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ISSUES OF NATIONAL IDENTITY, MIGRATION, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE TACKLED BY HANK WILLIS THOMAS AT JABLONKA MARUANI MERCIER GALLERY

Art Exhibitions • Ana Moriarty

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The Jablonka Maruani Mercier Gallery is pleased to present the Hank Willis Thomas exhibition for the first time in Belgium. An extensive selection of the artist's oeuvre will be presented for the viewers to enjoy. The New York-based conceptual artist focuses his work on the themes of commodity, media, popular culture, and identity, and often includes recognizable images in his work, many of which are familiar icons from advertising and branding

campaigns. This exhibition will address the same problems Europeans are facing in the light of the **immigration crisis** and their integration into the society. Hank Willis Thomas' exhibition will surely invite the viewers to engage in a lively dialogue and inspire them to make positive changes in their communities.

Left: Hank Willis Thomas – A Place to Call Home, 2009 / **Right:** Hank Willis Thomas -Die Dompas Moet Brand (The Passport Must Burn!), 2013

Hank Willis Thomas – To Whom It May Concern

Hank Willis Thomas' work tackles the building and the use of race in America, and at the same time, withstands this categorization. He has stated that he could be a **black artist**, but simultaneously, so much more than that. His opinion is that all people are a home to **multiple identities** at once. For Thomas, the most absurd thing is that the blackness was not invented by black people, but by Europeans with a mercantile interest in dehumanizing the black community. He added that some five hundred years ago, there were no black people in Africa, they were just regular people. A big part of the advertising industry, he says, is the success built on its capacity to fortify the generalizations grown around race, ethnicity, and gender. Even though these generalizations are mostly **false**, they can nevertheless be entertaining at times, sometimes true, and most of the times – horrifying.

Hank Willis Thomas – A Luta Continua, 2014

Art and Racial Identity

As we know, the information provided in school curriculums and art textbooks does not portray the African-American culture in its entirety. However, artists have been trying to change this general opinion on racial issues we face today, especially in the world of graffiti. Graffiti artists have the power to translate their feelings on racism, gender, and ethnicity into their art and create beautiful works with a strong message behind them. With the leading graffiti artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring, the interest in this medium has grown since their emergence on the art scene. Since Basquiat is a black painter, who was first a street artist, the story revolving around him was also sprinkled with the information about his **heritage** and **race**. Since Basquiat, many artists have found the courage to express their own racial backgrounds in their works, driven by his success despite the color of his skin. Perhaps this is why it is so important to address one's cultural and racial heritage and help people realize that it is not the color or ethnicity that divides us but makes our society stronger and more versatile and multicultural.

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#InequalityIs: Hank Willis Thomas on the role of artists in fighting



Hank Willis Thomas Exhibition at Jablonka Maruani Mercier Gallery

The opening reception for Hank Willis Thomas' exhibition *To Whom It May Concern* at [Jablonka Maruani Mercier Gallery](#) on **April 14th**, from 4 PM to 7:30 PM, where the artist will be present. It will be on display from **April 14th** through **May 22nd, 2016**. The gallery is located at Rue de la Régence, 17 - 1000 in **Brussels**. Jablonka Maruani Mercier Gallery is a contemporary art gallery founded in 1995, and has, since then, focused on well-known American artists from the 1980s. It also works towards promoting the artists it represents by publishing catalogs or monographs, and by being a participant in various art fairs. The gallery is also known for its cooperation with emerging artists.

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All images Courtesy of Jablonka Maruani Mercier Gallery

Featured image: Hank Willis Thomas - All things being equal, 2010 | Hank Willis Thomas - Keep the Faith Baby (button), 2014

Video: #InequalityIs: Hank Willis Thomas on the role of artists in fighting inequality



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What Makes a Young Art Lover Choose to be an Art Curator ?

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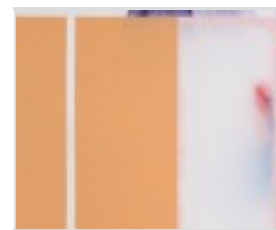
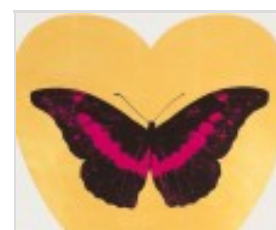
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True Identity : The Postmodern Art Affair

The question of identity boomed at the moment in history when stories needed to change, and when the language was no longer considered as given.

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Office Baroque Presents a Witful and Amusing Reflection on Femininity

Contemporary art gallery based in Brussels, Office Baroque, has announced a promising exhibition, 8 Femmes. The exhibition lends its title from the 2002 movie directed by François Ozon, which is a musical grounded in dark humor, focused on the ...

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David Zwirner is proud to present the works by Richard Hamilton in an exhibition on view at THE UPPER ROOM at the London location of the gallery. Widely recognized as one of the most influential artists of the twentieth c...

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