

NOVEMBER 10, 2020

Acquisition: Mickalene Thomas, "Melody: Back"



Mickalene Thomas

Melody: Back, 2011

diffusion transfer print (Polaroid)

image: 62.23 x 52.71 cm (24 1/2 x 20
3/4 in.)

sheet: 86.36 x 55.88 cm (34 x 22 in.)

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Charina Endowment Fund and Peter

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The Gallery has acquired its first work by celebrated African American artist Mickalene Thomas (b. 1971). Although she is best known for her rhinestone-encrusted paintings, Thomas has made

photographs since the beginning of her artistic career. *Melody: Back* (2011), a Polaroid print that depicts a seated nude woman, draws on European art history with the model mimicking the pose of Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres's *The Grand Odalisque* (1814). Instead of placing her figure on sumptuous silks, as Ingres did, Thomas has used boldly patterned fabrics, and her black model proudly displays a tattoo on her back that says "Only God Can Judge Me." Proclaiming her subject's beauty and sexuality, Thomas provocatively challenges cultural stereotypes while creating a richly textured work of art.

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