



*Hair Portrait #20*, 2014, Mickalene Thomas, American, born 1971, plastic rhinestones and acrylic on panel (30 panels), overall height: 90 in. (228.6cm) by Overall width: 300 in. (762cm), each panel 30 x 30 in., General Acquisition Fund, 2015.9. © Mickalene Thomas

### About the art and artist

*"To see yourself, and for others to see you, is a form of validation. I'm interested in that very mysterious and mystical way we relate to each other in the world."* - Mickalene Thomas

Mickalene Thomas is a Black queer contemporary artist born in Camden, New Jersey. Thomas creates colorful and lustrous paintings, collages, photography, videos, and installations and uses many different materials like paint, pictures, colorful patterns, and rhinestones for her large scale paintings. Her art explores subjects like identity, race, gender, and beauty and what it means to be different, unique, and powerful. She takes inspiration from history and pop culture and creates portraits of women of color in powerful positions, seen from a woman's point of view.

This work of art is part of a series called *Hair Portrait*, which celebrates Black women, who were often left out of famous Western paintings and art movements. Taking inspiration from pop artist Andy Warhol, Mickalene uses image repetition of a single person and in this case turns the subject into a dazzling and glamorous icon. This work of art is all about hair and how it can be a form of expression and individuality for Black women. The portrait is repeated thirty times, each time using different colors and shades for subtle variations.

## Art Activity | Sparkling Icons

Mickalene Thomas' work promotes inclusion, representation, and diversity and celebrates the beauty of being different and unique. Pick one of the LGBTQIA+ icons to create a sparkling collage that celebrates these powerful activists and artists!

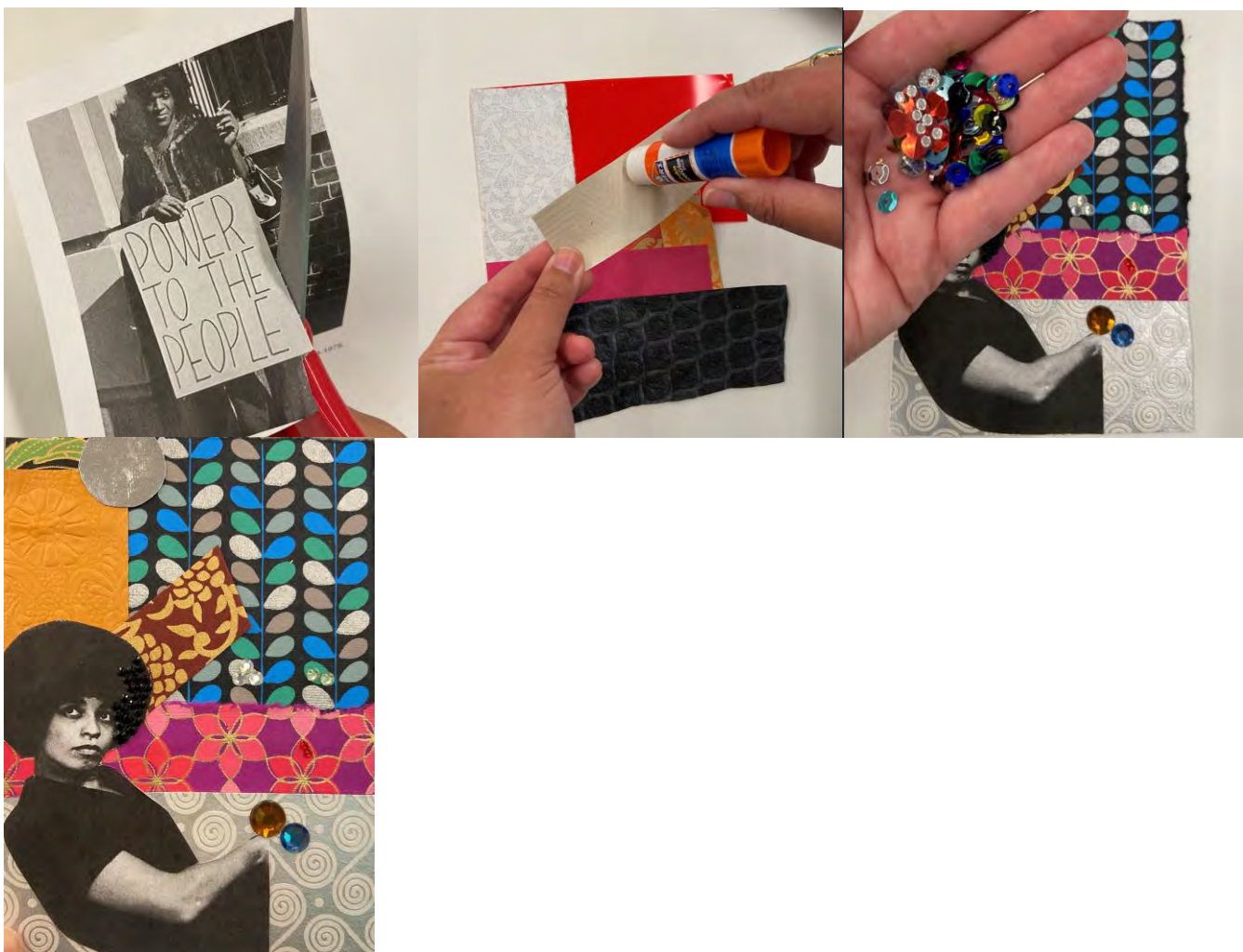
**Materials** scissors, glue, patterned paper, rhinestones, a sturdy piece of paper or cardboard for your background, and your favorite LGBTQIA+ icon image

