: Mentors, Muses and Celebrities* at Aspen Art Museum; and *Waiting on a Prime-Time Star* at Newcomb Art Museum. Her work has been a part of numerous group exhibitions, including *Us is Them* at Pizzuti Collection; *Eye Pop: The Celebrity Gaze* at Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery; *Fifty Years After: Gordon Parks, Carrie Mae Weems, Mickalene Thomas, LaToya Ruby Frazier* at James Barron Gallery; and the continued traveling exhibition *30 Americans* at the Rubell Family Collection, Miami. Thomas' work is in many permanent collections including San Francisco MoMA, Brooklyn Museum, Guggenheim, Seattle Art Museum, Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, MoMA PS1, New York, among others.

Mickalene Thomas is represented by Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong; Kavi Gupta Gallery, Chicago; and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris and Brussels. She lives and works in New York, and serves on the boards of the Brooklyn Museum, Children's...
About Aperture Foundation

Aperture, a not-for-profit foundation, connects the photo community and its audiences with the most inspiring work, the sharpest ideas, and with each other—in print, in person, and online.

Created in 1952 by photographers and writers as “common ground for the advancement of photography,” Aperture today is a multi-platform publisher and center for the photo community. From its base in New York, Aperture Foundation produces, publishes, and presents a program of photography projects and programs—locally, across the United States, and around the world.

About the Pomona College Museum of Art

The Museum collects, preserves, exhibits, and interprets works of art; and houses a substantial permanent collection as well as serving as a gallery of temporary exhibitions. Important holdings include the Kress Collection of 15th- and 16th-century Italian panel paintings; more than 5,000 examples of Pre-Columbian to 20th-century American Indian art and artifacts, including basketry, ceramics and beadwork; and a large collection of American and European prints, drawings and photographs, including works by Francisco de Goya, José Clemente Orozco, and Rico Lebrun.

Admission
All exhibitions and programs are free of charge and open to the public.

General Information
330 North College Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711
Tuesday through Sunday, 12-5 p.m., Closed Mondays
Art After Hours: Thursday, 5-11 p.m., Jan. 25 – Apr. 26, 2018

For more information, please call 909.621.8283 or visit www.pomona.edu/museum.