

# 2009 Hall of Fame Inductee

## Raymond A. Thomas

*Class of 1984*

*“I have always felt that being an artist is more about who I am and not about what I do.”*

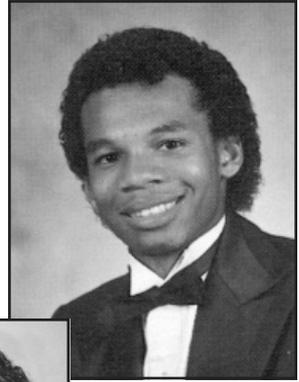
Raymond A. Thomas spent his formative years attending University City schools before graduating from University City High School in 1984. That same year, he left home to attend the prestigious School of the Art Institute of Chicago with a merit scholarship. Soon after earning his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Communications, he was hired by the founder of the Chicago-based Johnson Publishing Company Inc., where he was committed to continuing his life-long passion of creating and showing his studio work in galleries around the world.

Focusing on celebrating African-American life and culture, while examining the continuing harsh economic, social, spiritual and political realities, Thomas blends abstract and graphic expressionism to create powerful and poignant images in vibrant acrylic paintings with jazz principals of improvisation and rhythm and exploding with color, splatters drips and dry brush stokes.

His short film “12 Minutes,” the story of a death row inmate whose last wish before execution was to the gifted but troubled child he had never met, won Thomas six international awards for writing and directing.

“Everyday I’m on the grind, confronting the possibilities of my imagination with fearless passion. Through my unwavering devotion to craft and culture, I am reaffirming my humanity through the gift of creating. I have no choice in this because it is simply who I am. I am an artist and our inner urge can’t be bought, taught or bartered. It just is.”

In 2008, Thomas was University City’s Returning Artist and received a mayoral proclamation for career achievement. He currently resides in Chicago and is Ebony Magazine’s Creative Art Director.



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