



## Hank Willis Thomas: Pitch Blackness

*Rene de Guzman, Robin Kelley*

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Hank Willis Thomas gained wide recognition with his highly provocative series *B(r)ANDED*, which addresses the commodification of African-American male identity by raising questions about visual culture and the power of logos. *Pitch Blackness*, his first monograph, includes selections from this series and several others. The book begins with a deeply personal and interpretive re-telling of the senseless murder of young Songha Willis, the artist's cousin, who was robbed at gunpoint and murdered outside a nightclub in Philadelphia in 2000. It then charts Hank Willis Thomas' career as he grapples with the issues of grief, black-on-black violence in America and the ways in which corporate culture is complicit in the crises of black male identity. The concluding section presents his newest body of work, *Unbranded*--in which he examines advertising and media representation of African-Americans. With his characteristic pointedness and dark humor, Willis Thomas shows in *Pitch Blackness* why he is considered one of today's most compelling emerging artists. Essays by Rene de Guzman and Robin D. G. Kelley.

**Hank Willis Thomas**, born in Plainfield, New Jersey in 1976, received his BFA from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and his MFA in Photography, along with an MA in Visual Criticism from the California College of the Arts, San Francisco. He has exhibited in galleries and museums, including the Studio Museum in Harlem; Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford; Leica Gallery, New York; and the National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C. Willis Thomas is the first recipient of the Aperture West Book Prize, a new annual prize awarded by Aperture Foundation. He lives in Oakland, California.

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