

PRINCE VARUGHESE THOMAS biography

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2019 *The Legacy of Narcissus*, Art Museum of Southeast Texas, Beaumont, Texas
The Light of Other Days, Hooks-Epstein Galleries, Houston, Texas
- 2017 *The Space Between Grief and Morning*, Art League Houston, Houston, Texas
- 2014 *Read All About It (Collective Reaction: 6 Solo Exhibitions)*, FotoFest 2014, Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston, Texas
Mediation, Wagner Sousa Modern Art, Galveston, Texas
- 2010 *On Joy, On Sorrow*, Houston Center for Photography, Houston, Texas
- 2009 *Interstitial Spaces*, Middleton-McMillan Gallery, The Light Factory, Charlotte, North Carolina
- 2006 *New Works*, The Art Studio, Inc., Beaumont, Texas
Blurred Boundaries, Gallery 101, Houston, Texas
- 2003 *Fashion Accessories*, FotoFest 2002, Vine Street Studios, Houston, Texas
Consumption, Lisa Gould and Prince V. Thomas, Clement Gallery, University of Toledo, Toledo, Ohio
- 2001 *New Works*, Central Illinois State College Gallery, Peoria, Illinois
- 1996 *Image as Word*, Project Row House, Houston, Texas

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2019 *Experimental Film & Video 2019*, CICA Museum, Gyeonggi-do, South Korea
Site Lines, Asia Society, Texas, Houston, Texas
- 2018 *India: Contemporary Photography & New Media Art*, FotoFest 2018, Houston, Texas
I Segnalati Rome, Palazzo Velli Exhibition Hall, Rome, Italy
- 2016 *Sixty*, Angus-Hughes Gallery, London, United Kingdom (Traveling)
What's Right, What's Left: Democracy in America, Phoenix Gallery, New York, New York
- 2015 *Sightlines*, Kendall College of Art & Design, Grand Rapids, Michigan
Center Forward, The Center for Fine Art Photography, Fort Collins, Colorado
Mess With Texas, Aurora Picture Show, Houston, Texas
Snap to Grid, Los Angeles Center for Digital Art, Los Angeles, California
- 2013 *Texas Biennial*, Blue Star Contemporary Art Museum, San Antonio, Texas
- 2012 *HX8*, Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston, Texas
Transcience, China House & Alliance Française de Penang, Penang, Malaysia
- 2011 *D'Arles Photographie 2011: The International Photography Festival* (Traveling)
Erasing Borders 2011: Contemporary Indian Art in the Diaspora, New York, New York (Traveling)
- 2010 *New Media, Sex, and Culture in the 21st Century*, Museum of New Art, Detroit, Michigan
Dislocation, Living Arts Center, Toronto, Canada
The Last Book, Zentral Bibliothek, Zurich, Switzerland (Traveling)
- 2007 *Elaine Joyce Grant Photography Exhibiton*, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas
Millions Taken Daily, University of Maine Museum of Art, Bangor, Maine

- 2006 *Red Beans and Rice: Asian Artists in the New South*, Eleanor D. Wilson Museum, Hollins University, Roanoke, Virginia (Traveling)
- 2004 *Refocusing the Image*, Art Institute of Denver, Denver Colorado
- 2003 *Altered States: Digital Art by Marc, Montoya, Moran, Nakagawa, and Thomas*, The Gallery at the University of Texas, Arlington, Arlington, Texas
- 2002 *Texas National*, Stephen F. Austin State University Gallery, Nacogdoches, Texas
- 2001 *Between the Border: New Forms of Identity*, SPACES Art Center, Cleveland, Ohio
- 2000 *44th Annual International Exhibition*, San Diego Art Institute, San Diego, California
- 1999 *2nd Annual National All Media Exhibition*, Touchstone Gallery, Washington, DC
True Stories: Fourteen Artists Exploring Photography, Arlington Museum of Art, Arlington, Texas
- 1998 *The Opening*, Oculus Gallery, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
- 1997 *International Show '97*, New Jersey Center for Visual Arts, Summit, New Jersey
- 1996 *Houston Area Show*, Blaffer Gallery, Houston, Texas
Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition, Blaffer Gallery, Houston, Texas
- 1995 *Cultural Baggage*, Rice University Media Center Gallery, Houston, Texas

