LAVA THOMAS

Born 1958, Los Angeles, CA
Honorary Doctorate, California College of the Arts, 2025
BFA, California College of the Arts, 1999
Lives and works in Berkeley, CA
Presidential Advisory Board Member at California College of the Arts
Board member at Headlands Center for the Arts

Solo Exhibitions

2026 *Lava Thomas: In Our Own Regard,* Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, TX [forthcoming]
Lineage, Jessica Silverman, San Francisco, CA

2022 *Lava Thomas: Homecoming*, Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Atlanta, GA
Lava Thomas: Homecoming, Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, Montgomery, AL

2018 *Mugshot Portraits: Women of the Montgomery Bus Boycott*, Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2015 *Looking Back and Seeing Now*, Berkeley Art Center, Berkeley, CA

2014 *Lava Thomas: Beyond*, Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA

Selected Group Exhibitions

2026 *'Free as they want to be:' Artists Committed to Memory*, Baton Rouge Center for Contemporary Art, LA
Repossessions, Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Atlanta, GA

2025 *Ritual and Resistance,* TNT Art Lab, San Francisco, CA
Continuum, Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA
Reunited, Campus Gallery, California College of the Arts, San Francisco, CA
'Free as they want to be:' Artists Committed to Memory, Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

2024 *'Free as they want to be': Artists Committed to Memory*, Ethelbert Cooper Gallery, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
Summoning, Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Dwelling: New Acquisitions, Cantor Arts Center, Stanford, CA

2023 *What Has Been and What Could Be: The BAMPFA Collection*, Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive, CA
Resting Our Eyes, Institute of Contemporary Art, San Francisco, CA

2022 *'Free as they want to be': Artists Committed to Memory,* 2022 Fotofocus Biennial, National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, Cincinnati, OH
Tikkun: For the Cosmos, the Community, and Ourselves, Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco, CA
Reckoning: Protest. Defiance. Resilience., Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington D.C.
The Artist's Eye: Tammy Rae Carland, David Huffman, Lava Thomas and John Zurier, Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive, CA
The Black Index, Hunter College Art Galleries, New York, NY
Personal to Political: Celebrating the African American Artists of Paulson Fontaine Press, Mills College Art Museum, Oakland, CA
The Outwin 2019: American Portraiture Today, Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis, MO
Personal to Political: Celebrating the African American Artists of Paulson Fontaine Press, Bakersfield Museum of Art, Bakersfield, CA

2021 *Next to You,* McEvoy Foundation for the Arts, San Francisco, CA
New Time: Art and Feminisms in the 21st Century, Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive, CA
The Black Index, Art Galleries at Black Studies, University of Texas at Austin
The Black Index, Palo Alto Art Center, CA
The Black Index, University Art Galleries, University of California, Irvine
Otherwise/Revival, Bridge Projects, Los Angeles, CA

2020 *Monument*, Minnesota Street Project, San Francisco, CA
Justice, Marin Museum of Contemporary Art, Novato, CA
Podium, 181 Fremont, San Francisco, CA
Personal to Political: Celebrating the African American Artists of Paulson Fontaine Press, Art Museum of West Virginia University, WV

2019 *The Outwin 2019: American Portraiture Today*, National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC
To Reflect Us, Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Adjust Yo' Eyes for This Darkness, Ashara Ekundayo Gallery, Oakland, CA
Surfacing Histories, Sculpting Memories, National Museum of Women in the Arts Women to Watch 2020 Nominee, Hubble Galleries, California College of the Arts, San Francisco, CA

2018 *My Silences Had Not Protected Me*, For Freedoms and Fort Gansevoort, New York, NY
Pretty Big Things, Walter Maciel Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Personal to Political: Celebrating the African American Artists of Paulson Fontaine Press, Krasl Art Center, St. Joseph, MI
Art on the Vine, Martha's Vineyard, MA
Be Not Still: Living in Uncertain Times, Part II, di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art, Napa, CA
The Portrait Show, Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Face Forward: Self-Image & Self-Worth, Richmond Art Center, CA

