

WHITNEY

Whitney Museum of American Art

PRESS RELEASE

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2004 BIENNIAL TRACKS THE LATEST IN CURRENT AMERICAN ART

Exhibition to present prominent artistic trends in new intergenerational work

Reflecting what may be seen as a reinvigoration of contemporary American art at a moment of profound change in our cultural landscape, the 2004 Whitney Biennial opens at the Whitney Museum of American Art on March 11.

The 2004 Biennial is organized by three Whitney curators: Chrissie Iles, curator of film and video; Shamim M. Momin, branch director and curator of the Whitney Museum of American Art at Altria; and Debra Singer, associate curator of contemporary art. Works by 108 artists and collaborative groups will remain on view throughout the Whitney Museum of American Art through May 30, 2004; the show also includes outdoor projects throughout Central Park, presented in collaboration with the Public Art Fund. The list of participating artists is attached.

Adam D. Weinberg, the Whitney's Alice Pratt Brown Director, said, "The Biennial is a great tradition that goes back to the Museum's earliest roots. This gathering of new and established artists plunges us into the present moment in American contemporary art while simultaneously anticipating the future. Perhaps the Whitney's defining exhibition, the Biennial is a requisite, periodic report from the front. It's a means of discovery and of recognition, and a reaffirmation of the Museum's commitment to American artists and to America's cultural life. We are deeply grateful to Altria, Banc of America Securities, and The Brown Foundation for helping to make this year's Biennial possible."

Jennifer Goodale, Vice President of Contributions for Altria, the lead sponsor for the exhibition, commented, "For more than 45 years, Altria Group has supported arts organizations and projects around the world that challenge us to explore new and diverse perspectives by inspiring dialogue and debate. That is why Altria is pleased once again to support the Whitney Biennial, which celebrates the mosaic of vision and voices of contemporary American artists. We salute the Whitney's curatorial team for putting together a thoughtful and provocative show."

An Intergenerational Conversation

Several generations of artists are featured in the exhibition, in a conversation that reflects a number of overlapping trends:

- An engagement with the artmaking, popular culture, and politics of the late 1960s and early 1970s;
- The construction of fantastic worlds, uncanny spaces, and new narrative forms, often incorporating psychedelia, the Gothic, and the apocalyptic;
- A prevalence of abstract and figurative paintings and drawings as well as hand-processed films, frequently involving obsessive working of line, surface, and image.

Ranging from the apocalyptic to the ethereal, the fantastic to the political, and the sensual to the obsessive, many of the works convey an underlying sense of anxiety and uncertainty about the world today. The Biennial artists have drawn from a variety of sources including music, pulp fiction, the occult, recent and past art history, cinema, and current political events. A direct engagement with materials and process, paralleled by an embracing of ornament and surface, is evident throughout the show, which includes strong groupings of painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, installation, video, filmmaking, photography, performance, and digital art.

The intergenerational premise of the show is evident throughout. New work by artists who came to prominence in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, including Marina Abramović, Mel Bochner, Jack Goldstein, David Hockney, Mary Kelly, Yayoi Kusama, Robert Mangold, Paul McCarthy, and Richard Prince, is presented in dialogue with a highly accomplished group of mid-career artists, including Dike Blair, Sam Durant, Jim Hodges, James Siena, Amy Sillman, and Yutaka Sone, and with emerging figures, such as assume vivid astro focus, Wade Guyton, Emily Jacir, Glenn Kaino, Julie Mehretu, Aleksandra Mir, Elizabeth Peyton, Alec Soth, Catherine Sullivan, and Banks Violette.

Looking Back

One important aspect of the exhibition involves appropriation, by which artists remember – and sometimes intentionally misremember – the past. Engaging with the artistic experiments of the late 1960s and the early 1970s, these artists look back on the aesthetic strategies and popular culture of a period of international conflict, domestic tumult, political scandal, and economic downturn, which formed a combustible climate reminiscent of our own.

References to radical political action surface in the work of Mary Kelly and Sam Durant, for instance, and in the documentary film *The Weather Underground*, by Sam Green and Bill Siegel. Sculptures by Tom Burr, Taylor Davis, Wade Guyton, and Mark Handforth, among others, appropriate aspects of the Pop and post-Minimalist approaches of artists like Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg. The rigorous abstract films of Pip Chodorov and Luis Recoder rework the conceptual language of 1970s structuralist filmmakers, while Sharon Lockhart embraces similar strategies in new formal terms.

An interest in the dreamlike qualities of 1960s psychedelia arises in the immersive installations of assume vivid astro focus, Christian Holstad, and Virgil Marti, in the compositions of Fred Tomaselli, and in the new digital film of Andrew Noren. One of the exhibition's senior artists, Yayoi Kusama, will show a recent installation that echoes her hallucinatory environments of the 1960s.