SELECTED AWARDS & GRANTS

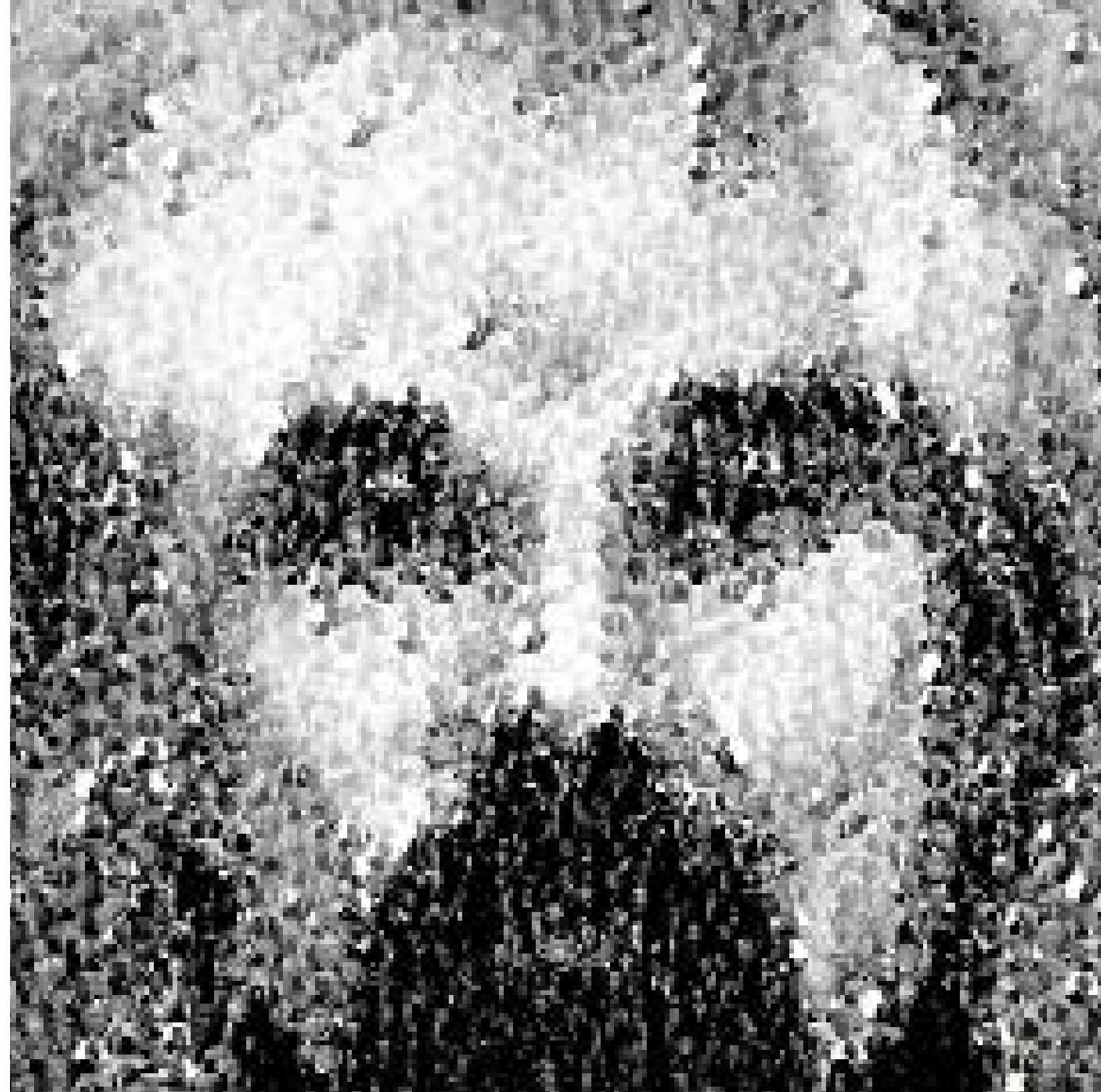
- 2018 Artists and Creative Individuals Grant Recipient, Houston Arts Alliance, Houston, Texas
- 2017 Joan Mitchell Foundation Emergency Artists Grant, New York, New York
Texas Artists Strong Grant, Houston, Texas
- 2015 Art Prize 7, Time-Based Media, Jurors Selection, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- 2013 Faculty Development Leave Grant, Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas
- 2009 Houston Center for Photography, Carol Crow Memorial Fellowship Award, Houston, Texas
Faculty Development Leave Grant, Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas
- 2000 Merit Award, Artwired International - in conjunction with FotoFest 2000
First Place Award, Works On Paper 2000: Recent Drawings, Prints And Photographs, LSU Union Art Gallery; Baton Rouge, Louisiana
- 1999 Emerging Artist Fellowship Grant, Cultural Arts Council of Greater Houston and Harris County, Texas