2017 *Sabbath: The 2017 Dorothy Saxe Invitational*, Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco, CA
With Liberty and Justice for Some, Berkeley Art Center, Berkeley, CA
Culture In a Changing America, Artist Salon Series, Park Avenue Armory, New York, NY
With Liberty and Justice for Some, Walter Maciel Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Sanctuary City: With Liberty and Justice for Some, SFAC Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Lift Off, Rio Hondo College Art Gallery, Rio Hondo, CA
The True Stories Project: Exploitation and Empowerment, Patan Museum, Kathmandu, Nepal

2016 *After Pop Life*, Minnesota Street Project, San Francisco, CA
Contemporary Figuration as an Expression of Humanism, Richmond Art Center, CA
These American Lives, Rena Bransten Gallery, Minnesota Street Project, San Francisco, CA
Introspective, Bravin Lee Programs, New York, NY

2014 *Collect!,* Berkeley Art Center, Berkeley, CA
West Coast Ink, University Art Gallery, Sonoma State University, CA

2013 *Being Scene: A Performance Installation*, in collaboration with Aleta Hayes, Cantor Art Center at Stanford University, CA

2012 *Community Creates*, Palo Alto Art Center, CA
Women In Print, Etchings from the Paulson Bott Press, Bolinas Museum, CA

2011 *Chain Letter,* Shoshona Wayne Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
Women in Print, Paulson Bott Press, Berkeley, CA
Tel-Art-Phone, Beacon Arts Building, Inglewood, CA

2010 *Secret Drawings,* Palo Alto Art Center, Palo Alto, CA
Secret Drawings, San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, CA

Permanent Installations

2024 San Francisco Public Art Commission, *Portrait of a Phenomenal Woman: A Monument to Honor Dr. Maya Angelou,* San Francisco Main Library, CA

2023 *Resistance Reverb: Movements 1 & 2*, HALL Arts Hotel, Dallas, TX

2022 *Feel What I Feel in the Sunshine,* Apple Music Headquarters, Culver City, CA

Selected Bibliography

2026 Jones, Okla. "Lava Thomas Turns Her Family History Into Art With 'Lineage.'" *Essence*. September 16, 2026.

Blue, Max. "Fall gallery guide: Five can't-miss art shows in The City." *San Francisco Examiner.* August 30, 2026.
Hotchkiss, Sarah. "The 10 Best Museum and Gallery Shows to See this Fall." *KQED*. August 24, 2026.
Torwudzo-Stroh, Jen. "A First Look at the Art in the New Obama Presidential Center." *Hyperallergic.* June 8, 2026.

2025 Wilson, Emily. "CCA's 'Reunited' celebrates materiality of supporting women artists." *48 Hills.* May 6, 2025.
Bravo, Tony. "'Reunited' group exhibition celebrates 12 Women to Watch." *San Francisco Chronicle.* April 18, 2025.
ed. Hamilton, Katherine Jemima and Austin, Jaime. Best, Makeda. "Lava Thomas: Portrait of a Phenomenal Woman." *Reunited: Bay Area Candidate Artists from the National Museum of Women in the Arts' Women to Watch Program* (2025: California College of the Arts) [exh. cat.].

2024 "Phenomenal Woman" Maya Angelou Monument Unveiled at San Francisco Main Library. *Oakland Post*. October 2, 2024.
Heath, Shaquille. "Portrait of Phenomenal Women," *Alta Journal*. October 3, 2024.
Chen, Shawna. "San Francisco's first-ever Black art week honoring artists around the Bay." *Axios San Francisco*. October 3, 2024.
"Lyman Allyn features works by African American Artists from Across the Country." *The Day.* October 3, 2024.
"Community Celebration & Unveiling of Monument Honoring Dr. Maya Angelou." *The San Francisco Bay Times.* October 3, 2024.
Mondros, Sam. "'This city owes us a lot': Black artists rally support for first-ever art week." *The San Francisco Standard.* October 1, 2024.
Salazar, James. "SF touts ongoing progress of Civic Center revamp as success 10 months in." *San Francisco Examiner*. September 21, 2024.
NY, Gee. "Still I Rise": Maya Angelou Monument Unveiled in San Francisco Honors the Iconic Poet and Activist. *Shine My Crown*. September 21, 2024.
Bravo, Tony. "'Still I Rise': S.F. unveils Maya Angelou monument after years of controversy." *San Francisco Chronicle.* September 20, 2024.
Dickey, Megan Rose. "SF unveils its first public monument honoring a Black woman." *Axios San Francisco*. September 20, 2024.
NBC Bay Area Staff. "Maya Angelou monument unveiled in San Francisco." *NBC Bay Area.* September 19, 2024.
Torrez, Andre. "Maya Angelou monument unveiled at San Francisco Public Library." *Fox 2 San Francisco*. September 19, 2024.
Finkel, Jori. "Black Art Week in San Francisco Bay Area Is in the Works for the Fall." *The New York Times.* August 14, 2024.
Liu, Linda. "S.F. museum to launch first ever weeklong celebration of Black art and culture." *San Francisco Chronicle.* August 14, 2024.

