

# cincinnati art museum

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**\*Images Available Upon Request**

## **“Hank Willis Thomas: All Things Being Equal...” brings contemporary art and urgent insight to Cincinnati**



**CINCINNATI—July 20, 2020—** See, listen and speak clearly with powerful multimedia art addressing equality and the power of joy. Cincinnati Art Museum will present [Hank Willis Thomas: All Things Being Equal...](#), the first comprehensive mid-career survey of the work of this influential artist from Sept. 4 through Nov. 8.

Presented by a grant from the PNC Foundation, Procter & Gamble and FEG Investment Advisors and supported by FotoFocus, the exhibition encompasses 20 years of Thomas’ career, during which the artist has explored how the visual languages of popular culture, advertising and media shape society and individual perspective, structuring and trading upon notions of race and gender.

Through photography, sculpture, video and collaborative projects, Thomas invites viewers to examine the role of everyday imagery in perpetuating ideas and to become active participants in the process of dismantling bias.

*All Things Being Equal...*, organized by the Portland Art Museum, Oregon, contains more than 90 works including Thomas’ early photographic series, sculptures and multi-media

works that reinterpret the photographic record of historic twentieth-century events, monumental textile works constructed from reclaimed prison uniforms and athletic jerseys, interactive video installations and public art projects. The works demonstrate an innovative exploration of photography, as well as ongoing critical examination of advertising and pop culture as it relates to social justice.

*All Things Being Equal...* was originally slated to open in Cincinnati in July 2020. Now, in conjunction with Thomas’ studio and with community partners, the Cincinnati Art Museum seeks to explore Thomas’ work in the context of today. In a moment of pandemic and nationwide protest against systemic racism, how can we see and challenge the inequality woven into our social fabric? What more can we learn as a community about the power of art to heal and connect?

“Hank Willis Thomas’ work guides us to the meeting points of art, politics, commerce and justice while affirming human joy and the role of art in grasping our shared humanity,” says Nathaniel Stein, Associate Curator of Photography. “There is no more important artist for us to pay attention to today, and none with whom the museum and our community partners could be more honored to grapple with history, rise to the present, and imagine a possible future. Living through 2020 with this project has been a profound experience. I hope people of Greater Cincinnati will join museum staff and our community partners in giving Thomas’ work its fullest meaning for here—for now and for what comes next.”

The Cincinnati Art Museum is the final venue for the exhibition, which previously appeared at the Portland Art Museum and the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas.

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In Cincinnati, this vital exhibition has been realized in collaboration with a Community Committee. Composed of volunteer thinkers, activists and artists recruited locally, the Community Committee has illuminated the artwork anew with their voices and views, which visitors will encounter both in the gallery and in public engagement programs.

The museum and committee are reimagining a collection of public programs that explore pressing questions raised by the exhibition while following evolving public health and safety guidelines. Details about digital, on-site and off-site programming will be posted on [cincinnatiartmuseum.org/hankwillisthomas](http://cincinnatiartmuseum.org/hankwillisthomas) throughout the summer and fall.

Thomas' work has been exhibited internationally and is collected by the Museum of Modern Art, Brooklyn Museum, and Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the High Museum of Art in Atlanta and the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., among other venerable institutions. Thomas is a 2018 Guggenheim Fellowship award winner. He has been an instructor in the MFA program at Yale University and Maryland Institute College of Art and is a member of the Public Design Commission for the City of New York. Thomas was recently chosen to design Boston's Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King Memorial in conjunction with MASS Design Group. He holds a B.F.A. from New York University, New York, N.Y. (1998) and an M.A./M.F.A. from the California College of the Arts, San Francisco, Calif. (2004) and has received honorary doctorates from the Maryland Institute of Art, Baltimore, Md. and the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts, Portland, Maine.

In 2016 Thomas co-founded the artist-led collective [For Freedoms](#), which uses art to promote civic engagement and enrich public political discourse. Public artworks and activations by members of the For Freedoms network have appeared across the country, including in Cincinnati, in 2018.

Tickets for *All Things Being Equal...* are free for museum members and will soon be available for purchase by the general public at the Cincinnati Art Museum front desk and online at [cincinnatiartmuseum.org](http://cincinnatiartmuseum.org). Photography without flash is encouraged except where posted signs specify. On social media, use the hashtag #HankWillisThomas.

The Cincinnati Art Museum will offer **free admission** to the opening weekend of new special exhibition Friday, Sept. 4–Sunday, Sept. 6. This free access was made possible by additional support from the PNC Foundation.

A full-color catalogue of the exhibition, co-published by Aperture and the Portland Art Museum and complete with essays and an artist interview, will be available for purchase through the [museum shop](#).

*All Things Being Equal...* is organized by the Portland Art Museum, Oregon. The exhibition is generously sponsored nationally by the Henry Luce Foundation and in Cincinnati by the PNC Foundation, Procter & Gamble, FEG Investment Advisors and FotoFocus.

## **About PNC Foundation**

The PNC Foundation, which receives its principal funding from The PNC Financial Services Group ([www.pnc.com](http://www.pnc.com)), actively supports organizations that provide services for the benefit of communities in which it has a significant presence. The foundation focuses its philanthropic mission on early childhood education and community and economic development, which includes the arts and culture. Through Grow Up Great, its signature cause that began in 2004, PNC has created a bilingual \$500 million, multi-year initiative to help prepare children from birth to age 5 for success in school and life.

## **About the Cincinnati Art Museum**

The Cincinnati Art Museum is supported by the generosity of individuals and businesses that give annually to Artswave. The Ohio Arts Council helps fund the Cincinnati Art Museum with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The Cincinnati Art Museum gratefully acknowledges operating support from the City of Cincinnati, as well as our members.

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Free general admission to the Cincinnati Art Museum is made possible by a gift from The Rosenthal Family Foundation. Special exhibition pricing may vary. Parking at the Cincinnati Art Museum is free. Visit [cincinnatiartmuseum.org](http://cincinnatiartmuseum.org) for more information.

**Image credit:** Hank Willis Thomas (American, born 1976), *Amanda*, 2014. Silicone, fiberglass, metal finish, 51 3/16 × 29 15/16 × 20 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. © Hank Willis Thomas

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