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Absolut Art Bureau, the unit within The Absolut Company responsible for global art initiatives, is pleased to announce a collaboration with Brooklyn-based artist Mickalene Thomas on a large-scale art bar installation that will be in operation during Art Basel's show in Basel (June 13 – 16, 2013).

The ambitious installation, *Better Days*, will transform the Galerie at Volkshaus, in downtown Basel, into an immersive art experience for the duration of the show. It is inspired by a theatrical play 'Put a Little Sugar in my Bowl' and parties hosted by Thomas's mother in the late '70s.

*Better Days* will present a nightly programme curated by Mickalene Thomas, including live performances and appearances by guest DJs. The bar will serve bespoke ABSOLUT cocktails designed by the artist in keeping with the installation's theme.

*"We are thrilled with Mickalene Thomas's plans for Better Days. She has developed an incredibly ambitious and immersive concept. From celebrity guest DJs spinning '70s classics to a bespoke range of punches and cocktails, Better Days will give visitors a truly unique experience."*

**Jonas Tählin, Vice President Marketing, The Absolut Company**

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#### **BETTER DAYS: AN ART BAR INSTALLATION BY MICKALENE THOMAS**

Mickalene Thomas will transform the Galerie at Volkshaus, Basel into an apartment environment that takes its inspiration from the parties hosted by her mother and long-time muse in the late '70s.

*Better Days* is Mickalene Thomas's literal and conceptual reconstruction of the 1970s domestic aesthetic, complete with faux wood panelling and wallpaper as well as custom sofas reupholstered with the artist's signature textiles. Each evening, Thomas will introduce guest and resident DJ performers, including DJ YSL, Derrick Adams and Simon de Pury, who will emulate the disco soundtracks of her mother's parties. Among the guest performers will be local jazz musicians, as well as Solange Knowles, the internationally-renowned recording artist who has collaborated with Thomas on several recent creative projects.

Mickalene Thomas is a multi-media artist best-known for her elaborate acrylic and enamel paintings with rhinestones. The African-American women in her provocative images are recast in the nostalgic glamour of her '70s childhood, in settings reminiscent of the odalisque from the 19<sup>th</sup> century paintings, and the film genre Blaxploitation. Much of Thomas's work explores conventional definitions of beauty, informed and inspired by her study of art history. Her paintings are influenced by a variety of iconic sources, from Edouard Manet and Henri Matisse to Romare Bearden and the 19<sup>th</sup> century Hudson River School, as well as Pop Art.

*Better Days*, on view during Art Basel, will expand on Thomas's recent series of work. In these installations, Thomas creates domestic interiors which bring to life the 1970s scenery of suburban living rooms, which also appear in her two-dimensional works. Thomas' installations are stylish reproductions wood panel-clad living rooms, coupled with swathes of psychedelic patterned textiles, blocks of colour, and collages of her personal photographs. Each of her interiors amounts to a self-portrait executed through historic décor.

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## ABSOLUT ART BUREAU AND ART BASEL CONVERSATIONS

Absolut Art Bureau is Associate Partner of Art Basel. In addition to presenting art bar installations during Art Basel's shows in Basel, Miami Beach, and Hong Kong, Absolut Art Bureau is a presenting partner of Art Basel Conversations. Conversations is a dynamic talks program that brings together leading experts from across the visual arts field, including artists, museum directors, curators, collectors, gallery directors and critics, to discuss some of today's most important issues in the global art market and the wider art community.

One of the guiding aspirations of the Absolut Art Bureau is to nurture artistic discourse and provide a forum for ideas that are relevant to the art world and to society at large. The Absolut Art Bureau makes these discussions widely accessible through digital platforms. Videos of current and past Conversations are available at [www.absolutartbureau.com](http://www.absolutartbureau.com) and [www.artbasel.com](http://www.artbasel.com).

Further details of the Conversations program at Art Basel will be announced in May 2013.