PUBLIC ART PROJECTS

- 2019 George Bush Intercontinental Airport, United Airlines Terminal, Houston, Texas
- 2016 City of Houston, Wayfinding Project, Houston, Texas



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The Legacy of Narcissus

PRINCE VARUGHESE THOMAS

On view September 22 - December 1, 2019

PRINCE THOMAS: THE VIRTUES OF VARIOUSNESS

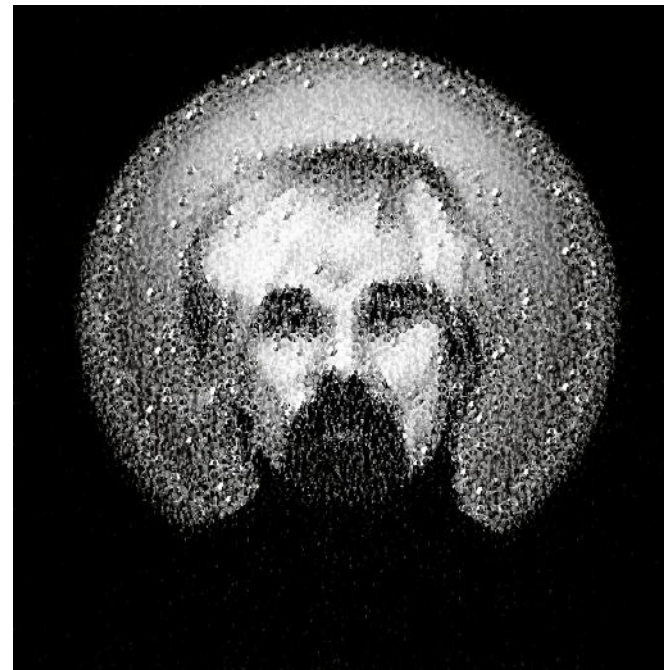
In its impressive range of mediums and formats (video, drawing, text art, photography, interactive audio installation, photomontage) and in its equally expansive and inclusive scope of subject matter (identity in all its complexity, war, mourning, landscape, current politics), the work of Prince Thomas reminds us that the practice and function of art, the job description of “artist,” are very much in flux. While his work is keenly aware of art-historical precedents, and, in fact, is constantly finding ways to connect with art history, he has developed a practice that is emphatically contemporary. Much of the work in “The Legacy of Narcissus,” for instance, is concerned with the impact of social media on our society, and in previous work Thomas has often zeroed-in on the impact of journalism (as in a series of striking videos about how CNN and the 24-hour news cycle emerged via spectacular coverage of the First Gulf War).

Like a number of other contemporary artists (Trevor Paglen, Hito Steyerl and Paul Chan come to mind), Thomas configures the artist as a skeptical media observer, an analyst of communications systems, a watchdog over the more insidious forms of manipulation and propaganda. Of course, there have long been artists who criticized their society through satire and protest, from Goya to Käthe Kollwitz to Nancy Spero, but Thomas belongs to a new kind of artist, elaborated from a model that emerged in the wake of postmodernism. Not defined by any specific medium, finding their subject matter across the media landscape, these artists arose in tandem with the evolution of the personal computer, cable television, the internet, cellular phones and social media.