**Step 1 | Pick your icon** and cut its outline. Then pick your favorite patterned papers.

**Step 2 | Collage your background** Use the patterned paper to create a fun and colorful background of your choice. You cut the paper into shapes, overlap it, cut it, rip it, up to you!

**Step 3 | Glue it** Use the glue stick to glue your background to your board. Then glue your icon on top of the background

**Step 4 | Sparkle it** Add rhinestones to your work of art. You may choose to add rhinestones to the hair, clothing, background, or anywhere you'd like!





Additional works of art by Mickalene Thomas that inspired this activity



Photo: © Mickalene Thomas / Courtesy of the artist / Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

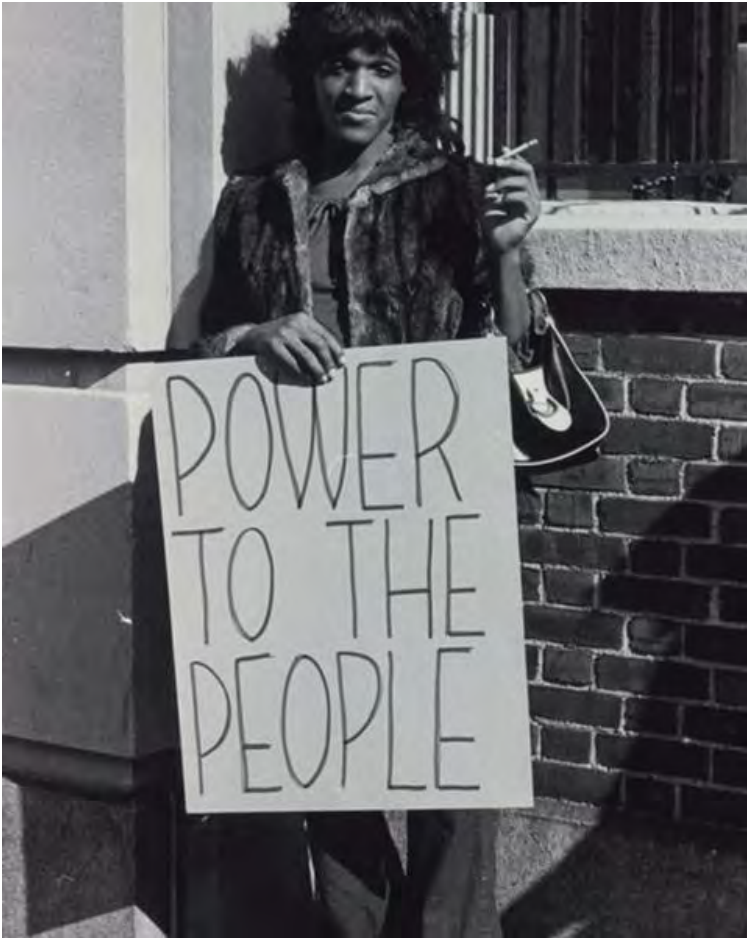


Mickalene Thomas, *Portrait of Mnonja*, 2010, rhinestones, acrylic, and enamel on wood panel, 96 × 120 in. (243.8 × 304.8 cm), Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase through the Luisita L. and Franz H. Denghausen Endowment, 2011.16, © 2010, Mickalene Thomas

