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media release



## ***Picture Windows:* Hank Willis Thomas in collaboration with Sanford Biggers**

On view from  
January 18, 2013  
through  
May 5, 2013

Media Preview  
January 17, 2013  
11:30 am–1:30 pm

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*Untitled* from the *Wayfarer* series, 2012. © Hank Willis Thomas.

The International Center of Photography is launching *Picture Windows*, a new series of site-specific installations from a global selection of contemporary artists. The inaugural project features work by conceptual photographer Hank Willis Thomas in collaboration with interdisciplinary artist Sanford Biggers and examines themes of multiplicity, identity, performance and gesture. It will be on view in ICP's 43rd Street windows from January 18 through May 5.

"The work of Hank Willis Thomas has often made use of vernacular imagery repurposed with subversive results," said Mark Robbins, ICP Executive Director. "We are pleased to have this type of work, which is tied to an activist use of the image, as the inaugural project for this new ICP series."

The installation explores perspective in relation to theatricality and identity. Clad in a divided black and white suit, top hat, and dress shoes, Biggers strikes 13 distinct poses that allude to "dandies," vaudeville performers, dancers, and even Kabuki actors. Inspired by a portrait of a late-19th-century performer, the costume also refers to the Yoruba deity Elegba, the protector of travels and crossroads.

"When dealing with black and white, it's important not to forget the gray space in between, where I often feel more comfortable," said Thomas. "I wanted to present cultural hybridity as an intricate performance. Sanford is the kind of artist whose work often straddles this idea and I felt he would be the perfect conduit to address this subject."

(more)

“There is so much more to the character than what we see on the surface,” said Biggers. “When I saw the black and white costume, I immediately thought of the dual nature of the yin and yang – two forces not in opposition but working in tandem with one another.”

Thomas is considered one of today’s most compelling emerging artists. Working with themes related to identity, history, and popular culture, he gained wide recognition with his highly provocative series *B®ANDED*, which addresses the commodification of African-American male identity by raising questions about visual culture and the power of logos. He received a BFA from New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts and an MFA in photography, along with an MA in visual criticism, from California College of the Arts in San Francisco. His work has been featured in several publications including *25 under 25: Up-and-Coming American Photographers* (CDS, 2003), *30 Americans* (RFC, 2008) as well as his monograph *Pitch Blackness* (Aperture, 2008). Thomas’ work is in numerous public collections including the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, and ICP. He is represented by Jack Shainman Gallery in New York City.

An LA native working in New York City, Biggers creates artworks that integrate film, video, installation, sculpture, drawing, original music and performance. He intentionally complicates issues such as hip hop, Buddhism, politics, identity and art history in order to offer new perspectives and associations for established symbols. His work has been celebrated through solo exhibitions both nationally and internationally including Tate Britain and Tate Modern in London, the Whitney Museum and Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, and most recently at the Brooklyn Museum, Sculpture Center and Mass MoCA. Biggers has won numerous awards including the American Academy in Berlin Prize, Greenfield Prize, New York City Art Teachers Association Artist-of-the-Year, Creative Time Travel Grant, Creative Capital Project Grant, New York Percent for the Arts Commission, Art Matters Grant, New York Foundation for the Arts Award, the Lambent Fellowship in the Arts, the Pennies From Heaven/ New York Community Trust Award, Tanne Foundation Award, and Rema Hort Mann Foundation Award Grant. Biggers is Assistant Professor at Columbia University’s Visual Arts program. He has also taught at Virginia Commonwealth University’s Sculpture and Expanded Media program and was a visiting scholar at Harvard University’s VES Department in 2009.

This *Picture Windows* project was made possible with support from an anonymous donor and by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council.



### **About ICP**

The International Center of Photography (ICP) is the world’s leading institution dedicated to the practice and understanding of photography and the reproduced image in all its forms. Through our exhibitions, educational programs, and community outreach, we offer an open forum for dialogue about the role images play in our culture. Since our founding, we have presented more than 500 exhibitions and offered thousands of classes, providing instruction at every level. ICP is a center where photographers and artists, students and scholars can create and interpret the world of the image within our comprehensive educational facilities and archive. Visit [www.icp.org](http://www.icp.org) for more information.

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