

WHITNEY

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PRESS RELEASE



Adrienne Edwards and David Breslin. Photograph by Bryan Derballa

DAVID BRESLIN AND ADRIENNE EDWARDS WILL CURATE THE 2021 WHITNEY BIENNIAL

NEW YORK, October 7, 2019—The Whitney Museum of American Art announced today that its 2021 Biennial will be co-organized by two members of the Museum’s curatorial department, David Breslin and Adrienne Edwards. This will be the Biennial’s 80th edition. The exhibition will open in spring 2021. The 2021 Whitney Biennial is presented by Tiffany & Co, which has been the lead sponsor of the Biennial since the Museum’s move downtown.

Alice Pratt Brown Director Adam D. Weinberg noted: “The central aim of the Biennial is to be a barometer of contemporary American art. Each Biennial is a reflection of the cultural and social moment as it intersects with the passions, perspectives, and tastes of the curators. David and Adrienne will be a great team. They are inquisitive, curious, and are acutely attuned to the art of the current moment. No doubt they will bring fresh outlooks to this historic exhibition and reinvent it for these complex and challenging times.”

Scott Rothkopf, the Whitney’s Senior Deputy Director and Nancy and Steve Crown Family Chief Curator, said, “David and Adrienne truly represent the best spirit and ideals of the Whitney. Not only are they devoted to—and beloved by—living artists, but they bring to the art of our time a deep historical and scholarly

awareness. The most recent editions of the Biennial have reaffirmed its vitality and relevance, and I look forward to discovering how another pair of Whitney curators will lend their voices to our signature exhibition.”

Initiated by founder Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney in 1932, the Whitney Biennial is the longest-running survey of American art. More than [3,600 artists](#) have participated, including Edward Hopper, Georgia O’Keeffe, Jacob Lawrence, Alexander Calder, Louise Bourgeois, Joan Mitchell, Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Robert Rauschenberg, Claes Oldenburg, Roy Lichtenstein, Agnes Martin, Cy Twombly, Andy Warhol, Ellsworth Kelly, Richard Serra, Lynda Benglis, Frank Bowling, Joan Jonas, Barbara Kruger, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Jenny Holzer, David Wojnarowicz, Glenn Ligon, Yvonne Rainer, Zoe Leonard, Kara Walker, Cindy Sherman, Nan Goldin, Mike Kelley, Lorna Simpson, Renée Green, Wade Guyton, Julie Mehretu, Cecilia Vicuña, Mark Bradford, Daniel Joseph Martinez, Ellen Gallagher, Rachel Harrison, Wu Tsang, Nick Mauss, Sarah Michelson, Laura Owens, Postcommodity, Pope.L, Jeffrey Gibson, and Tiona Nekkia McClodden.

The biennials were originally organized by medium, with painting alternating with sculpture and works on paper. Starting in 1937, the Museum shifted to yearly exhibitions called Annuals. The current format—a survey show of work in all media occurring every two years—has been in place since 1973. The 2019 Biennial (still on partial view on the Museum’s sixth floor until October 27) was organized by two Whitney curators, Jane Panetta and Rujeko Hockley. It featured seventy-five artists and collectives working in painting, sculpture, installation, film and video, photography, performance, and sound.

About the Curators

David Breslin was recently named the DeMartini Family Curator and Director of Curatorial Initiatives, a role he will assume this month. Since joining the Museum in 2016 as DeMartini Family Curator and Director of the Collection, Breslin has spearheaded the Museum’s collection-related activities, curating a series of major collection exhibitions and overseeing acquisitions. Working closely with his curatorial colleagues, he has organized or co-organized four timely and thematized collection displays, including *Where We Are: Selections from the Whitney’s Collection, 1900–1960*, *An Incomplete History of Protest: Selections from the Whitney’s Collection, 1940–2017*, *Spilling Over: Painting Color in the 1960s*, and *The Whitney’s Collection: Selections from 1900 to 1965*, which is currently on view on the Museum’s seventh floor. In 2018, he co-curated (with David Kiehl) the landmark retrospective *David Wojnarowicz: History Keeps Me Awake at Night*.

Breslin came to the Whitney from the Menil Drawing Institute, where he created an ambitious program of exhibitions and public and scholarly events and helped to shape the design of the Institute’s new facility. He also oversaw work on the catalogue raisonné of the drawings of Jasper Johns and grew the collection. Prior to the Menil, Breslin served as the associate director of the research and academic program and associate curator of contemporary projects at the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, MA; he also oversaw the Clark’s residential fellowship program and taught in the Williams College Graduate Program in the History of Art. Breslin co-edited *Art History and Emergency: Crises in the Visual Arts and Humanities* (Yale University Press, 2016), a volume that grew from a Clark Conference he organized with art historian Darby English.

