

PRESS RELEASE



Rachel Harrison, *Alexander the Great*, 2007. Wood, chicken wire, polystyrene, cement, acrylic, mannequin, Jeff Gordon waste basket, plastic Abraham Lincoln mask, sunglasses, fabric, necklace, and two unidentified items, 87 x 91 x 40 inches (221 x 231.1 x 101.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Committee on Painting and Sculpture Funds, 2007; courtesy the artist and Greene Naftali, New York. Photograph by Jean Vong

THE WHITNEY TO PRESENT RACHEL HARRISON'S FIRST FULL-SCALE SURVEY

NEW YORK, August 13, 2019—Since the early 1990s, Rachel Harrison (b. 1966) has combined pop-cultural, political, and art-historical references in her work, creating a distinctive visual language that is multi-layered and full of mordant wit. *Rachel Harrison Life Hack* is the first full-scale survey to track the development of Harrison's career over the past twenty-five years, assembling approximately one hundred works, including sculptures, photographs, drawings, and installations, ranging in date from 1991 to the present.

Harrison's complex works incorporate everything from consumer goods to cement, with objects both made and found. Cans of olives, remote controls, NASCAR paraphernalia, and a restaurant meal appear in configurations that open up simultaneous and unexpected layers of meaning. In her practice, Harrison brings together the breadth of art history, the impurities of politics, and the artifacts of pop and celebrity culture, conjuring unexpected, wryly humorous combinations and atmospheres that suggest allegories of the contemporary United States. A remarkable cast of characters appear in her work, ranging from Amy Winehouse to Abraham Lincoln, Mel Gibson to Marcel Duchamp, David Bowie to Angela Merkel, Hannah Wilke to Buckethead, and Bo Derek to Al Gore.

The exhibition, organized by Elisabeth Sussman and David Joselit, with Kelly Long, will fill the Museum's fifth-floor galleries through January 12, 2020.

Scott Rothkopf, Senior Deputy Director and Nancy and Steve Crown Family Chief Curator, remarked: "Although *Life Hack* gathers together the most significant examples of Harrison's art from across her career, she has brilliantly approached the exhibition itself almost as an entirely new work of art. Visitors will be immersed in a sequence of dramatic sculptural environments that unfold across the Whitney's sprawling clear-span gallery, which was designed to inspire precisely such bold experimentation."

As Sussman writes in her catalogue essay (entitled "Rachel Harrison: Two or Three Things I Know About Her" after a film by Jean-Luc Godard), "From the beginning, Harrison was omnivorous. Working on the principle that art should include everything, she made things and environments, she found stuff and collected it. Nor did she limit herself to a specific medium." Sussman further comments: "Harrison's importance lies in that she has absorbed commodity and media culture into a paradigm of object making. She has consistently kept at the task of making meaning out of modern-day life for thirty years, and her contribution to contemporary art is singular."

Co-curator Joselit noted, "Drawing on past sculptural practice, from a wide and seemingly contradictory range of precedents including Michael Asher, Mike Kelley, Adrian Piper, and Fred Sandback, Harrison de-familiarizes museum space and exhibition practices. By playing with the idea of pedestal and wall and often exploiting the ad hoc qualities of assemblage, she undermines the sense that a work or an installation is ever finished by calling attention to how it is framed."

The installation is loosely chronological, beginning with a gallery devoted to works from the 1990s, then moving into more thematic and atmospheric spaces punctuated by smaller galleries devoted to specific bodies of work (a selection of Harrison's Amy Winehouse drawings, for example). Two large galleries in the exhibition engage with the idea of civic space and monumentality, providing complex, evocative environments for Harrison's work that are further activated by the presence of viewers.

About the Artist

Rachel Harrison lives and works in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include *Prasine*, Greene Naftali, New York (2017); *Perth Amboy*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2016); *Depth Jump to Second Box*, Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin (2016); *Three Young Framers*, Regen Projects, Los Angeles (2015); *Gloria: Rachel Harrison & Robert Rauschenberg*, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland (2015); *Fake Titel*, Kestnergesellschaft, Hannover (2013); *Fake Titel: Turquoise-Stained Altars for Burger Turner*, S.M.A.K., Ghent (2013); *Villeperdue*, Galerie Meyer Kainer, Vienna (2013); *Consider the Lobster*, CCS Bard/Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York (2009); *HAYCATION*, Portikus, Frankfurt (2009); *Conquest of the Useless*, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2010); and *Lay of the Land*, Le Consortium, Dijon (2008). Her work is in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Art Institute of Chicago; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Tate, London; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; and Museum Ludwig, Cologne, among many others. Harrison's work has appeared in two Whitney Biennials, in 2002 and 2008, and her work was also included in *America Is Hard to See*, the Whitney's inaugural exhibition in its downtown home in 2015.

About the Catalogue

The catalogue contains essays by Sussman and Joselit, as well as by Johanna Burton, Darby English, Maggie Nelson, and Alexander Nemerov. This publication, designed by Rachel Harrison and Joseph Logan, explores twenty-five years of Harrison's practice and is the first comprehensive monograph on Harrison in nearly a decade. Its centerpiece is an in-depth plate section, which doubles as a chronology of Harrison's major works, series, and exhibitions. Objects are illustrated with multiple views and details, and accompanied by short texts. This thorough approach elucidates Harrison's complicated, eclectic oeuvre—in which she integrates found materials with handmade sculptural elements, upends traditions of museum display, and injects quotidian objects with a sense of strangeness. Published by the Whitney Museum of American Art and distributed by Yale University Press.

Curatorial Credit

Rachel Harrison Life Hack is organized by Elisabeth Sussman, Curator and Sondra Gilman Curator of Photography, and David Joselit, Distinguished Professor, Graduate Center, City University of New York, with Kelly Long, curatorial assistant.

Exhibition Support

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The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts

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

Spilling Over: Painting Color in the 1960s	March 29–August 18, 2019
2019 Whitney Biennial	May 17–September 22, 2019
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	Opening September 27, 2019
Rachel Harrison Life Hack	October 25, 2019–January 12, 2020
Alan Michelson: Wolf Nation	October 25, 2019–January 12, 2020
Pope.L: Choir	Opens October 10, 2019
Making Knowing: Craft in Art 1950–2019	November 22, 2019–January 2021
Vida Americana: Mexican Muralists Remake American Art, 1925–1945	February–May 2020
Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist	March 13–June 21, 2020
Julie Mehretu	June 26–September 20, 2020
David Hammons: Day's End	2020
Jasper Johns	Opens Fall 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, and Sunday from 10:30 am to 6 pm; Friday and Saturday from 10:30 am to 10 pm. Closed Tuesday except in July and August. Adults: \$25. Full-time students, visitors 65 & over, and visitors with disabilities: \$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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