Bravo, Tony. "S.F. monument of Maya Angelou, at center of City Hall controversy, will finally be unveiled." *San Francisco Chronicle.* July 24, 2024.

2023 Wilson, Emily. "'Resting Our Eyes' taps the power of Black women in repose." *48 Hills*. June 20, 2023.
Bravo, Tony. "Review: Final opening exhibitions at ICA SF show promise fulfilled at Dogpatch museum." *San Francisco Chronicle*. February 25, 2023.
Proehl, Ariana. "At ICA SF, 'Resting Our Eyes' Affirms Black Women's Right to Leisure." *KQED.* February 23, 2023.
Bridget Cooks, Jacqueline Francis, Sarah Thornton, and Pamela Wilson-Rycman. "The Artists Eye: Tammy Rae Carland, David Huffman, Lava Thomas and John Zurier," (2023: University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive) [exh. cat].
Heath, Shaquille. "Women at Rest: Ten Black artists imagine the freedom of leisure at ICA San Francisco's 'Resting Our Eyes' exhibition." *The Cut.* January 19, 2023.

2022 Evans, Bryn. "Homecoming: In Conversation with Lava Thomas and Dr. Bridget R. Cooks." *Burnaway.* December 15, 2022.
Feaster, Felicia. "Review: Ordinary people commemorated in Lava Thomas' powerful drawings at Spelman." *The Atlanta Journal.* November 8, 2022.
Greer, Karyn. "Lava Thomas and Liz Andrews Interview." *WSB Atlanta*. November 27, 2022.
Cheryl Finley and Deborah Willis. "Free as they want to be: Artists Committed to Memory," (2022: Damiani Editore) [exh. cat.].
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Bravo, Tony. "Exclusive: Bay Area couple gifts $1 million to new Institute of Contemporary Art San Francisco." *San Francisco Chronicle*. July 18, 2022.
Adiele, Faith. "The Seeker." *Alta Journal.* June 29, 2022.
Hutcheson, Carolyn. "Portraits from the Montgomery Bus Boycott." *Troy Public Radio.* April 27, 2022.
"Heroines of the Montgomery Bus Boycott celebrated in new exhibition." *Montgomery Advertiser.* April 6, 2022.
Bridget R. Cooks, editor. Jennifer Jankauskas and Bertis English. "Lava Thomas: Homecoming," (2022: Sming Sming Books, Saratoga, CA) [exh. cat].
Selz, Gabrielle. "'Pencils are my weapons': Lava Thomas tackles lack of art by Black women in BAMPFA Collection." *Berkeleyside.* March 20, 2022.
Bravo, Tony. "7 Bay Area art exhibitions not to miss this spring." *San Francisco Chronicle.* March 16, 2022.
D'Souza, Aruna. "The Black Index." *4Columns,* February 25, 2022.

