

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

Flavia Bastos – *Guernica* Response Transcript

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Hello, my name is Flavia Bastos and I'm a professor of

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art education at University of Cincinnati. And I was asked to

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respond to my visit to the
exhibition of Hank Willis Thomas

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at the Cincinnati Art Museum, and specific to a work that

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really moved me the *Guernica*
quilt on a back wall.

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You know I'm an art professor
and art educator, and as such we

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are educated on Western European
art. You know, that's the art we

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learn about. So what was

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really powerful about this whole exhibition was the the way in

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which the artist really
addressed issues of race.

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It was an exhibition about being black in the United

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States, and that work, Guernica, like in many other works, you

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see, all these interconnections between

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perhaps the topic at hand in other issues that the work

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brings to the fore. And the Black experience in America, very much

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like the Black experience,

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of people growing up in Latin America, where I'm from, is

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layered and it's full of issues

of power and prejudice and

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oppression. And in Guernica, that quilt that is evidenced, first

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of all, I was attracted by

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the monumental

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character of the work, very much

like the original Guernica which

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I had the opportunity to see in the Museo Orania Sophia in

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Spain a few years back.

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So there is this monumental quality which draws into that

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colorful field of sports
jerseys, which do make you think

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about all the Black athletes who are part of our sports culture.

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And you can ask how the Black athletes benefit from their

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world. But then you also have
Picasso iconic figures. You have

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the bull. You have to crying

00:02:12.939 --> 00:02:18.716

person. You have those iconic
images which came to represent

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the horrors of the Spanish Civil War, re-presented in Hank Willis

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Thomas's work. And you can't avoid the connections to

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African art because that's in many ways the aesthetics that

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Picasso appropriated. So here
you have all these layers. You

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have this ancient

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African art that is usually
underrated and unknown.

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Myself, I didn't really know
that African art was a

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category to be studied until I came to graduate school in the

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United States. Isn't that a
bit shocking? But anyway, so

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you have the African arts that
existed for a long time. That

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is powerful insignificant.

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Being appropriated by a white
European artist with a

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tremendous ego and then re-presented again by a Black

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artist in the United States.

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Making commentaries about his
experiences with race in

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contemporary times. So lots of
amazing layers and lots of

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questions and lots of thoughts.

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And. That's those are a few of
the things that is stayed with

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me as I engaged with that
fantastic work of art.