Other Worlds

Reflecting on the past as if it was "a foreign country," as the novelist L.P. Hartley put it, can be considered the flipside of another prevalent contemporary impulse: the construction of fantastical alternative realities, in which myth-making becomes a way to understand a world that has become increasingly dangerous and alien. The surreal narratives of artists such as Laylah Ali, Amy Cutler, Robyn O'Neil, Dario Robleto, and Matthew Ronay propose alternative interpretations of social conventions.

One prominent strain embraces a Gothic sensibility, in which darkness and morbidity function as a means to suggest transcendence and access to the sublime. This character is evident in the work of David Altmejd, Liz Craft, Sue de Beer, Chloe Piene, Aida Ruilova, and Banks Violette. A similar nihilistic tendency can be found in the apocalyptic vision of Jack Goldstein's volcanic explosions in *Underwater Sea Fantasy*, his first film since the 1970s and the last work he completed before his death earlier this year.

Other artists also explore the persistence of, and potential for, community and connection, from Craigie Horsfield's video installation tracking a remote rural enclave on the Canary Islands, to Catherine Opie's photographs of West Coast surfers and Andrea Zittel's experimental living habitat in Joshua Tree, California.

Materiality and Process

Much of the work in the exhibition demonstrates a strong engagement with materiality and process, seen in the provocative cast-rubber sculptures of Paul McCarthy, Rob Fischer's hybrid "caravans" constructed from fragments of houses, planes, and cars, and in the low-tech modesty of Cory Arcangel's installations of obsolete computers and hacked video games. Terence Koh's delicately erotic objects and environments, using materials such as flowers, rhinestones, and elements of the exquisite, and Spencer Finch's spectrum-gel light arrangements resonate with Julianne Swartz's labyrinths of lenses, fans, and mirrors. The artists in the exhibition manifest an increasingly skeptical attitude towards technology and dissipated utopian hopes for its positive impact on the future.

Drawing and Painting

Evidence of an upsurge in drawing and painting is clearly visible in the exhibition. Large- and small-scale works across three generations demonstrate an emphasis on surface and obsessive mark-making, ranging from a new installation by Raymond Pettibon to Robert Longo's drawings of towering, ominous ocean waves, and from organic abstract drawings by James Siena to the intimate mythological images of Ernesto Caivano.

Related to the proliferation of drawing, the exhibition underlines the current prominence of painting, from important new works by established artists such as Mel Bochner, Alex Hay, David Hockney, Robert Mangold, and Richard Prince, to work by a younger generation of artists including Cecily Brown, Kim Fisher, Barnaby Furnas, and Laura Owens, as well as the final hand-painted films of Stan Brakhage, which will be seen for the first time projected in a gallery context. The strong presence of portraiture in painting is evident in recent works by Hernan Bas and Elizabeth Peyton, seen alongside new portraits by Hockney, with whose work Peyton's strongly resonates. In photography, Katy Grannan, Jack Pierson, and Alec Soth create intensely personal portraits whose subjects seem to possess untold, hidden stories.

Scheduled Film, Video, and Performances

The exhibition incorporates an extensive film and video program, comprising hand-processed films, documentaries, performative film presentations, and narrative works by three generations of filmmakers and artists, from Jonas Mekas and Bradley Eros to Liisa Roberts, Andrea Bowers, and James Fotopoulos. The Biennial also features new performances by artists including Marina Abramović, Antony and the Johnsons, Noémie Lafrance, and Los Super Elegantes.

Collaboration with the Public Art Fund

For the second time, the Whitney Museum is partnering with the Public Art Fund, New York's leading presenter of artists' projects, new commissions, installations and exhibitions in public spaces. A selection of Biennial artists' works is on display in various locations throughout the city,

as well as within the museum. In collaboration with the Biennial curators, Tom Eccles, Director and Curator of the Public Art Fund, has co-curated this off-site component of the Biennial, which has been organized by the Public Art Fund and includes a number of newly commissioned projects.

Catalogue

The three curators have developed a new format for the Biennial catalogue. The catalogue comprises two elements: the first, a bound book that includes essays by each of the curators, as well as more than a dozen contemporary and historical writings by a range of authors, including historians, critics, and artists such as Susan Buck-Morss, Richard Davenport-Hines, Tim Griffin, Wayne Koestenbaum, Laura Mulvey, Robert Smithson, Anthony Vidler, and a collaborative text by Rachel Greene and Johanna Fateman. The second component of the catalogue features projects created by artists participating in the exhibition.

The Bucksbaum Award

The third annual Bucksbaum Award will be presented in conjunction with the 2004 Biennial. In the 2002 Biennial, it was conferred on Irit Batsry for her film *These Are Not My Images* (neither there nor here). In 2000, Paul Pfeiffer was the first recipient. Endowed by trustee Melva Bucksbaum and her family, The Bucksbaum Award is given by the Whitney to an artist chosen from among those in the Biennial. It includes a grant of \$100,000, and an exhibition in the Whitney's Contemporary Series.