2021 Quinn, Bridget. "The Many Feminisms of Contemporary Art." *Hyperallergic.* September 6, 2021.

DiQuinzio, Aspara, editor. Lawrence Rinder, Chiara Bottici, Jamieson Webster, and Lyn Hejinian. "New Time: Art and Feminisms in the 21st Century," (2021: University of CA, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive) [exh. cat.].
Walter, Sydney. "The Aftermath of a Spiritual Revival," *Art and Cake*. July 3, 2021.
Groom, Angela. "The Exhibit 'Otherwise/Revival' At Bridge Projects Explores Impact of Azusa Street Revival In L.A.," *Religion Unplugged*. June 23, 2021.
Elisa Wouk Almino and Matt Stromberg. "Your Concise Los Angeles Art Guide for April 2021." *Hyperallergic.* April 6, 2021.
Venture, Anya. "Seeing Blackness." *Getty*. February 25, 2021.
Conner, Allison. "Six Black Artists Test the Limits of Portraiture." *Hyperallergic*. February 19, 2021.
Nys Dambrot, Shana. "The Black Index and the Agency of Representation." *LA Weekly*. February 11, 2021.
McCalman, George. "Lava Thomas speaks out: A candid interview with the artist on saga of S.F.'s Maya Angelou monument." *San Francisco Chronicle*. February 7, 2021.
Bravo, Tony. "YCBA 100 honors Lava Thomas, 1619 founder and more." *San Francisco Chronicle*. February 2, 2021.
Forston, Jobina. "Celebrating Black voice: Here's a look at Dr. Maya Angelou's Bay Area connection, Legacy." *ABC7 News San Francisco*. February 2, 2021.
Nguyen, Lilly. "We exist in other ways…to see us, to find us—UC Irvine debuts 'The Black Index' Exhibition." *Los Angeles Times*. January 16, 2021.

2020 Madden, Helena. "This $6.8 Million San Francisco Condo Doubles as a Gallery Showcasing Black Artists," *Robb Report*. November 18, 2020.
Hotchkiss, Sarah. "SFAC Awards the Maya Angelou Monument to Lava Thomas, Finally." *KQED*. November 16, 2020.
Knight, Heather. "S.F. City Hall wrong made right: Eye-catching monument to Maya Angelou to be installed after all." *San Francisco Chronicle*. November 6, 2020.
Small, Zachary. "San Francisco Reinstates Winning Design for Maya Angelou Monument." *The New York Times*. November 5, 2020.
Bravo, Tony. "Artists Lava Thomas, Marcel Pardo Ariza named recipients of 2020 San Francisco Artadia Awards." *San Francisco Chronicle*. August 27, 2020.
Small, Zachary. "'There Should Be Greater Transparency': Public Art Becomes a Political Battleground." *Artnet*. August 4, 2020.
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Knight, Heather. "Toppling of SF statues springs from city's long history of inaction: 'It fell on deaf ears." *San Francisco Chronicle*. June 26, 2020.
Millner, Caille. "Maya Angelou wouldn't approve of this statue fiasco." *San Francisco Chronicle*. January 10, 2020.

2019 Wilson, Emily. "In San Francisco, a Design for Maya Angelou Monument is Approved,

Then Suddenly Scraped." *Hyperallergic.* October 23, 2019.
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Knight, Heather. "Statue of Maya Angelou comes into sharp relief as SF diversifies public art." *San Francisco Chronicle*. July 21, 2019.
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Closs, Wyatt. "Charles White in Three Dimensions: Work, Teaching, and Legacy." *LA Weekly.* April 4, 2019.
Murff, Zora J. "Q&A: Lava Thomas." *Strange Fire Collective.* March 21, 2019.
Osterweil, Ara. "Lava Thomas: Rena Bransten Gallery." *Artforum,* Vol. 57, No. 5, January 2019.

2018

Roth, David M. "Best of 2018." *SquareCylinder,* December 22, 2018.
Desmarais, Charles. "Year in review: Big changes in the visual arts world." *San Francisco Chronicle.* December 17, 2018.
Evans, Alissa. "Exhibit explores optimism, beauty amid political climate." *Daily Bruin.* November 20, 2018.
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Van Proyen, Mark. "Lava Thomas @ Rena Bransten," *SquareCylinder.* September 28, 2018.
Seikaly, Roula. "At Rena Bransten Gallery, Lava Thomas' 'Mugshots' Are Drawn Out of History." *KQED Arts*. September 20, 2018.
Raiford, Leigh. *Lava Thomas' 'Mugshot Portraits: Women of the Montgomery Bus Boycott* (2018: Rena Bransten Gallery) [exh. cat.].
Desmarais, Charles. "An uncertain approach to political art at di Rosa." *San Francisco Chronicle*. August 18, 2018.
Desmarais, Charles. "What's up in SF museums and galleries this fall." *San Francisco Chronicle.* August 17, 2018.
Norwood, Christopher. "Black Excellence at Art Basel." *International Review of African American Art*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2018): 13–32.
Giles, Gretchen. "Part Two of di Rosa's 'Be Not Still' a Lesson in the Importance of Being Earnest." *KQED.* June 28, 2018.
Lederer, Carrie. *Personal to Political: Celebrating the African American Artists of Paulson Fontaine Press* (2018: Bedford Gallery) [exh. cat.].

