

Cincinnati Art Museum *Hank Willis Thomas: All Things Being Equal...* Workshop

Michael Coppage – *Winter in America* Response Transcript

00:00:01,430 --> 00:00:04,244

So I just want to give my

00:00:04,244 --> 00:00:06,690

feedback to the

00:00:07,990 --> 00:00:10,219

stop motion film

00:00:11,100 --> 00:00:16,617

Winter in America depicting
the murder of Hank Willis.

00:00:16,617 --> 00:00:19,069

Thomas's cousin Songha.

00:00:20,980 --> 00:00:25,820

I found it ironic that he
used GI Joe Last American

00:00:25,820 --> 00:00:30,660

heros, you know, toys to be
played with the manipulated

00:00:30,660 --> 00:00:33,300

with an he set them up.

00:00:34,430 --> 00:00:37,390

Using a narrative that we're
also familiar with.

00:00:38,540 --> 00:00:39,760

Depicting

00:00:40,910 --> 00:00:46,331

the last minutes of his cousin's
death, In a way, he saved us from

00:00:46,331 --> 00:00:48,833

the agony of using real life

00:00:48,833 --> 00:00:56,480

actors, but, but using the GI

Joe characters as a metaphor or

00:00:56,480 --> 00:00:58,920
substitute for actual human.

00:01:00,210 --> 00:01:04,233
Brings into play how
some of the structural and

00:01:04,233 --> 00:01:04,680
institutional

00:01:06,820 --> 00:01:11,290
situations that Black
men find themselves in.

00:01:12,390 --> 00:01:17,505
Play out again and again. Much
like scenarios you would have

00:01:17,505 --> 00:01:19,830
when you play with toys.

00:01:22,160 --> 00:01:26,912
You know, watching a GI Joe
figurine lose his life

00:01:29,490 --> 00:01:31,960
was about as emotional as

00:01:32,640 --> 00:01:35,544
watching the news and
seeing black men lose

00:01:35,544 --> 00:01:36,633
their life every day.

00:01:37,880 --> 00:01:42,408
We're so callous that there's
hardly a difference.

00:01:43,040 --> 00:01:45,620
I don't think that this was

00:01:45,620 --> 00:01:48,400
unintentional. I think it
was deliberate.

00:01:52,090 --> 00:01:54,439

It's super sad

00:01:55,600 --> 00:01:56,560

Film,

00:01:57,760 --> 00:02:00,886

an I'm sure it was therapeutic

00:02:00,886 --> 00:02:04,650

for Hank. But for the rest of

00:02:04,650 --> 00:02:10,973

us it, ust reinforces the fact
that the value of a black life

00:02:10,973 --> 00:02:14,517

is about as valuable as a GI Joe

00:02:14,517 --> 00:02:17,260

action figure. And.

00:02:19,300 --> 00:02:25,030

You know, in America I think
we need to reassess what's

00:02:25,030 --> 00:02:25,603

important.

00:02:28,310 --> 00:02:35,616

Is human life important or is
the color of the skin of the

00:02:35,616 --> 00:02:37,302

human that's alive

00:02:38,180 --> 00:02:41,870

more important? Because
we deal with

00:02:43,430 --> 00:02:48,166

very similar deaths very
differently depending on the

00:02:48,166 --> 00:02:50,534

complexion of the person.

00:02:52,810 --> 00:02:57,694

I wasn't expecting to see this film. It really resonated with

00:02:57,694 --> 00:03:00,860

me. It could very well be me,

00:03:02,120 --> 00:03:04,070

one day. The fact that

00:03:05,150 --> 00:03:09,880

this young man was killed over a chain. Given our historical

00:03:09,880 --> 00:03:11,170

connection with chains.

00:03:13,450 --> 00:03:18,178

Brings in the play the idea that slavery

00:03:20,610 --> 00:03:26,090

never really was abolished, it was just re

00:03:26,090 --> 00:03:27,755

branded. Repurposed and,

00:03:29,350 --> 00:03:30,750

and took a new angle.