

## RYSE YOUTH CENTER COMMUNITY PORTRAIT PROJECT



Installation of portraits at Corcoran Gallery of Art, 2013

### GOAL/DESCRIPTION:

In honor of the humans that make RYSE and in celebration and anticipation of the opening of RYSE Commons, the RYSE community is invited to paint self-portraits in the style of artist, Mickalene Thomas. Portraiture can foster critical dialogue, reconnect relationships to place, reduce stigma, encourage empathy, and make visible the strength and power of a community. These portraits will be installed in a grid within RYSE Commons that includes members, staff, partners, and families.



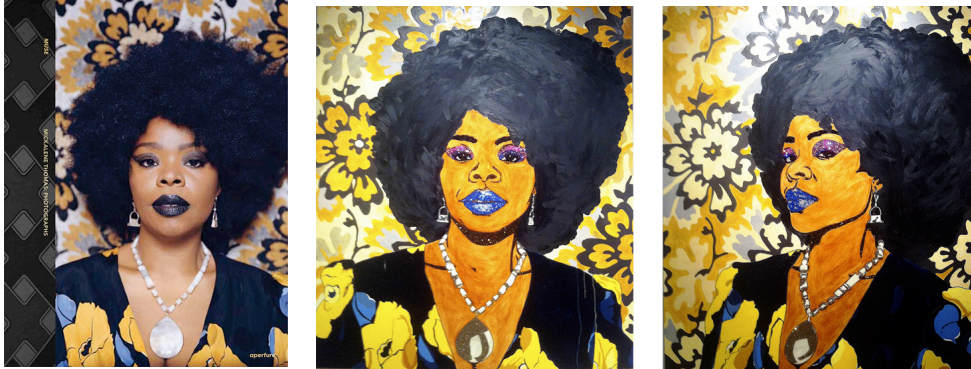
Mickalene Thomas and muse, Racquel Chevremont, by Victoria Kovios

*"The sheer power of seeing yourself reflected in works of art speaks volumes, it says "I am you!" We have to see ourselves represented on every level. My hope is that when a young girl comes to the museum she leaves it inspired and knows that we see her too."*

-- Mickalene Thomas

Mickalene Thomas explores how culture influences personal identity, focusing on consumerism, stereotypes, symbolic references, and historical biases. Her work

specializes in dazzling collage portraits adorning her muses in lush fabrics, glitter, and rhinestones to diversify the representations of Black women in art. Thomas challenges standard notions of beauty through the lenses of pop culture and pop art. (<https://www.mickalenethomas.com/>)



Mickalene Thomas, *Din, une très belle négresse* (2012)

### WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN YOUR ART KIT

- 1 8x8 canvas panel
- 1 9x13 carbon paper (this paper can be used multiple times for tracing, so please don't discard after one use)
- 1 paint palette for mixing your paints
- 1 set of acrylic paints
- Paint brushes
- 1 mechanical pencil
- (You will also need tape and a cup of water, not included)

### STEPS TO CREATING YOUR SELF-PORTRAIT

1) The first step in creating your self-portrait is to have your photo taken. This 8X8 photograph will be a headshot only, with your face in the center of the frame, with approximately one inch of space above your head and two inches below your chin.



Malik Langley with self-portrait

2) Print your photograph as a black and white image in high contrast on regular printer paper to facilitate easier tracing. If you need support with your image, please contact Tara ([tara@rysecenter.org](mailto:tara@rysecenter.org)).

3) Wrap one 9X13 piece of carbon paper with the darker side facing down on the white side of the 8X8 canvas panel. Tape the ends of the paper down around the back of the panel (similar to wrapping a gift). Repeat with your photograph, adjusting it so your face is in the middle of the canvas. Tape this down as well. Write your name on the back of the panel.

4) Trace the outlines of your face with your pencil, making sure to press firmly so your marks will transfer onto the canvas with the help of the carbon paper. Don't forget the following details: chin, neck, hair, shoulders, eyes, eyelids, eyelashes, pupils, nose, lips, teeth, ears, etc. Additional details could include jewelry, accessories, anything you feel connects to your identity. Test different levels of pressure- if you press too hard with your pencil, you will tear the photo and the carbon paper. Too light, and you will not see any marks when you remove the photo and carbon paper. A No. 2 pencil can be used instead of the mechanical pencil.

5) Remove the photograph and carbon paper from the canvas panel and go over any faint tracings with your pencil. If the transfer marks from the carbon paper are too light, you can reattach the carbon paper and photograph, and retrace using more pressure with your pencil.

6) Using a thin paintbrush, paint over your tracings with black paint. If your paint line starts to fade or becomes too thick, add a little bit of water to your brush for more even results.

7) Working your way from the middle of your canvas panel to the outer edges, begin to paint your portrait using a thin to medium sized brush. Take care to not paint over the black outlines. Paint your face, including your ears, neck, and any other exposed skin areas. Next paint your eyes, mouth, hair, background, and clothing. To infuse some life into your image, add a single spot of white in your pupil to mimic light reflecting off of your iris. Create patterns or designs in your background that connects to your work at RYSE or that embody RYSE values. This can be as literal or abstract as you desire. Some examples include... What symbol represents youth power? What shape when repeated as a pattern reflects love and rage? What is the color and shape of liberation? Retrace all black outlines with black paint using a thin brush.

8) After all areas are painted, leave your painting face up to dry for at least an hour. Your piece is dry if you don't see any tacky areas when you hold it up to the light. Please use this time to clean your palette, cup, and brushes.



Details of portraits from THEARC, Sitar Arts Center, and Corcoran Gallery of Art, 2013