

Aimia Inc.

Hank Willis Thomas wins 2017 Aimia | AGO Photography Prize

TORONTO, Dec. 4, 2017 /CNW Telbec/ - The **Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO)** and **Aimia** are pleased to announce the winner of the **2017 Aimia | AGO Photography Prize**. On the 10th anniversary of Canada's most significant award for photography, **Hank Willis Thomas** was chosen by public vote to receive C\$50,000. Runners-up **Liz Johnson Artur** (Ghana/Russia), **Raymond Boisjoly** (Haida Nation/Canada) and **Taisuke Koyama** (Japan) will each receive \$5,000 to support their photography practices.

Developed through an innovative partnership between the AGO and Aimia, a Montreal-based global leader in data-driven marketing and loyalty analytics, the **Aimia | AGO Photography Prize** is internationally renowned, recognizing Canadian and international contemporary artists whose work has exhibited extraordinary potential over the preceding five years.

Hank Willis Thomas, of the United States, is a multidisciplinary contemporary African-American visual artist, photographer and arts educator, working primarily with themes related to identity, history and popular culture. He has exhibited throughout the U.S. and internationally including the International Center of Photography, Public Art Fund and The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. His work can be found in numerous public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Thomas' monograph, *Pitch Blackness*, was published by Aperture in 2008. He received a MFA/MA in Photography and Visual Criticism from the California College of Arts. Thomas is represented by Jack Shainman Gallery in New York City and Goodman Gallery in South Africa.

"On behalf of the AGO, I congratulate Hank Willis Thomas and all of the shortlisted artists," said **Stephan Jost**, the AGO's Michael and Sonja Koerner Director and CEO. "I also thank the voters, who each took the time to vote for an artist whose work spoke to them personally. Offering our public the opportunity to deeply engage with art is core to our mission."

"Congratulations to Hank Willis Thomas and all the shortlisted artists on their incredible achievements and contributions to contemporary photography on an international stage," said Vince Timpano, President, Coalitions, Aimia. "Thank you for sharing with us your compelling visions and ideas, and engaging us in new perspectives of the world we live in."

The **Aimia | AGO Photography Prize Exhibition**, featuring works by all four finalists, is on view now at the AGO and remains open until **January 14, 2018**. It can also be viewed online at the [Prize website](#).

The shortlist for the Prize, announced on July 25, 2017, was selected by a jury headed by **Sophie Hackett**, the AGO's Curator of Photography and curator of this exhibition, and included **Ken Lum**, artist, professor and Chair of the Fine Arts Department at the University of Pennsylvania; and **Eva Respini**, the Barbara Lee Chief Curator at the ICA Boston.

In celebration of the 10th year of the Prize, a commemorative publication has been produced, telling the story of the Aimia | AGO Photography Prize over the past decade. The book will showcase the extraordinary work of nominees of the Prize, explore its scholarships and residencies, and celebrate the impact the Prize has had over 10 years. The book is available now at [shopAGO](#).

ABOUT THE AIMIA | AGO PHOTOGRAPHY PRIZE

Over the last 10 years, the **Aimia | AGO Photography Prize** recognized and developed the best in Canadian and international contemporary photography and helped to foster the next generation of artists. The Prize has comprised an annual exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario, an online exhibition at [AimiaAGOPhotographyPrize.com](#), a range of public programming and a national scholarship program. It has included awards of \$50,000 to the winner, \$5,000 to each of the three runners-up, \$7,000 to each of three scholarship winners and \$1,000 to each of their respective schools.

Previous winners of the Prize include German artist Ursula Schulz-Dornburg (2016), Americans Dave Jordano (2015) and Lisa Oppenheim (2014), Canada's Erin Shirreff (2013), Britain's Jo Longhurst (2012), Gauri Gill of India (2011), Canadian Kristan Horton (2010), Marco Antonio Cruz of Mexico (2009) and Canadian Sarah Anne Johnson (2008).

For further details on the shortlisted artists and additional information, please visit [AimiaAGOPhotographyPrize.com](#) and follow

[@AimiaAGOPrize](#) on Twitter.

ABOUT AIMIA

Aimia, a data-driven marketing and loyalty analytics company, has adopted two fundamental principles of loyalty, trust and reciprocity, as the pillars of its global social purpose — to create mutually beneficial partnerships that leave a lasting impact in our communities. As an enthusiastic patron of the Arts, Aimia has supported many Canadian and International arts and culture initiatives through donations, sponsorships and employee volunteer activities. Aimia has supported several Canadian cultural organizations including the Art Gallery of Ontario, Art Canada Institute, Business for the Arts, Canadian Art Foundation, the National Gallery of Canada, Luminato Festival and the Walrus Foundation. Aimia is proud to engage in a dialogue around the arts through the Aimia | AGO Photography Prize and scholarship program, and through our office art installations in Montreal and Toronto. Visit us at www.aimia.com to learn more.

ABOUT THE AGO

Located in Toronto, Canada's largest city of 6.5 million, the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) is one of the largest art museums in North America. The AGO's collection of close to 95,000 works ranges from cutting-edge contemporary art such as *Untitled* by Pierre Huyghe to European masterpieces such as Peter Paul Rubens's *The Massacre of The Innocents*; from the vast collection by the Group of Seven to works by established and emerging Indigenous Canadian artists; with a photography collection that tracks the impact of the medium with deep holdings of works by artists such as Garry Winogrand and Diane Arbus; and with focused collections in Gothic boxwood miniatures and Western and Central African art. Drawing on this collection—as well as collaborations with museums around the world—the AGO presents wide-ranging exhibitions and programs, taking special care to showcase diverse and underrepresented artists. A major expansion designed by Frank Gehry in 2008 with lead support from the family of Ken Thomson makes the AGO a highly-photographed architectural landmark. Visit ago.ca to learn more.

The Art Gallery of Ontario is funded in part by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Additional operating support is received from the City of Toronto, the Canada Council for the Arts and generous contributions from AGO members, donors and private-sector partners.

The AGO acknowledges the generous support of **Aimia**, Signature Partner of the Photography Collection Program and Founding Partner of the Aimia | AGO Photography Prize.

SOURCE AIMIA

For further information: For media inquiries, images or interview requests, please contact: Blair Mlotek, Arts & Communications, blair@acteam.ca; Dianna Lai Read, Aimia, Dianna.lai@aimia.com; Samantha Chater, Art Gallery of Ontario, Samantha_Chater@ago.net

<https://aimia.mediaroom.com/2017-12-04-Hank-Willis-Thomas-wins-2017-Aimia-AGO-Photography-Prize,1>