Exhibition Announcement

Hank Willis Thomas: Falk Visiting Artist
September 3 – December 11, 2016

What do advertisements sell us? Products is the easy answer: potato chips, sneakers, refrigerators, lipstick, toys—the list goes on. Artist Hank Willis Thomas expands that list and points us towards the more complicated answer by revealing the ways that ads also sell us assumptions about race and gender.

The Weatherspoon Art Museum at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro is pleased to present the exhibition Unbranded: A Century of White Women, 1915–2015. In the exhibition, Thomas reveals ways that corporate campaigns have both marketed products to white women and marketed those women as a feminine standard. By removing the texts from historic advertisements, he offers a visual chronology of the perceived social roles of whit women—a history he describes as “a fascinating one step forward, two steps back.” Simultaneously, he highlights the complex ways in which popular notions of virtue and power, beauty and desire, race and gender have long been bound together.

In a previous project, Unbranded: Reflections in Black by Corporate America, 1968–2008, Thomas focused attention on media images of and for black consumers, especially black men. By expanding that project to address images of white women, he questions why our understandings of identities—male and female, black and white—are often shaped in opposition to one another.
Today, issues of race and gender reverberate throughout our national dialogue. This fall, Americans may pass leadership from their first black president to their first female president—a possibility unimaginable a century ago. At the same time, however, news stories—detailing systemic racial inequities, sexual assault against women on college campuses, and heated debates over the rights of transgendered individuals—remind us that equality is not a given, and that discussions of race and gender remain both difficult and essential. Thomas offers these images as fuel for those important conversations.

Hank Willis Thomas holds a BFA in Photography and Africana Studies from New York University as well as an MA in Visual Criticism and an MFA in Photography from California College of the Arts. His artwork has been featured in museum exhibitions around the world and resides in such important collections as the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. He is represented by Jack Shainman Gallery in New York.

As the Fall 2016 Falk Visiting Artist, Thomas will present a public lecture about his work and meet with graduate students in the UNCG Art Department.

This exhibition is organized by Dr. Emily Stamey, Curator of Exhibitions, and supported by the UNCG Art Department’s Falk Visiting Artist Program; the UNCG University Performing Arts Series, celebrating its 100th season; Fabric of Freedom, an arts program of the National Folk Festival; and the Humanities Working Groups for Community Impact Initiative, a project of the National Humanities Alliance Foundation supported by the Whiting Foundation.

This exhibition and related programs in September are partner programs included in the 2016 17 DAYS Greensboro Festival sponsored by ArtsGreensboro.

Related Public Programming

Artist Talk: Hank Willis Thomas  
*An Evening of White Women For Freedoms*  
Thursday, September 15, 7 pm  
Through photographs, sculptures, videos, and public art installations, Artist Hank Willis Thomas asks tough questions and offers sharp insights about the constructions of race, gender, and class in American popular culture. Join us on September 15, as he explains the thinking and motivation behind his photographic series *Unbranded: A Century of White Women, 1915–2015* and places the project in the context of his other work—including his current artist-driven political action committee For Freedoms. **The artist talk is FREE but tickets are required, check the Weatherspoon website for details on how to reserve your ticket.**

This talk is supported by UNCG’s Falk Visiting Artist Program and University Performing Arts Series; Fabric of Freedom, an arts program of the National Folk Festival; and the National Humanities Alliance Foundation supported by the Whiting Foundation.
Curator Talk: Emily Stamey
*Media and Message – Appropriation in the Art of Social Activism*
Friday, September 23, 12:15 pm
Curator Emily Stamey will address Hank Willis Thomas’s series Unbranded: A Century of White Women, 1915-2015 in the context of work by other artists who likewise employ media images and themes of social activism. This event is free. No registration required, but let us know you are coming by sending an RSVP on Facebook or to RSVPWAM@uncg.edu.
This talk is supported by Fabric of Freedom, an arts program of the National Folk Festival; and the Humanities Working Groups for Community Impact Initiative, a project of the National Humanities Alliance Foundation supported by the Whiting Foundation.

Noon @ the 'Spoon Public Tour
Tuesday, October 11, 12 pm
Noon @ the 'Spoon features a 20-minute tour of a new exhibition. Offered every second Tuesday of the month. Free.

For a complete, updated list of programs, visit [http://weatherspoon.uncg.edu](http://weatherspoon.uncg.edu).

About the Weatherspoon Art Museum

Mission
The Weatherspoon Art Museum at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro acquires, preserves, exhibits, and interprets modern and contemporary art for the benefit of its multiple audiences, including university, community, regional, and beyond. Through these activities, the museum recognizes its paramount role of public service, and enriches the lives of diverse individuals by fostering an informed appreciation and understanding of the visual arts and their relationship to the world in which we live.

History
The Weatherspoon Art Museum at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro was founded by Gregory Ivy in 1941 and is the earliest of any art facilities within the UNC system. The museum was founded as a resource for the campus, community, and region and its early leadership developed an emphasis—maintained to this day—on presenting and acquiring modern and contemporary works of art. A 1950 bequest from the renowned collection of Claribel and Etta Cone, which included prints and bronzes by Henri Matisse and other works on paper by American and European modernists, helped to establish the Weatherspoon’s permanent collection. Other prescient acquisitions during Ivy’s tenure included a 1951 suspended mobile by Alexander Calder, *Woman* by Willem de Kooning, a pivotal work in the artist’s career that was purchased in 1954, and the first drawings by Eva Hesse and Robert Smithson to enter a museum collection.

In 1989, the museum moved into its present location in The Anne and Benjamin Cone Building designed by the architectural firm Mitchell Giurgula. The museum has six galleries and a sculpture courtyard with over 17,000 square feet of exhibition space. The American Alliance of Museums accredited the Weatherspoon in 1995 and renewed its accreditation in 2005 and 2015.

Collections + Exhibitions
The permanent collection of the Weatherspoon Art Museum is considered to be one of the foremost of its kind in the Southeast. It represents all major art movements from the beginning of the 20th century to the present. Of the nearly 6,000 works in the collection are pieces by such prominent figures as Sol LeWitt, Robert Mangold, Cindy Sherman, Al Held, Alex Katz, Henry Tanner, Louise Nevelson, Mark di Suvero, Deborah Butterfield, and Robert Rauschenberg. The museum regularly lends to major exhibitions nationally and internationally.

The Weatherspoon also is known for its adventurous and innovative exhibition program. Through a dynamic annual calendar of fifteen to eighteen exhibitions and a multi-disciplinary educational program for audiences of all ages, the museum provides an opportunity for audiences to consider
artistic, cultural, and social issues of our time and enriches the life of our university, community, and region.

Weatherspoon Art Museum  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
Spring Garden and Tate Streets, PO Box 26170  
Greensboro, NC 27402-6170, 336.334.5770, weatherspoon@uncg.edu

For more information or press images, contact:  
Loring Mortensen, 336-256-1451, lamorten@uncg.edu