

Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) Reopening includes new exhibition *Lava Thomas: Beyond*

Exhibit runs Dec. 3, 2014 through April 5, 2015

The [Museum of the African Diaspora](#) (MoAD), a San Francisco-based arts and cultural institution dedicated to preserving and sharing stories of a common African heritage, reopens Dec. 3, 2014 following a six-month makeover. Among the new exhibitions on display is *Lava Thomas: Beyond*.

Renovations to the building, which first opened in 2005, refreshed the museum's overall look and feel and also created more exhibition space. The renovation is the first major step in an effort to transition the facility from a museum that houses temporary exhibits into a fine arts museum with a national presence that showcases both permanent and rotating collections. The refreshed look and expanded exhibition space also will give MoAD the capacity needed to grow its community, educational and outreach programs.

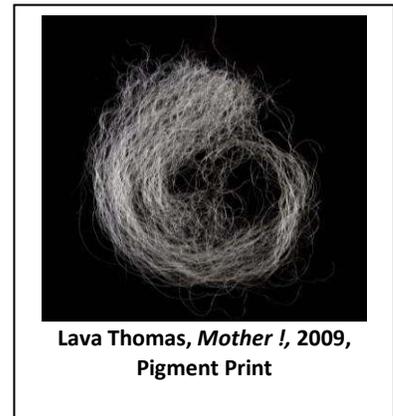
Lava Thomas: Beyond

One of MoAD's two new exhibits for the reopening is *Lava Thomas: Beyond*, a two-part exhibition that interweaves Thomas' past and present works. Thomas creates a space that inspires reflective thought and evokes a sense of the sublime through memory, metamorphosis and transcendence. *Lava Thomas: Beyond* runs through April 5, 2015.

"MoAD's thrilled to debut this collection of Lava Thomas' pieces to celebrate the reopening of the museum," said Linda Harrison, executive director of MoAD. "We're excited to showcase the work of a California artist which not only prompts discussions around the African diaspora, but also a woman's role in society."

Thomas creates alternative ways to approach portraiture that inspire reflective thought and evokes a sense of the sublime through memory, metamorphosis and transcendence.

Many of Thomas's works from 1995 to 2003 also consider the "beauty myth" of youth an obsession that translates into invisibility for older women. For women, hair is one of the main signifiers for youth and something that is easily changeable, thus hair is part of the body that is uniquely suited to Thomas's inquiries. Although common to every human being (and almost universally associated with the feminine), hair is often intensely personal and painstakingly customized—particularly in African American beauty shops like the one run by Thomas's grandmother.



**Lava Thomas, *Mother I*, 2009,
Pigment Print**



Lava Thomas, *Lungbreasts*, 1997, Ceramic

Craftsmanship is key to Thomas's sculptures of female reproductive parts that convey a sense of sterile preciousness. In these sculptures, Thomas asks the viewer to consider how we experience these female body parts, their social, political, and historical significance and their personal and institutional

interpretations with respect to race and class.

As an artist whose practice considers the body as a site and symbol of personal and cultural identity, the experiences of Black women have provided a crucial conceptual foundation from which to approach other artist's works. As such, Thomas has broadened her thinking about the sacrifice of women and what has been left out of conversations and art discourses about Black women—and women in general.

An exhibition catalogue, *Lava Thomas: Beyond* with contributions by Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins and Jacqueline Francis accompanies the exhibition.

About Museum of African Diaspora (MoAD)

Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) is an arts and cultural institution dedicated to preserving the stories of our common African heritage and sharing those stories with audiences from around the world. Situated in the heart of the Yerba Buena Arts District in San Francisco, MoAD is actively engaged in building a community that inspires, educates and connects people of all ages and backgrounds. MoAD seeks to build a deeper understanding of the African Diaspora through art, programs and events that cultivate wonder and excitement about the ways in which our personal histories are connected. As a nonprofit organization, the museum's operations and programs are supported by grants and contributions from public and private sources.



As a Smithsonian Institution affiliate, MoAD has access to the Smithsonian Institution's 136 million artifact collection for research, exhibits and programming. MoAD joins a network of more than 190 organizations in 45 states, Puerto Rico and Panama with a shared goal of creating lasting experiences that educate, inspire and broaden perspectives on science, history, world culture and the arts. To learn more and to support MoAD, visit www.moadsf.org.

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