

# CORCORAN

GALLERY OF ART • COLLEGE of ART + DESIGN

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kristin Guter, Vice President of Communications and Marketing,  
[kguter@corcoran.org](mailto:kguter@corcoran.org), (202) 639-1867  
Rachel Cothran, Manager of Public Relations,  
[rcothran@corcoran.org](mailto:rcothran@corcoran.org), (202) 639-1833  
Media Center: [www.corcoran.org/press](http://www.corcoran.org/press)

**CORCORAN PRESENTS HANK WILLIS THOMAS: *STRANGE FRUIT***  
*NEW body of work to debut alongside 30 Americans exhibition*  
**October 1, 2011–January 16, 2012**



Image: Hank Willis Thomas, *From Cain't See in the Mornin' til Cain't See at Night*, 2011.  
Digital C-print, 30 x 96 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY. © Hank Willis Thomas.

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — This fall, the **Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design** presents *Hank Willis Thomas: Strange Fruit*, a group of approximately 12 new photographs and video works by Hank Willis Thomas. In *Strange Fruit*, Thomas explores how the concepts of spectacle and display relate to notions of African American identity. Organized by the Corcoran and shown concurrently with the special exhibition *30 Americans* (October 1, 2011–February 12, 2012), *Strange Fruit* examines two forms of spectacle—the historic culture of lynchings and the commodification that surrounds professional sports—and analyzes their impact on the presentation and the perception of the black body.

Presenting contemporary representations of athletes alongside historic images of lynching victims, this provocative exhibition invites viewers to consider, remember, and question the transformation of black bodies into souvenirs and commercial objects. Thomas explores how disturbing historical images inform our present perceptions.

“*Strange Fruit* presents provocative new work by Hank Willis Thomas, a tough and thoughtful young artist working at the edge of contemporary practice,” said Chief Curator and Head of Research Philip Brookman, who organized the exhibition. “His images confront our sense of memory and history—both past and present—and they deal strongly with issues of racial identity and terror. One of the hallmarks of Hank's art is that he illuminates some of the things we do not want to see or remember and puts these in the context of what we already know, such as spectacle,

sports, and corporate ideology. In this way he pushes us to confront our own preconceptions about the world and reconsider them in new and enlightening ways.”

Two works from Thomas’s series *B@ANDED* will be on view in *30 Americans. Basketball and Chain, 2003*, and *Branded Head, 2003* draw upon the language of advertising to compare commodification of the African American male body during slavery and the presentation of African American sports stars today.



Hank Willis Thomas received his BFA from New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts and his MFA in photography along with an MA in visual criticism from California College of the Arts (CCA) in San Francisco. Thomas’s work has been featured in multiple publications, and his monograph, *Pitch Blackness*, was published by Aperture in 2008. He has exhibited extensively in galleries and museums throughout the U.S. and abroad, with recent exhibitions at the International Center of Photography, MoMA PS1, Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Baltimore Museum of Art. Thomas’s work is included in public collections such as the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, the Museum of Fine Art in Houston, and the Studio Museum in Harlem, NY. Thomas is represented by Jack Shainman Gallery in New York City.

The Corcoran will host a **personal appearance and lecture by Hank Willis Thomas on Monday, November 28, 2011 at 7 p.m.** in the Frances and Armand Hammer Auditorium. The lecture is part of the Corcoran’s FREE Visiting Artist series, which brings in artists, scholars, and critics to engage with students and other members of the Corcoran community. Each one-day visit includes intensive in-class interactions as well as a public lecture that highlights the visiting artist’s work and ideas. The Corcoran is proud to include several artists represented in *30 Americans* in this year’s Visiting Artist program. While admission is free, space is limited and pre-registration is encouraged. To register for this and other programs, please visit <http://www2.corcoran.org/30americans/related-programs-events>.

Normally closed on Mondays and Tuesdays, the Gallery will be open and FREE to the public on Monday, January 16, 2012 in celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

*Hank Willis Thomas: Strange Fruit* is made possible by a grant from Lodestar Fund.

### **ABOUT 30 AMERICANS**

Organized by the Rubell Family Collection, Miami, *30 Americans* (October 1, 2011–February 12, 2012) presents a wide-ranging survey of works by many of the most important African American artists of the last three decades. Reconceived for its presentation at the Corcoran, the exhibition focuses on issues of racial, sexual, and historical identity in contemporary culture, exploring the powerful influence of artistic legacy and community across generations.

*30 Americans* is organized by the Rubell Family Collection, Miami. The presenting sponsor at the Corcoran Gallery of Art is Altria Group. Additional support has been provided by Morgan Stanley Smith Barney. Generous support has been provided by American Express for the artist lectures associated with the *30 Americans* exhibition.

## **PRESS PREVIEW**

Media are invited to a press preview for *Hank Willis Thomas: Strange Fruit* and *30 Americans* on **September 28 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.** at the Corcoran, 500 Seventeenth St. N.W., Washington, DC. RSVP to [pr@corcoran.org](mailto:pr@corcoran.org) by September 23.

## **VISITOR INFORMATION**

The Corcoran's hours of operation are as follows: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; closed Monday and Tuesday. Admission to *Strange Fruit* is \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors (62+) and students (with valid ID), children 12 and under, military (with valid ID) and Corcoran Members enter for free. The Gallery will be open and FREE to the public on Monday, January 16, in celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

## **ABOUT THE CORCORAN**

**The Corcoran Gallery of Art**, a privately funded institution, was founded in 1869. It was America's first dedicated art museum and today is Washington's largest nonfederal museum of art. It is known internationally for its distinguished collection of historical and modern American art as well as contemporary art, photography, European painting, sculpture, and the decorative arts. In addition, a dynamic schedule of special exhibitions is complemented and enhanced by a range of educational programming, which together seek to enrich perspectives, support the local arts community, and encourage interpretation. **The Corcoran College of Art + Design** was founded in 1890 and stands as Washington's only four-year college of art and design, offering BFA degrees in Digital Media Design, Fine Art, Fine Art Photography, Graphic Design, Interior Design, and Photojournalism; a BA in Art Studies; a five-year Bachelor of Fine Arts/Master of Arts in Teaching (BFA/MAT); an AFA in Digital Media Design, Fine Art, Graphic Design, and Photography; and MA degrees in Art and the Book, Art Education, Exhibition Design, Interior Design, Master of Arts in Teaching, and New Media Photojournalism. The College's Continuing Education program offers part-time credit and non-credit classes for children and adults and draws more than 2,500 participants each year. For more information about the **Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design**, visit [www.corcoran.org](http://www.corcoran.org).



Hank Willis Thomas, *And One*, 2011. Digital C-print, 96 x 50 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY. © Hank Willis Thomas.

###