## Notes to Editors

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### ***Better Days***

*Better Days* will be open daily from June 11 – 15, 2013, from 6PM – 1AM, and will serve bespoke ABSOLUT cocktails designed by Mickalene Thomas. Located at the Galerie, Volkshaus, Rebgeasse 12, *Better Days* is in close proximity to Art Basel's exhibition halls. Entry is free, however, occasional restrictions on access will apply during private VIP events. Please note that the capacity of *Better Days* is limited, so a guestlist policy may be in effect during busy periods. Guests 18 years and older are welcome.

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### **Mickalene Thomas**

Mickalene Thomas was born in Camden, New Jersey, USA, in 1971. She earned a BFA in painting at Pratt Institute, in 2000, and a MFA at the Yale University School of Art in 2002. Thomas has exhibited extensively in solo and group exhibitions, including "Americans Now" at the National Portrait Gallery, Washington D.C.; "The Global Africa Project" at the Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY (both 2010); "Mama Bush: One of a Kind Two" at the Hara Museum, Tokyo, Japan; "30 Americans" at the Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C. (both 2011); and "Origin of the Universe," a solo exhibition at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, CA and the Brooklyn Museum, NY (both 2012). Thomas's work can be found in many significant public and private collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum

of American Art, the Rubell Collection in Miami, Florida, and the American Art Museum, Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Mickalene Thomas lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She is represented by Lehmann Maupin in New York and Hong Kong and Susanne Vielmetter for Los Angeles-based projects.

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### Absolut Art Bureau

Absolut Art Bureau is the unit within The Absolut Company responsible for global art initiatives. The first spirit brand to forge genuinely close ties with art and artists, ABSOLUT has been active in the art world since 1985, when it invited Andy Warhol to create the first in a series of iconic advertisements inspired by the ABSOLUT bottle. Since then, ABSOLUT has collaborated with more than 500 artists on over 800 commissioned projects. Today, ABSOLUT supports acclaimed artists, art writers, and institutions in their efforts to present new works, stimulate ideas, bring people together, and broaden access to creativity.

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### Absolut Art Bureau and Art Basel

Absolut Art Bureau is Associate Partner of Art Basel and a presenting partner of Art Basel Conversations. This multi-year partnership was launched at Art Basel in Switzerland in 2012. *Better Days* is the fifth in a series of art bar installations which continue and expand upon The Absolut Company's 30-year commitment to nurturing artistic creativity.

Absolut Art Bureau's collaboration with Mickalene Thomas during Art Basel follows collaborations with Jeremy Shaw on *The Kirlian* at Art Basel in Switzerland in June 2012; with Ryan Gander and Mario Garcia Torres on *Absolut Maybe* at dOCUMENTA (13); and with Los Carpinteros on *Guiro* at Art Basel in Miami Beach in December 2012. At the inaugural edition of Art Basel in Hong Kong in May, Absolut Art Bureau will collaborate with Adrian Wong to present *Wun Dun*, an art bar installation at the Fringe Club, in Central, Hong Kong.

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### Absolut Art Award

In 2012, Absolut Art Bureau announced a new format for the Absolut Art Award, which will now provide recognition and project funding not only for artists but also for art writers. The 2013 award jury is led by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, former Artistic Director of dOCUMENTA (13). The winners will be announced at a ceremony in Stockholm on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2013, in conjunction with a series of art events in Stockholm. Please visit [www.absolutartbureau.com](http://www.absolutartbureau.com) for additional information.

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### Art Basel

Art Basel stages the world's premier art shows for modern and contemporary works, sited in Basel, Miami Beach and Hong Kong. Defined by its host city and region, each show is unique, which is reflected in its participating galleries, artworks presented, and the content of parallel programming produced in collaboration with local institutions for each edition. In addition to ambitious stands featuring leading galleries from around the globe, each show's singular exhibition sectors spotlight the latest developments in the visual arts, offering visitors new ideas, new inspiration, and new contacts in the art world. Please visit [www.artbasel.com](http://www.artbasel.com) for additional information.

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### Press contacts

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