Fancher, Lou. "Walnut Creek: African-American art show opens at Bedford Gallery." *East Bay Times*. April 13, 2018.
Hutson, Laura. "Two Shows at Zeitgeist Gallery Explore the Power of the Feminine." *Nashville Scene*. January 25, 2018.
Boyle, Kathleen. "States of Matter." *Nashville Arts Magazine*. January 4, 2018.

2017 Miller, Robert Nagler. "Remember the Sabbath: 57 artists respond in imaginative exhibit." *The Jewish News of Northern California*. November 19, 2017.

2016 Roth, David M. "These American Lives at Rena Bransten Gallery." *SquareCylinder*. April 25, 2016.

2015 Troupe, Quincy, editor. *Black Renaissance Noire*, Vol. 15, Issue 2, New York University, New York, NY.
LeDuc, Aimee, editor. Francis, Jacqueline. *Lava Thomas: Looking Back and Seeing Now* (2015: Berkeley Art Center) [exh. cat.].
Zack, Jessica. "Lava Thomas' Mirrored Art Helps Viewers Reflect." *San Francisco Chronicle*. July 31, 2015.
Burke, Sarah. "Lava Thomas' Tambourine Dream." *East Bay Express*. July 15, 2015.

2014 Garchick, Leah. "MoAD cuts the ribbon and welcomes art lovers to reimagined space." *San Francisco Chronicle*. December 4, 2014.
LeFalle-Collins, Lizetta and Francis, Jacqueline. *Lava Thomas: Beyond* (2014: Museum of the African Diaspora) [exh. cat.].
Winn, Steven. "Lava Thomas' art rooted in biography." *SF Gate*. November 29, 2014.
Winn, Steven. "MoAD reopens with big changes and big plans." *San Francisco Chronicle*. November 26, 2014.
"The Cantor collaborates with Stanford students in many creative ways: Being Scene." *Cantor Arts Center News*, Spring 2014.
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2011 Zevitas, Stephen T., editor. *Studio Visit*, Vol. 15, 2011.

2010 Junker, Howard. "Violin d'Ingres." *ZYZZYVA 90,* Winter 2010.
"Art Collection of the United States Consulate General, Johannesburg, South Africa," exhibition catalog, 2010.
Graham, Jason-Louise. "Lava Thomas Shakes Berkeley," *Examiner*. September 28, 2010.

Residencies and Awards

2021 American Academy of Arts and Letters Purchase Prize, Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, NY

2020 Artadia Award San Francisco, Artadia, New York, NY

	Artist in Residence, Facebook, Los Angeles, CA Joan Mitchell Center Artist Residency, New Orleans, LA
2019	Finalist, The Outwin 2019: American Portraiture Today, National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC Lucas Artists Fellowship in Visual Arts, Montalvo Art Center, Saratoga, CA Master Artist Award, Kala Art Institute, Berkeley, CA
2017	Artist in Residence, Headlands Center for the Arts, Sausalito, CA Artist in Residence, Kala Art Institute, Berkeley, CA
2015	Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant, New York, NY
2003	Artist in Residence, Djerassi Resident Artists Program, Woodside, CA

Collections

Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, TX
Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA
Cantor Art Center at Stanford University, Stanford, CA
Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA
Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, MA
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX
National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, DC
Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA
Smithsonian Museum of American Art, Washington, DC
Spelman College Museum of Fine Art, Atlanta, GA
Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY
Art in Embassies Program, United States Embassy in Johannesburg, South Africa
University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, MI