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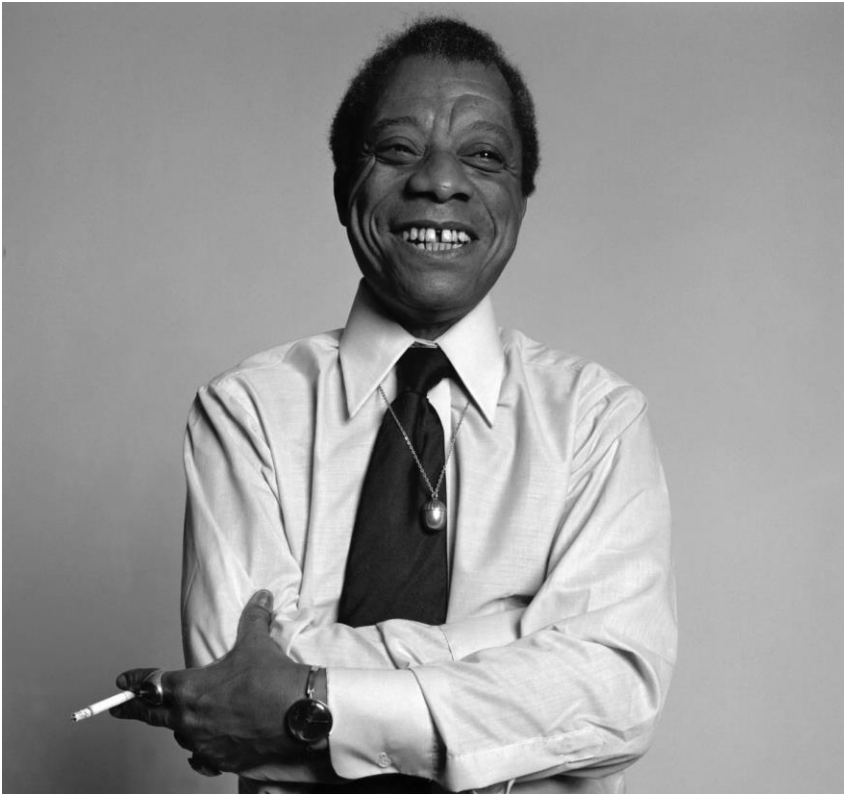
Marsha protests Bellevue Hospital's treatment of street people/LGBTQ. By Diana Davies, 1968-1975.

**Marsha P. Johnson** was one of the most prominent figures of the gay rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s in New York City. Always sporting a smile, Johnson was an important advocate for homeless LGBTQ+ youth, those affected by H.I.V. and AIDS, and gay and transgender rights.



The poet and activist Audre Lorde. PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT ALEXANDER / GETTY

Poet, author, and activist **Audre Lorde** used her writing to shine light on her experience of the world as a Black lesbian woman and later, as a mother and person suffering from cancer. A prominent member of the women's and LGBTQ rights movements, her writings called attention to the multifaceted nature of identity and the ways in which people from different walks of life could grow stronger together.



Photograph by Anthony Barboza / Getty

**James Baldwin** (1924 – 1987) was an American, an author, a fierce civil and social rights critic, and ultimately, a gay rights inspirationalist. As a novelist, he brought to light the challenges, social aspects, and complexities blacks, gays, and bisexual men had to face at the time, as well as the internal struggles that these groups faced for acceptance.





**Angela Davis**

Angela Davis (b. 1944) is an American political activist, professor, and author who was an active member in the Communist Party and the Black Panther Party.



"Hell hath no fury like a drag queen scorned." --Sylvia Rivera

A veteran of the 1969 Stonewall Inn uprising, **Sylvia Rivera** was a tireless advocate for those silenced and disregarded by larger movements. Throughout her life, she fought against the exclusion of transgender people, especially transgender people of color, from the larger movement for gay rights.





**RuPaul Andre Charles** (b. 1960) is an American actor, model, singer, songwriter, television personality, and author. Best known for producing, hosting, and judging the Emmy Award winning show, *RuPaul's Drag Race*, he has been dubbed the "Queen of Drag."