Roundtable

As part of the process of shaping this Biennial, the three curators convened an all-day roundtable in March 2003. A number of colleagues were invited to discuss salient issues in contemporary art and culture. The participants were George Baker, assistant professor of Art History at UCLA and co-editor of *October*; Carlos Basualdo, a co-curator of Documenta XI and the 2003 Venice Biennale; Catherine de Zegher, director, The Drawing Center; Lauri Firstenberg, adjunct curator, Artists Space; Rachel Greene, editor, *rhizome.org*; Tim Griffin, editor, *Artforum*; Branden Joseph, assistant professor of Art History at the University of California, Irvine, and co-editor, *Grey Room*; Christine Kim, associate curator, The Studio Museum in Harlem; Dominic Molon, associate curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Sina Najafi, editor-in-chief, *Cabinet*; and Cay Sophie Rabinowitz, senior U.S. editor, *Parkett*.

Biennial History

This year's Biennial is the 72nd in the Whitney's ongoing surveys of contemporary American art, begun in 1932, shortly after the museum was founded. Varying the approach a number of times throughout its history, the Whitney began by mounting bi-annual exhibitions of painting or sculpture (the latter including prints and drawings) between 1932 and 1936. Starting in 1937, two Annuals were held each year, one devoted to painting and the other to sculpture. This structure remained in effect (with slight modifications) until 1956, when a single Annual was held encompassing all media. Between 1959 and 1972, Annuals once again alternated between sculpture (sometimes together with prints and drawings) and painting. Motivated by the shifting character of American art, increasingly violated margins between traditional media, and the blurring of conventional distinctions, the present all-media Biennial system was initiated in 1973..

Lead sponsor



Major support is provided by

The Brown Foundation, Inc., Houston

Significant funding for the 2004 Biennial has been provided by an endowment created by Melva Bucksbaum, Emily Fisher Landau, and Leonard A. Lauder. Additional support has been given by the Director's Council, the National Committee, and the Whitney Contemporaries of the Whitney Museum of American Art..

2004 Biennial Exhibition: List of Artists

Marina Abramovic	Lee Mingwei
Laylah Ali	Golan Levin
David Altmejd	Sharon Lockhart
Antony and the Johnsons	Robert Longo
Cory Arcangel/BEIGE	Los Super Elegantes
assume vivid astro focus	Robert Mangold
Hernan Bas	Virgil Marti
Dike Blair	Cameron Martin
Jeremy Blake	Anthony McCall
Mel Bochner	Paul McCarthy
Andrea Bowers	Bruce McClure
Slater Bradley	Julie Mehretu
Stan Brakhage	Jonas Mekas
Cecily Brown	Aleksandra Mir
Tom Burr	Dave Muller
Ernesto Caivano	Julie Murray
Maurizio Cattelan	Julie Atlas Muz
Pip Chodorov	Andrew Noren
Liz Craft	Robyn O'Neil
Santiago Cucullu	Jim O'Rourke
Amy Cutler	Catherine Opie
Taylor Davis	Laura Owens
Sue DeBeer	Raymond Pettibon
Lecia Dole-Recio	Elizabeth Peyton
Sam Durant	Chloe Piene
Bradley Eros	Jack Pierson
Spencer Finch	Richard Prince
Rob Fischer	Luis Recoder
Kim Fisher	Liisa Roberts
Morgan Fisher	Dario Robleto

Harrell Fletcher
James Fotopoulos
Barnaby Furnas
Sandra Gibson
Jack Goldstein
Katy Grannan
Sam Green & Bill Siegel
Katie Grinnan
Wade Guyton
Mark Handforth
Alex Hay
David Hockney
Jim Hodges
Christian Holstad
Roni Horn
Craigie Horsfield
Peter Hutton
Emily Jacir
Isaac Julien
Miranda July
Glenn Kaino
Mary Kelly
Terence Koh
Yayoi Kusama
Noémie Lafrance

Matthew Ronay
Aïda Ruilova
Anne-Marie Schleiner,
Brody Condon, and Joan Leandre
(the "Velvet-Strike" team)
James Siena
Amy Sillman
Simparch
Zak Smith
Yutaka Sone
Alec Soth
Deborah Stratman
Catherine Sullivan
Eve Sussman
Julianne Swartz
Erick Swenson
Fred Tomaselli
Tracy and the Plastics (Wynne Greenwood)
Jim Trainor
Tam Van Tran
Banks Violette
Eric Wesley
Olav Westphalen
TJ Wilcox
Andrea Zittel

About the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the leading advocate of 20th and 21st-century American art. Founded in 1930, the Museum is widely regarded as the preeminent collection of 20th-century American art and includes the entire artistic estate of Edward Hopper, the largest public collection of works by Alexander Calder, Louise Nevelson, and Lucas Samaras, as well as significant works by Arshile Gorky, Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Agnes Martin, Bruce Nauman, Georgia O'Keeffe, Claes Oldenburg, Kiki Smith, and Andy Warhol, among other artists.

Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art:

New Additions: Prints: Through April 25, 2004
Inside Out: Portrait Photographs: Through May 23, 2004
2004 Biennial: March 11-May 30, 2004