
DAILY AD

HANK WILLIS THOMAS'S NEW INSTALLATION ABOUT TRUTH POPS UP IN DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN

Text by Alexa Lawrence | August 14, 2015



In Search of the Truth (The Truth Booth), 2011–15, Hank Willis Thomas.
 Photo: Liz Ligon/Courtesy of the Public Art Fund, NY, and the Cause Collective

With “The Truth Is I See You,” artist Hank Willis Thomas invites the people of Brooklyn, to join his ongoing investigation into the nature of truth. For the next ten months, a series of comic book–esque speech bubbles will hang overhead from various lampposts along the MetroTech Promenade, espousing “universal statements about truth” with the hopes of sparking conversation. Phrases include “The truth is I respect you,” “The truth is I welcome you,” “The truth is I need you,” “The truth is I am you,” each drawn from a poem composed by Thomas and fellow artist Ryan Alexiev.

But Thomas’s concern is with truth across cultures, and his dialogue is not limited to English: With the help of a large network of multilingual friends, Thomas has translated the essence of the statements into 22 of the many languages spoken in Brooklyn. “In Wahrheit brauche ich dich,” reads one. “*La verdad es que te elijo a ti,*” another. Each bubble is accompanied by the original English phrase and a pronunciation guide.



The Truth Is I Love You, 2015.

Photo: James Ewing, Courtesy of the Public Art Fund, NY, the artist, and Jack Shainman Gallery

Other pieces around the park include two steel speech-bubble benches, where passersby can stop and rest, mull over the meaning of truth—or snap a cartoonish selfie. Large steel trees with branches sprouting speech bubbles announce indiscriminately to all who pass, “The truth is I love you.”

And in case none of these “universal statements” resonates with your understanding of the truth, *The Truth Booth* will also make four appearances during the exhibition. A collaboration with Alexiev and Jim Ricks of the Cause Collective, this piece consists of a video recording booth in which visitors are invited to create a new ending to the statement “The truth is . . .,” adding their own verse to Alexiev and Thomas’s protean poem.

Through June 3, 2016, in downtown Brooklyn, New York; publicartfund.org