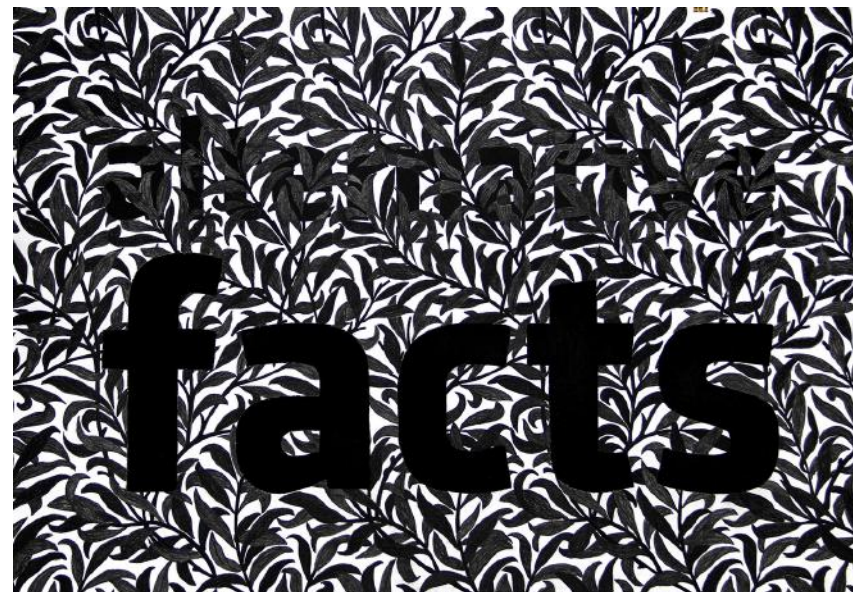


Portrait of Liza Koshy, from *Masters of the Universe* series, 2019, pigment print on photo rag paper, 20 x 20 in., Loan Courtesy of the Artist and Hooks-Epstein Galleries

So, what are we to make of Thomas’s frequent conflation of past and present? In the present exhibition, examples of this strategy can be seen in the marriage of Old Master paintings and YouTube stars in *Masters of the Universe*, and in the melding of William Morris wallpaper designs and statements from the Trump Administration in *What Are Words For*. At first it might seem as if Thomas is using the past to draw a contrast between the serious artistic achievements of history and the debased, commercialized, instant language of today’s digital technology. But his transhistorical perspective could also be seen as arguing for continuity, and maybe even equivalency, between past and present. By his own account, Thomas does not intend any value judgment in his juxtapositions of old and new, nor in his works on political themes. Rather, he prefers to leave such conclusions to his viewers. He is an artist who points to things rather than preaches about them.



Untitled-2, from *Famous to Infamous in 15 Minutes*, 2019, pigment print on aluminum, 40 x 40 in., Loan Courtesy of the Artist and Hooks-Epstein Galleries



Alternative Facts, from *What Are Words For* series, 2019, charcoal drawing on stonehenge paper, 30 x 44 in., Loan Courtesy of the Artist and Hooks-Epstein Galleries

When asked about the variousness of his practice, Thomas points to his background as an Indian national who was born in Kuwait and then became a naturalized U.S. citizen. He also cites his university studies, which encompassed philosophy, history and computer science, eventually leading to a degree in psychology (he only discovered art by chance during his final semester as an undergraduate). In interesting ways, Thomas’s multi-national, multi-disciplinary background makes him ideally suited to be a contemporary artist. His practice is nomadic and adaptive. As he explained to me in a recent email, “the idea dictates the material that I use to make an artwork or what medium is best to translate an idea.”

Of course, this flexibility has everything to do with how innovative technologies are constantly eroding traditional boundaries between mediums, and giving birth to new forms of communication. And yet, Thomas is very far from being a technophile artist. Perhaps aware of the cautionary tale of the Italian Futurists whose mania for the new led them into the arms of Mussolini, Thomas hasn’t succumbed to the seductive promise, the sheer excitement, of technology; he is as likely to pick up a stick of charcoal as he is to type away at a laptop keyboard. First and foremost, Thomas is an artist who proceeds without preconceptions, and it’s in that spirit that we must come to his work.

Raphael Rubinstein, September 2019

Raphael Rubinstein is a New York-based poet and art critic

Front: *Untitled-2*, from *Famous to Infamous in 15 Minutes*, (detail), 2019, pigment print on aluminum, 40 x 40 in., Loan Courtesy of the Artist and Hooks-Epstein Galleries

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