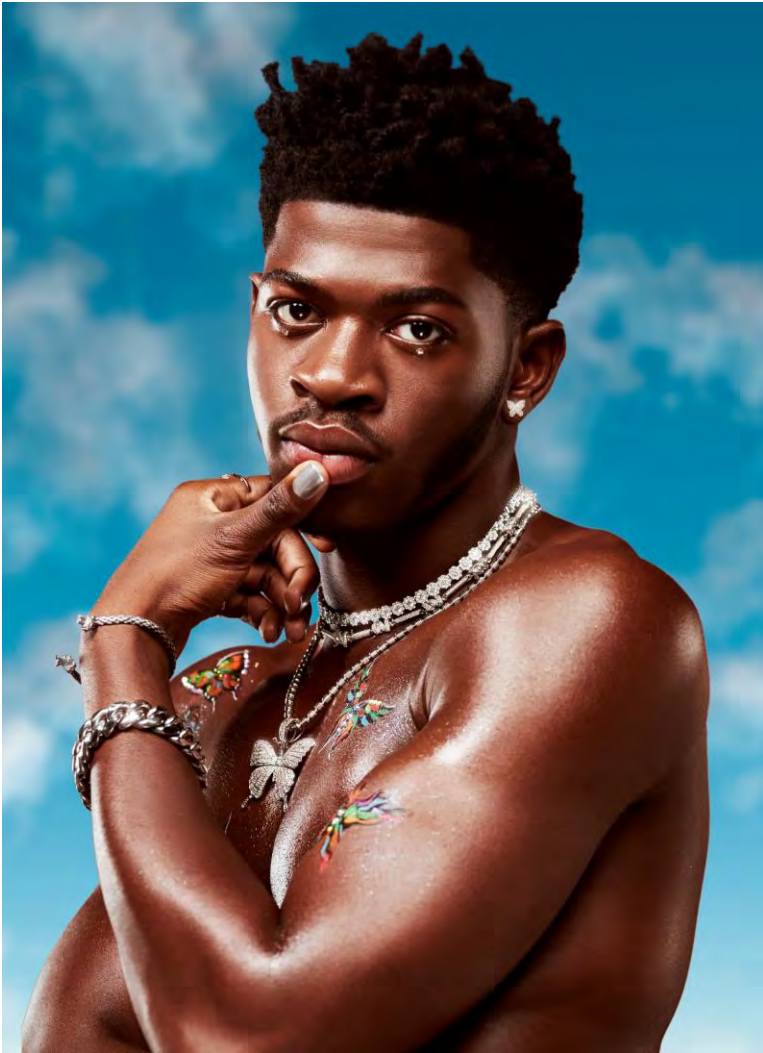
**Megan Rapinoe** is a star soccer player and Olympic gold medalist who was named FIFA's Women's World Player of the Year, in addition to winning two World Cup titles in 2019. Rapinoe was one of the first soccer players to announce she was gay and has spoken out about the need for racial justice, equal pay and LGBTQIA+ rights.



Photography by *Albert Sanchez*

**Margaret Cho** is an Asian American comedian, actress, LGBT social activist, and musician. She is known for her stand-up routines, through which she critiques social and political problems, especially regarding race and sexuality. Her stance against bullying and discrimination earned her a GLAAD Golden Gate Award for enhancing the understanding, advocacy and visibility of the LGBT community.





Photography by Charlotte Rutherford

Montero Lamar Hill, known by his stage name of **Lil Nas X** is an American singer, songwriter, rapper. Hit songs include 'Old Town Road', which won the VMA Song of the Year (2019), being the first LGBTQ artist to receive the award. Recipient of the Country Music Award (CMA) Musical Event of the Year (2019), making him the first black gay man to win a CMA award.





PHOTOGRAPHY BY EMMA MCINTYRE/GETTY IMAGES FOR MTV

**Michaela Jaé Rodriguez** is an American actress and singer who became the first transgender woman to earn an Emmy Award nomination and win a Golden Globe Award. In her acceptance speech on Instagram she declared, "This is for the LGBTQAI, Black, Latina, Asian, the many multi beautiful colors of the rainbow around the freaking world. This is not just for me, this is for y'all. There are going to be so many young individuals — young, talented thriving individuals — that are going to be able to trail in and storm in through the door."