

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS



Hank Willis Thomas, *Le cheval, l'écyère et le clown*, 2022, mixed media, 162.6 x 254 cm; (64 x 100 in.)

HANK WILLIS THOMAS:

"Everybody used to say, oh, I got it all from Matisse, and I said, 'Not really.'"

November 25 2022 – January 21 2023

PRIVATE VIEW with ARTIST: Sunday December 4, 6-8PM

245 Worth Avenue, Palm Beach, FL, USA

Ben Brown Fine Arts is proud to present Hank Willis Thomas' ***"Everybody used to say, oh, I got it all from Matisse, and I said, 'Not really.'"***. This is the artist's fourth solo exhibition with Ben Brown Fine Arts and first exhibition at the Palm Beach gallery. The exhibition brings together a selection of recent works by the artist from his most celebrated series, including sports jersey textile works, lenticular text works, retroreflective prints, and a neon. Hank Willis Thomas is a multi-disciplinary, conceptual artist whose work explores notions of identity, race, politics, popular culture, sports, and history. His practice emanates from a bright vision of promise for the future, attained by both examining the past and creating a fresh visual repository to engage with these conceptions.

***Le cheval, l'écyère et le clown*, 2022**, is a vibrant textile work comprised of Miami soccer jerseys, based on an iconic Matisse cut-paper collage from his 1947 *Jazz* series. In this body of work, Thomas brings an acute eye to the intersection of art, sports, geopolitics, and history, achieved through the medium of quilting and its resonance as a Black American tradition. In referencing artists such as Matisse, Picasso and Brâncuși, Thomas illuminates the profound influence of African art on modernism, as well as the influence of African music on jazz. In interconnecting the myriad sports jerseys, Thomas explores the branding, commercialization, physical glorification, and lucrative trading of players in the interest of

LONDON

BEN BROWN FINE ART LTD.
52 BROOK'S MEWS
LONDON W1K 4DG
T +44 (0)20 7734 8888
INFO@BENBROWNFINEARTS.COM

HONG KONG

BEN BROWN GALLERY LTD.
201 THE FACTORY | YIP FAT STREET
WONG CHUK HANG HONG KONG
T+852 2522 9600
HKINFO@BENBROWNFINEARTS.COM

PALM BEACH

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS
245 WORTH AVENUE
PALM BEACH FL 33480
T+1 561 366 9985
PALMBEACH@BENBROWNFINEARTS.COM

WWW.BENBROWNFINEARTS.COM

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS

national and regional identities, tracing parallels to histories of colonization, while also looking at the influence and prominence of sports figures in contemporary popular culture. In 2020, Thomas began a series of textile works reimagining the National Basketball Association (NBA) logo made from jerseys of legendary NBA All-Star players, as part of a commission to commemorate the NBA's 75th anniversary. **No. 3, 2022**, celebrates the legacy of Dwyane Wade and the culture of Miami basketball, and more largely how Black athletes have become cultural icons that unify across the sports, races, class, and even national boundaries, attaining access to new spaces and platforms.

Included in the exhibition are three new works from Thomas' retroreflective series that take inspiration from the abstract color field painter Ellsworth Kelly, and all carry latent photographic imagery screen-printed onto their retroreflective sheeting, the industrial material used to make road signs visible in the dark, which is only revealed when illuminated by a beam of light. ***I'm Going to Take My Talents to South Beach (4 x 3), 2022***, is a color block grid that reveals headshots of the Miami Heat's 2011-12 champion 'Superteam', a ground-breaking group that included the 'Big Three' – Dwyane Wade, LeBron James, and Chris Bosh – who transformed the basketball industry, affecting team constructions, contracts and the free agency of players to choose where to play. Mirroring this chromatic framework is ***Freedom Riders (4 x 3), 2022***, which carries police photographs of Freedom Riders, nonviolent civil rights activists who rode buses through the American south in 1961 to protest segregation in public transport, bravely laying the groundwork for the Civil Rights Act that would follow later in the decade. Thomas creates a dialogue between these two works, elucidating that liberation is the goal of all activism, in whatever form, and that assembling together and creating platforms is what affects change, prompting his viewers to examine what activism looks like today and the ways in which social media and public figures can amplify social justice in contemporary culture.