In 2018, **Adrienne Edwards** was named Engell Speyer Family Curator and Curator of Performance at the Whitney. Previously, she served as curator of Performa since 2010 and as Curator at Large for the Walker Art Center since 2016.

At the Whitney, Edwards curated *Jason Moran*, the artist’s first museum show, now on view on the Museum’s eighth floor. She originated the exhibition at the Walker in 2018; it previously traveled to the ICA Boston and the Wexner Center for the Arts. The exhibition features a series of performances, *Jazz on a High Floor in the Afternoon*, curated by Edwards and Moran. She organized the event commencing the construction of David Hammons’s *Day’s End*, featuring a commission by composer Henry Threadgill and a “water” tango on the Hudson River by the Fire Department of the City of New York’s Marine Company 9. Earlier this year,

Edwards organized *Moved by the Motion: Sudden Rise*, a series of performances based on a text co-written by Wu Tsang, boychild, and Fred Moten, which presented a collage of words, film, movements, and sounds.

For Performa, Edwards realized new boundary-defying commissions, as well as pathfinding conferences and film programs with a wide range of over forty international artists. While at the Walker, she co-led the institution-wide Mellon Foundation Interdisciplinary Initiative, an effort to expand ways of commissioning, studying, collecting, documenting, and conserving cross-disciplinary works. Edwards's curatorial projects have included the critically acclaimed exhibition and catalogue *Blackness in Abstraction*, hosted by Pace Gallery in 2016. She also organized Frieze's Artist Award and *Live* program in New York in 2018. Edwards taught art history and visual studies at New York University and The New School, and she is a contributor to the National Gallery of Art's Center for the Advanced Study in Visual Art's forthcoming publication *Black Modernisms*.

The 2021 Whitney Biennial is presented by

TIFFANY & CO.

About the Biennial

With a long history of exhibiting the most promising and influential artists and provoking debate, the Whitney Biennial is the Museum's signature survey of the state of contemporary art in the United States. The Biennial, an invitational show of work produced in the preceding two years, was introduced by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney in 1932, and it is the longest continuous series of exhibitions in the country to survey recent developments in American art.

The 2021 Whitney Biennial is organized by David Breslin, DeMartini Family Curator and Director of Curatorial Initiatives, and Adrienne Edwards, Engell Speyer Family Curator and Curator of Performance, Whitney Museum of American Art.

About the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art, founded in 1930 by the artist and philanthropist Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875–1942), houses the foremost collection of American art from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Mrs. Whitney, an early and ardent supporter of modern American art, nurtured groundbreaking artists at a time when audiences were still largely preoccupied with the Old Masters. From her vision arose the Whitney Museum of American Art, which has been championing the most innovative art of the United States for more than eighty years. The core of the Whitney's mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit American art of our time and serve a wide variety of audiences in celebration of the complexity and diversity of art and culture in the United States. Through this mission and a steadfast commitment to artists themselves, the Whitney has long been a powerful force in support of modern and contemporary art and continues to help define what is innovative and influential in American art today.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art

The Whitney's Collection: Selections from 1900 to 1965	Ongoing
Jason Moran	September 20, 2019–January 5, 2020
Order and Ornament: Roy Lichtenstein's Entablatures	Opens September 27, 2019
Pope.L: Choir	October 10, 2019–Winter 2020
Rachel Harrison Life Hack	October 25, 2019–January 12, 2020
Alan Michelson: Wolf Nation	October 25, 2019–January 12, 2020
Making Knowing: Craft in Art 1950–2019	November 22, 2019–January 2021
fruits, vegetables; fruit and vegetable salad	January 15–February 16, 2020
Vida Americana: Mexican Muralists Remake American Art, 1925–1945	February 17–May 17, 2020
Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist	March 13–June 21, 2020
Julie Mehretu	June 26–September 20, 2020
Working Together: The Photographers of the Kamoinge Workshop	July–October 2020

Around Day's End: Downtown New York, 1970–1986
David Hammons: Day's End
Jasper Johns
Dawoud Bey

July–October 2020
Fall 2020
Opens Fall 2020
Opens November 2020

The Whitney Museum of American Art is located at 99 Gansevoort Street between Washington and West Streets, New York City. Museum hours are: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday from 10:30 am to 6 pm; Friday from 10:30 am to 10 pm. Closed Tuesday. Adults: \$25. Full-time students and visitors 65 & over: \$18. Visitors 18 years & under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 7–10 pm. For general information, please call (212) 570-3600 or visit whitney.org.

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