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BMA PRESENTS HANK WILLIS THOMAS EXHIBITION

*Recent work shown in conjunction with JHU Center for Africana Studies
Artist-in-Residence program*

BALTIMORE, MD (July 29, 2009)—Discover the powerful work of multimedia artist **Hank Willis Thomas** in the BMA's West Wing for Contemporary Art from **July 29 through November 29, 2009**. This acclaimed African-American artist is participating in the Artist-in-Residence Program at The Johns Hopkins University Zanvyl Krieger School of Arts and Sciences' Center for Africana Studies during the fall 2009 semester. Thomas is a rising star in the art world, with works featured in numerous exhibitions at national and international venues, including the Studio Museum in Harlem, the National Portrait Gallery, and the Prague Contemporary Art Festival.

The exhibition features 10 examples of Thomas' recent work exploring racial stereotypes and black identity in America. He first gained wide recognition for his provocative B@ANDED series, which raised questions about visual culture, the power of logos, and media representation of African Americans. An example from this series is *Hang Time Circa 1923* (2008), which shows the Jumpman logo from Nike's Air Jordan ad campaigns appropriated to create an image about lynching. The artist's deeply personal video, *Winter in America* (2005), features G.I. Joe toy action figures re-enacting the senseless murder of his beloved cousin, showing how the seeds of violence are sown through play and also the all-too-common killings of young black men by their peers. In recent works such as the *I Am A Man* series of images (2009), Thomas explores the power of language as a means of questioning concepts of racial identity.

During his residency this fall, Thomas will participate in a series of lectures and workshops on JHU's Homewood campus, as well as an artist's conversation at the BMA on November 12, 2009.

Thomas is the second artist to be selected for this residency. Both he and the first artist, Renee Stout, were selected by an advisory committee of art historians and scholars that included Jay Fisher, BMA Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs, who also chose the works for the exhibition; Ben Vinson, Director of Center for Africana Studies; and two JHU alumni: Leslie King-Hammond, Graduate Dean Emeritus and Founding Director of the Center for Race and Culture at Maryland Institute College of Art, and Lowery Stokes-Sims, The Charles Bronfman Curator of the Museum of Art & Design in New York City. This is the first time Thomas' work is being shown in Baltimore.

Thomas was born in New Jersey in 1976 and raised in New York. He received his BFA in Photography from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, and an MFA in Photography and an MA in Visual Criticism from the California College of the Arts in San Francisco. Another important influence is his mother, Deborah Willis, a well known scholar, curator, and photographer with whom Thomas has collaborated on several exhibition projects. Thomas is currently based in New York and the San Francisco Bay area.

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The Center for Africana Studies Artist-in-Residence Program is supported by a gift from Hopkins alumna Christina Mattin.

JHU CENTER FOR AFRICANA STUDIES

Part of the Zanvyl Krieger School of Arts and Sciences, the Center for Africana Studies pursues broad inquiry into the ideas and experiences of African people throughout the world. This interdisciplinary program encompasses the study of Africa, African Americans, and the African Diaspora within the humanities, social sciences, and public health fields. Established in 2003, the Center offers an undergraduate major and minor and teaching and research opportunities for graduate students.

THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

The Baltimore Museum of Art is home to an internationally renowned collection of 19th-century, modern, and contemporary art. Founded in 1914, the BMA's outstanding collection encompasses 90,000 works of art, including the largest and most significant holding of works by Henri Matisse in the world, as well as masterpieces by Pablo Picasso, Paul Cézanne, and Vincent van Gogh. An expanding collection of contemporary art features iconic post-1960 works by Andy Warhol and Sol LeWitt, as well as exciting acquisitions by artists such as Kara Walker and Olafur Eliasson. The BMA is also recognized for an acclaimed collection of prints, drawings, and photographs from the 15th-century to the present; grand European painting and sculpture from Old Masters to the 19th-century; distinguished American painting, sculpture, and decorative arts and Maryland period rooms; one of the most important African collections in the country, and notable examples of Asian, ancient American, and Pacific Islands art.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN ART AT THE BMA

The BMA has a long and distinguished record of collecting African-American art that began in 1939 when the Museum presented one of the first exhibitions of works by African-American artists in the country. In recent years the BMA has added more than 50 works by both historical and contemporary artists. The collection includes contemporary works by David Hammons, Kerry James Marshall, Martin Puryear, Allison Saar, Lorna Simpson, Kara Walker, Carrie Mae Weems, and Fred Wilson; important examples of painting and sculpture by Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett, Beauford Delaney, Sam Gilliam, Joshua Johnson, Jacob Lawrence, Horace Pippin, Alma Thomas, and Hale Woodruff; and works on paper by John Thomas Biggers, Gordon Parks, and James Van Der Zee. Among the Baltimore-based artists represented are Carl Clark, Linda Day Clark, Cary Beth Cryor, Robert Houston, Tom Miller, Kenneth Royster, and Joyce J. Scott.

VISITOR INFORMATION

General admission to the BMA is free; special exhibitions may be ticketed. The BMA is open Wednesday through Friday, 11 a.m.–5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m.–6 p.m. (except major holidays). The Museum is closed Monday, Tuesday, New Year's Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The BMA is located on Art Museum Drive at North Charles and 31st Streets, three miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor. For general Museum information, call 443-573-1700 or visit artbma.org.

NOTE: BEGINNING WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2009, THE BMA WILL BEGIN OPENING WEEKDAYS (WEDNESDAY THROUGH FRIDAY) AT 10 A.M. WEEKEND HOURS WILL REMAIN THE SAME.