The title of the exhibition, "Everybody used to say, oh, I got it all from Matisse, and I said, 'Not really.'", is a playful reference to a quote by Ellsworth Kelly when talking about his own career and other's assumptions of a linear influence running through art history. Thomas similarly trailblazes on his own path, one uniquely distinguished for disrupting and re-examining linear histories through a dynamic, thoughtful, and engaging body of work.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Hank Willis Thomas (b. 1976) received a BFA in Photography and Africana Studies from New York University and an MFA and MA in Photography and Visual Criticism from the California College of Arts, San Francisco. Thomas has had solo exhibitions at institutions including the Portland Museum of Art, OR; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, AK; Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Brooklyn Museum, New York; Baltimore Museum of Art, MD; and the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO, among others. His work is in numerous public and private collections including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Rubell Museum, Miami and Washington DC; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia; and the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, among others. Thomas is a recipient of the Gordon Parks Foundation Fellowship (2019), The Guggenheim Fellowship (2018), AIMIA | AGO Photography Prize (2017), Soros Equality Fellowship (2017), Aperture West Book Prize (2008), Renew Media Arts Fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation (2007), and the New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship Award (2006). Thomas is a co-founder For Freedoms, a platform for creative civic engagement in America. The artist currently lives and works in New York City.

LONDON

BEN BROWN FINE ART LTD.
52 BROOK'S MEWS
LONDON W1K 4DG
T +44 (0)20 7734 8888
INFO@BENBROWNFINEARTS.COM

HONG KONG

BEN BROWN GALLERY LTD.
201 THE FACTORY | YIP FAT STREET
WONG CHUK HANG HONG KONG
T +852 2522 9600
HKINFO@BENBROWNFINEARTS.COM

PALM BEACH

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS
245 WORTH AVENUE
PALM BEACH FL 33480
T +1 561 366 9985
PALMBEACH@BENBROWNFINEARTS.COM

WWW.BENBROWNFINEARTS.COM

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS

ABOUT BEN BROWN FINE ARTS

In 2004, Ben Brown Fine Arts opened its first location in the heart of Mayfair, London. The gallery quickly established itself on the international art scene with exhibitions of long-term gallery artists Candida Höfer, Tony Bevan, Claude & François-Xavier Lalanne, and Heinz Mack, amongst others, as well as momentous exhibitions of 20th-century masters including Lucio Fontana, Alighiero Boetti and Gerhard Richter. In 2009, Ben Brown Fine Arts opened an exhibition space in Hong Kong, becoming the first international gallery to move to the city that would soon become a major international art hub. In Hong Kong, the gallery introduced notable exhibitions of Pablo Picasso, Sean Scully, Frank Auerbach, and Miquel Barceló, as well as survey exhibitions of Chinese contemporary photography, the Düsseldorf School of Photography, 20th-century Italian art, and the ZERO movement. In 2021, Ben Brown Fine Arts opened a third location in Palm Beach, Florida, with an inaugural exhibition celebrating the legacy of American and European 20th-century artists who developed radical approaches to making art, among them Alexander Calder, Georg Baselitz, and Andy Warhol. The galleries regularly exhibit and develop programming for our renowned stable of international, multi-disciplinarian contemporary artists, including the aforementioned as well as Yoan Capote, Awol Erizku, Nabil Nahas, José Parlá, Enoc Perez, Ena Swansea, Hank Willis Thomas, Gavin Turk, and Jan Worst. With multi-lingual staff based in London, Hong Kong, New York, and Palm Beach, the gallery has strong relationships with private collectors, advisors, and public institutions, sourcing and placing important primary and secondary artworks for them. Ben Brown Fine Arts participates in major art fairs worldwide, including Art Basel, Art Basel Hong Kong, Art Basel Miami Beach, The Armory Show, Frieze Masters, TEFAF Maastricht, and TEFAF New York.

Instagram: [@hankwillisthomas](#)

Twitter: [@hankwthomas](#)

Instagram: [@ben_brown_fine_arts](#)

Facebook: [/BenBrownFineArts](#)

Twitter: [@BenBrownFineArt](#)

For sales enquiries please contact:

sales@benbrownfinearts.com

www.benbrownfinearts.com

+44 (0)20 7734 8888

For media enquiries please contact:

Katy Wickremesinghe: katy@ktwlondon.com

Tani Burns: tani@ktwlondon.com

LONDON

BEN BROWN FINE ART LTD.
52 BROOK'S MEWS
LONDON W1K 4DG
T +44 (0)20 7734 8888
INFO@BENBROWNFINEARTS.COM

HONG KONG

BEN BROWN GALLERY LTD.
201 THE FACTORY I YIP FAT STREET
WONG CHUK HANG HONG KONG
T+852 2522 9600
HKINFO@BENBROWNFINEARTS.COM

PALM BEACH

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS
245 WORTH AVENUE
PALM BEACH FL 33480
T+1 561 366 9985
PALMBEACH@BENBROWNFINEARTS.COM

WWW.BENBROWNFINEARTS.COM