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SITES UNSEEN TO LAUNCH *LOVE OVER RULES* HANK WILLIS THOMAS' FIRST PERMANENT PUBLIC ARTWORK IN SAN FRANCISCO

October 27, 2017 — San Francisco, CA — Sites Unseen is pleased to announce the unveiling of *LOVE OVER RULES*, New York-based artist **Hank Willis Thomas' first permanent public artwork in San Francisco**. The large-scale animated text-based neon artwork is Sites Unseen's third public art project and will be installed on The Salma Family Building at 165 Jessie Street, in an alley close to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in the downtown Yerba Buena neighborhood. On **Thursday, November 9**, the artwork will be illuminated for the first time following a public artist talk at the California Historical Society. Thomas, who graduated from the California College of the Arts' MFA program in 2004, has deep ties to the city and local culture.

"I grew up in a family where love overruled," said Thomas. "My cousin, Songha Willis, was murdered in Philadelphia in 2000. A month after he died, I found a recording of the incident, and his last words were 'love over rules.' It is especially meaningful for me to present this work in collaboration with Sites Unseen and the Yerba Buena Community Benefit District because my first outdoor public installation was in the Yerba Buena neighborhood over a decade ago."

Starting at 6PM, Thomas will give a presentation about this project and his practice in conversation with Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Chief of Program and Pedagogy at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, at a free public event at the California Historical Society, located at 678 Mission Street, adjacent to the installation. AT 7PM, the public is invited to join Thomas in Annie Street for remarks by former SF Mayor Willie Brown and the inaugural illumination of the artwork, followed by a reception at Gallery Wendi Norris, located at 161 Jessie Street.

"We are very excited to be working with Hank to produce an artwork that resonates so deeply for so many, especially at this particularly tumultuous time in history," said Jessica Shaefer, Sites Unseen project director. "The message *Love Over Rules* is one that we encourage audiences to take to heart and share widely. Our hope is that Hank's piece will serve as a beacon in the Yerba Buena neighborhood, sending a powerful message to residents, workers, and visitors alike."

"We are presenting the work during the 50th anniversary of San Francisco's Summer of Love, at a time when the world needs a strong reminder that loves overrules all else," said Dorka Keehn, Sites Unseen co-founder and San Francisco Arts Commissioner.

ABOUT HANK WILLIS THOMAS

Hank Willis Thomas is a conceptual artist working primarily with themes related to identity, history and popular culture. His work has been exhibited throughout the U.S. and abroad, and is included in numerous public collections including the Museum of Modern Art New York, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, among others. His collaborative projects include *Question Bridge: Black Males*, *In Search of The Truth (The Truth Booth)*, and *For Freedoms*, the first artist-run super PAC. Thomas received a BFA in Photography and Africana studies from New York University and a MFA/MA in Photography and Visual Criticism from the California College of Arts. Thomas lives and works in New York City.

ABOUT SITES UNSEEN

Sites Unseen believes that art and artists have the power to shape society and that public art does more than beautify; it stimulates dialogue and participation across cultures. Through a series of creative place making initiatives, Sites Unseen is bringing arts programming to under-used alleys in the downtown Yerba Buena neighborhood of San Francisco in the form of permanent and temporary art installations and activations. The project — supported by individual donations and private funders including the Bently Foundation, the Kenneth Rainin Foundation, the VIA Art Fund, and the Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation, among others — aims to transform these areas into thriving cultural destinations for diverse audiences. Sites Unseen is a fiscally sponsored project of the nonprofit Yerba Buena Community Benefit District, which supports quality of life improvements in the neighborhood. Learn more at sitesunseen.org.
