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Robert Fishko, *Director*

Michael C. Thorpe

(b. 1993)

American

Michael C. Thorpe tells stories about his world in quilts composed with colorful geometric fabric shapes and textures made of stitched lines and in boldly colored paper collages. Thorpe's painterly quilts transport us into the richly diverse community he inhabits – recalling his time playing competitive basketball, his friends, family, inspirational figures – and endeavors to prompt a dialogue between people from all walks of life. In his art, Thorpe presents communities that live together harmoniously and with a generosity of spirit.

An emerging young artist, Thorpe came to quilting as an artistic vehicle connecting him to his bi-racial background. Quilting is a skill passed on intergenerationally by the matriarchs of Thorpe's family who were part of the predominantly white quilting community in New England. Thorpe's subsequent discovery of the Gee's Bend community of African American women quilters in Alabama offered the Artist deeper personal meaning in his chosen medium and a connection to his African American lineage.



Thorpe's compositions draw inspiration from Jean-Michel Basquiat's forms, Romare Bearden's experimental collages and Jacob Lawrence's abstracted depictions of black life. His interest in paring down form to a minimum and in using color as a fundamental descriptive element draws parallels to the work of Jonas Wood and David Hockney. Thorpe's figurative work is ingenious and uniquely contemporary.

Michael C. Thorpe was raised in Newton, MA and earned his BA from Emerson College in Boston, MA where he studied photojournalism. Before his first solo exhibition, Thorpe attracted the attention of NPR, who wrote an article about his story and dedication to creating art in the medium of quilting. Press articles about Michael C. Thorpe have been published in *Artscope Magazine*, *Boston Art Review*, *The Boston Globe*, *CNN Style*, *Cultured Magazine*, *Howl*, and *PBS*, among

others. Thorpe was recently featured in a Dove Men + Care television commercial and he participated in a collaboration with Nike and the NBA for the league's 75th anniversary.

Works by Michael C. Thorpe have been added to the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and numerous private collections around the country. Thorpe is included in *Storied Strings: The Guitar in American Art*, an exhibition organized by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, that opened in October 2022 and will travel to the Frist Art Museum in Nashville. His work is included in *Fabric of a Nation: American Quilt Stories*, organized and first presented at the MFA Boston and opening on November 17, 2022 at the Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles, CA. His work will also be featured in group exhibitions at The Textile Museum, The George Washington University Museum, Washington, D.C. and the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, NY in 2023. Michael C. Thorpe will have one man shows at the Fuller Craft Museum in Brockton, MA and the Paul R. Jones Museum, University of Alabama in 2024.